

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Meditation: A Saint Recounting His Life

Editorials: The Nature of the Atonement

Ecumenical To The Extreme

That Period Theory Again (see All Around Us)

World Congress on Evangelism

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION—

A Saint Recounting His Life

by Rev. M. Schipper

"And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

Genesis 47:8, 9

How old are you?

Embarrassing question, you say!

Perhaps it is for some! Maybe you prefer not to answer it!

But such a question can prove to be very salutary! Especially is this so when one considers it wisely. It suggests, among other things, the fleetness of life; and it calls for retrospection, the careful taking of inventory of one's life.

Such was the question wherewith Pharaoh, king of Egypt, confronted Jacob. This third of a triumvirate of saints had lately come to Egypt at the invitation of his son Joseph, whom God had exalted so highly that he sat next to Pharaoh. And at the behest of Joseph, Jacob is brought before the monarch who is greeted by the venerable old saint with the salutation such dignitaries deserve; and where the grey-haired old gentleman is immediately asked the question: How old

art thou?

That question evoked not only the answer as to the number of the years the saint had lived; but it caused all the years to pass in retrospect before his consciousness, so that he could properly assess them!

As this year draws to its close, another year of our lives is ended. Not only has the plan of God for the history of the world reached another milepost in its approach to its culmination, a fact in itself serious enough for earnest consideration. For though a thousand years with God are as one day, and vice versa, we know that the world's history is reckoned by years. Each successive year brings that history to its consummation. And from that point of view the end of this year is indicative of the fact that God is realizing His counsel for the ages. But our lives also have made an approach to their end! The foolish, of course, will fail to take this into consideration. He thinks he shall live forever. And with eating and drinking, with merry-making, the blowing of whistles and the ringing of bells, he will attempt to drown out the thought concerning the fastly approaching end. But the saint, the child of God, will very seriously consider the passing of his years! Not so much to complain of their rapid passing, but to consider his calling as it must be fitted into a space of life which compared with that of others may appear to be very short, but which when considered in the line of duty may recall the trials and the testings, the joys and the evils to be experienced as one treads out the path on which his pilgrimage takes him!

How old art thou?

The answer to that question should cause the saint to pass judgment on the span of life already lived, and to assess his calling as it yet must be realized!

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years . . . !

He observed that the years of his life is a pilgrimage!

And that means that all those years he was a pilgrim!

And the pilgrim is one who is an alien in a strange land! He is one who is on his way to his homeland, and is only temporarily passing through another. And the pilgrimage is the trek of the pilgrim as he wanders in this foreign land, not without purpose, but with the guide-map of the Word of God, which also serves him as a lamp for his feet and a light upon his pathway. On this way, as he travels with other pilgrims, he sings it out with the sweet Psalmist of old -

"I am a stranger here,

Dependent on Thy grace,

A Pilgrim, as my fathers were,

With no abiding place."

Such was the experience of Jacob!

All his life was literally and emphatically a pilgrimage! It began in Canaan. Thence to Padanaram, and back to Canaan again. And there always he moved from place to place, first to Succoth, and then to Shechem, and then to Hebron. And now to Egypt!

Like his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, who also were pilgrims, dwelling in tents, with no permanent

abode, looking for the city which has foundations! Such had been the life of this child of God!

The saint seeks not the earthly! His abode is not the domicile deeply dug, and a house for aye; but it is the tent which may be carried on his back as he moves from place to place. Earthly values are to him not intrinsic but transitory. Earthly things have no other significance than to be servants assisting him in the progress of his pilgrimage. His sole objective is the heavenly! Heaven is his home. His citizenship, with all that it implies, is in heaven. All that he is and does is motivated by the heavenly principle!

The days of the years of my pilgrimage . . . !

This is not a sad complaint!

Rather, it expresses a joyous prospect!

Another year, another milepost in the pilgrim way is also not a sad aspect! Such it might be were we citizens from below. But not so for the pilgrim! Another year brings him a little closer to his home and eternal happiness! The days of my pilgrimage have been so many, and that means there are so many left according to the plan and purpose of God, when my pilgrimage will be finished, and my destination reached!

Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been!

They have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage!

The saint observes the brevity of his life!

Also this is not a complaint!

So some would explain! Jacob, they say, was placed before the question: How old are you? And his answer includes a comparison with the patriarchs before him. And when he considered that they had outlived him, he remorsefully asserts that his days by comparison were few.

However, we know from the subsequent history of Jacob that this cannot be the case. Though it is true that he did not live as long as his fathers Abraham and Isaac; and though it is also true that he had yet to live seventeen years after he appeared before Pharaoh, his fathers lived considerably longer than he. It is also true that in verse 29 of our chapter where we read: "And the time drew nigh that Israel must die . . ." This implies that his years were full, that he had according to the plan of God lived out his years. And in Genesis 49:33 we read: "And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people." This implies that he knew his time had come, and he was willing and ready to go. And though this was some seventeen years later, there is no reason to believe that Jacob would complain now and be satisfied then.

Rather, here is a saint speaking, who is truly wise! He faces the fact of life's span by comparisons. He takes notice of the life span of others, of his predecessors, and comes to the conclusion that life is very brief! He observes, too, that his life had been packed with activity, and that much earlier than his fathers he was worn out. And so, while he had still seventeen

years to live, he was already living in anticipation of his death.

This brevity of life!

How often the Scriptures call our attention to it!

"Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breath, and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." Psalm 39:4, 5.

"For all our days are passed away in thy wrath, we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Psalm 90: 9, 10.

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." Psalm 103:14-16.

This is the tone of all the Scriptures!

And it seems that the packed life is the shortest! To one who never seems to have anything to do, life must seem long and dull. But to him who is never idle, life seems all too short. The day does not seem to hold in it enough hours; the year, enough days; and the life, enough years.

So it must have appeared also to Jacob, the saint!

And evil have the days of the years of my life been!

Also this is not a complaint!

It is a confession!

The evil of which he speaks may be considered twofold. Not only is the saint here recounting his manifold sins; how he had deceived his brother Esau and his aged father Isaac; how he had outmaneuvered his miserly uncle Laban; how on several occasions in his own strength he even attempted to outmaneuver God. When the thing he sought most, namely, the patriarchal blessing, the birthright, when this did not come to him as quickly as he wished, when he could

not wait for God to give it him. When he is confronted with Esau and his host at the Jabbok, how he would have strategically out-foxed his brother to spare the best of his possessions, and God had to teach him that it was not Esau but God with Whom he must wrestle.

O, indeed, he remembered his wicked sins!

But the other aspect of the evil which had been packed into his brief life was the tribulation he endured! A fugitive he had been for twenty years, while all that time his avaricious uncle persecuted him as he labored for his wives and substance. How he was troubled by the conduct of his sons when with his family he returned to Shechem! How his very heart seemed to be torn from him when he laid his beloved wife Rachel to rest at Bethlehem! How with grey hairs he appeared ready to descend into the grave when the news reached him that his favorite son had lost his life, being torn to pieces by some wild beast!

All this he recounted now!

How old are you?

Indeed, my life is so short that I am not only able to recall all that took place in it, but especially the evil!

That evil I readily confess!

And I have sensed more than ever how that I have only a small beginning of the new obedience!

Nevertheless, I have walked by the grace of my God in the way He ordained for me, even as it led through many trials and tribulations!

And now, though the span of the years of my life seemed so short, especially when I compared it with that of my fathers, when you ask me how old I am, I am not only able to tell you, but I am also able to see the end of my pilgrimage!

Soon I will be in the city that hath foundations! Fatherland, the land where Father dwells, and where the whole family of God shall forever dwell, there I shall soon enter!

When you ask me: how old are you? that is what I am reminded of!

How old are you?

... By grace are ye saved also means that by grace ye are called. This, too, may well be emphasized in our day. On the one hand, he that preaches the gospel must constantly bear this in mind, in order that he may be humble. He must not leave the impression by the way he preaches, as if he were the whole show, as if he were really the one that calls and saves souls, while the Holy Spirit is a sort of assistant evangelist that is called in at the right moment to finish the preacher's work. He is only an instrument. But on the other hand, the audience, too, must understand that the important point of the sermon is not that it pleases them, that it is a "nice sermon," by which they were probably entertained for forty-five minutes; but the great question is whether through the preaching they heard the calling of Christ the Lord, the voice of Jesus saying: "Come unto me and rest." The calling is through the preaching, but it is of God through Christ. By grace are ye called!

H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p.55

EDITORIALS—

The Nature of the Atonement Limited or General?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

THE CONFESSIONS ON THE DEFINITE AND PERSONAL ELEMENT OF THE ATONEMENT

One of our confessions of a minor order, The Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, also speaks of Christ's atonement as being both definite and personal. It is true, of course, that this Form does not use any language which expressly, in so many words, excludes some from this death of Christ; and in this sense it does not speak of a limitation of the atonement. Nevertheless, the language is such that it makes the atonement very definite and very personal; and it would be impossible to read this language in any other way than referring to the elect, and to them only. We find the same "we" and "us" and "our" in this Form that is found in the Heidelberg Catechism and in the Belgic Confession. This is simply due to the fact that faith is speaking here. This should warn us already that the language is not general, but definite. For faith proceeds from the fountain of election. The believers are the elect. And when believers give expression to their faith, therefore, they are always speaking in a very exclusive (limited) communion, i.e., the communion of the saints in Christ Jesus. Together they express in that communion that Christ died for them personally. From this point of view, the Form for the Lord's Supper contains a very beautiful passage emphasizing in detail how Christ very definitely substituted for His people in such a way that what He objectively accomplished through that substitution His people never would have to endure. He did it all *for them*. And if in this passage the "we" is generalized, then this simply would have to mean that all the benefits spoken of accrue objectively to all men. Take note of the following passage; and as you do so, in order to see the absurdity of general atonement, try substituting "all men" for "we" and "our" and "us."

.....Now after this manner are we to remember him by it: First. That we are confidently persuaded in our hearts, that our Lord Jesus Christ.....bore for us the wrath of God (under which we should have perished everlastingly) from the beginning of his incarnation, to the end of his life upon earth; and that he hath fulfilled, for us, all obedience to the divine law, and righteousness; especially, when the weight of our sins and the wrath of God pressed out of him the bloody sweat in the garden, where he was bound

that we might be freed from our sins; that he afterwards suffered innumerable reproaches, that we might never be confounded; that he was innocently condemned to death, that we might be acquitted at the judgment-seat of God; yea, that he suffered his blessed body to be nailed on the cross — that he might fix thereon the handwriting of our sins; and hath also taken upon himself the curse due to us, that he might fill us with his blessings; and hath humbled himself unto the deepest reproach and pains of hell, both in body and soul, on the tree of the cross, when he cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" that we might be accepted of God and never be forsaken of him....."

In this same Form we find the truth that the atonement is in the most specific sense of the word *personal*. But again, this assurance of one's personal part is not general. It is not thus, that the gospel or the preacher of the gospel can say to every individual personally, "Christ died for you." Nor is the Supper of the Lord designed to give that personal assurance of a personal part in the atoning death of Christ generally. The very opposite is true. This personal assurance of a personal stake in the atoning death of Christ is for those who eat and drink by faith, that is, "in remembrance of me," that is, for the elect. This follows, of course, from the objective truth of a definite and personal atonement which is specifically taught in the words of Christ quoted in this part of the Form: "...Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed *for you, and for many*, for the remission of sins...." (emphasis mind, H.C.H.) The question is: of what objective fact does he who eats and drinks the supper of the Lord receive a sure remembrance and pledge? The answer is: that Christ died for *you* personally. Let us understand this clearly. It is not only thus that in the Lord's Supper the believer receives a *personal assurance*; but he receives the personal assurance that Christ acted as *his personal substitute*. He receives the assurance that he was there, personally represented, when Christ laid down His life. Notice:

....that is, as often as ye eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you shall thereby as by a sure remembrance and pledge, be admonished and assured

of this my hearty love and faithfulness towards you; that, whereas you should otherwise have suffered eternal death, I have given my body to the death of the cross, and shed my blood for you; and as certainly feed and nourish your hungry and thirsty souls with my crucified body and shed blood, to everlasting life, as this bread is broken before your eyes, and this cup is given to you, and you eat and drink the same with your mouth, in remembrance of me.

Hence, there is a very strong guarantee in the Lord's Supper of a personal part in the atonement of Christ and all its benefits. But that guarantee of such a personal stake is a guarantee to faith only, that is, to the elect. The atonement is definite and personal, never general.

Finally, the same is true of the next paragraph of the Form. It should be perfectly obvious, in the first place, that this paragraph speaks of the redemptive and meritorious work of Christ that was accomplished nineteen hundred years ago at the cross. And, in the second place, it should be perfectly obvious that if that redemptive and meritorious work of Christ accomplished through His atoning death is general, that is, for all men, then this paragraph says far too much, unless one is willing to be a thorough-going universalist, — something which everyone in the Dekker controversy seems to abhor. Take note of this paragraph:

From this institution of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see that he directs our faith and trust to his perfect sacrifice (once offered on the cross) as to the only ground and foundation of our salvation, wherein he is become to our hungry and thirsty souls, the true meat and drink of life eternal. (And now notice the objective accomplishments of the death of Christ, accomplishments which cannot possibly be general, H.C.H.) For by his death he hath taken away the cause of our eternal death and misery, namely sin, and obtained for us the quickening Spirit, that we by the same (who dwelleth in Christ as in the head, and in us as his members), might have true communion with him, and be made partakers of all his blessings, of life eternal, righteousness and glory.

Especially the last element here, namely, that Christ by His atoning death obtained for us the quickening Spirit, is something which the generalist cannot explain. For it is that quickening Spirit Who applies unto us that which we have in Christ, puts us in living, personal communion with Christ through faith, and thus makes us conscious partakers of all the blessings which accrued to us in that atoning death of Christ, namely, life eternal, righteousness, and glory. Anyone can see, therefore, that if the atoning death of Christ is general, for all men, then all men must needs have the quickening Spirit, and, with that quickening Spirit all the blessings of salvation. Much as Dr. Daane repudiated the reasoning from limited salvation to limited atonement, that reasoning is perfectly valid. And the reason why it is valid is that the ground, the sure ground, of salvation is in the atonement of Christ. Universal atonement necessarily means universal salvation; and limited salvation can only be grounded in limited atonement.

* * *

We are now ready to turn to the Canons of Dordrecht. But a few introductory remarks are in order, first of all.

My first remark is that the Canons must certainly be viewed in the light of their historical background. As far as the atonement is concerned, the chief concern has, of course, been with the Second Head of Doctrine. And when I consider the historical background of the Second Head of Doctrine, I find it rather strange, to say the least, that anyone should have the audacity to deny that Canons II teaches limited, or definite atonement. Yet this is exactly what has taken place in this controversy in the Christian Reformed Church. To me it is conceivable that someone might try to maintain that the Catechism or the Belgic Confession does not teach particular atonement; but it is utterly inconceivable that one should posit this of the Second Head of the Canons. Just exactly what do they think our fathers were fighting about at the Synod of Dordrecht? As far as the atonement is concerned, they were fighting exactly the doctrine which Prof. Dekker defended in his articles in the *Reformed Journal*. Prof. Dekker wants to say to all men: "Christ died for you." This is precisely the Arminian doctrine in Article II of the Remonstrance: "That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John 3:16....And in the First Epistle of John 2:2...."

If our Reformed fathers, therefore, had agreed with this second article of the Remonstrance and with the doctrine of Prof. Dekker, there would have been no Second Head of the Canons written, for the simple reason that there would have been no controversy about the atonement.

My second remark concerns the complete absence of the term *atonement* from the Canons. In fact, this term does not occur in any of our confessions. But it is claimed by some that Canons II does not speak of the atonement, but speaks only of redemption. On this basis the attempt is made to establish a disjunction between atonement and redemption, as though, for example, the atonement (not mentioned in the Canons) could be unlimited, while redemption could be limited. In regard to this suggestion, I have the following to say:

1) It seems to me that this kind of argumentation reveals both desperation and ignorance. It reveals desperation because it is a kind of grasping at straws. Who does not know that in common theological parlance the doctrine set forth in Canons II is called the doctrine of the atonement? In Reformed theology this term *atonement* has been used for many, many years in the English language to denote the Reformed conception of the death of Christ. The mere fact that this particular term does not occur in our English translation of the Canons does not mean that the

Canons do not set forth the doctrine of what we all have become accustomed to call "the atonement." One may have objections to the term; but there is no doubt in anyone's mind as to the usage. The same is true of a term like "limited" as applied to the atonement. Many have expressed themselves as preferring the term *definite* or *particular*. But we all know what the term *limited* is meant to express, namely: that Christ died for the elect, and for them only. To base a theological argument on a point like this is a genuine case of reducing theology to semantics.

But it also betrays ignorance. Our Canons were composed in the Latin language; and they were first translated into the Dutch language. Neither the Latin nor the Dutch has a term that is exactly equivalent to the term *atonement*, that is, in its root meaning. *Atonement* is derived from the two English words at *one*; it is literally *at-one-ment*. Thus, it originally was used to denote the state of being at one, concord, agreement, friendship; hence, the state of being reconciled. Then it came to denote the idea of satisfaction for an injury or offense; and thus it was applied to the work of Christ whereby He made satisfaction for our sins to the justice of God and achieved our reconciliation. In the Latin there are many related terms, such as the term for *satisfaction*, *redemption*, *redeem*, *expiate*, etc. But there is no exact equivalent of the word *atonement*. The same is true of the Dutch. There are terms like *verlossen* and *verlossing* and *loskopen* and *vrijkopen* to denote the idea of redemption, that is, the purchasing free, the ransoming, of the guilty sinner. And there is a term like *verzoening* to denote the idea of reconciliation. Moreover, also the Scriptural terms, both in Hebrew and in Greek, do not find their exact equivalent in our English word *atonement*. In the Old Testament the word *atonement* is used in our English Bible to denote a term which means "covering," and in the New Testament the term *atonement* is once used where the word *reconciliation* would be the proper translation.

But all this means nothing, except that those who appeal to this absence of the word *atonement* in Canons II have failed to do their homework before coming out with arguments. In dogmatic usage in the English language we all know the meaning of the term, and we all know that the atonement is treated in Canons II.

2) The attempt to establish separation between atonement and redemption also points up a sore lack in the entire Dekker case, namely, the lack of precise definition of terms. Terms like *atonement* and *efficacious atonement* and *redemption* and *efficacious redemption* are tossed around without giving precise and Scriptural content to them. But I submit that if the term *redemption* is given its correct dogmatic content in the light of Scripture, it will become plain that redemption can be no more limited or unlimited than atonement; they are co-extensive.

Finally, I want to remark that proper attention must be paid to the relation between Canons I and Canons II. After all, the root of the entire Dekker controversy lies in the area of predestination. And one cannot properly consider and understand the Reformed doctrine of the atonement set forth in Canons II except in the light of and upon the basis of the truth of predestination as set forth in Canons I. To this I shall call attention in my next installment. In concluding this article, however, let me point out that the same is true of Arminianism. The Arminian view of the atonement follows logically upon the Arminian view of election, as set forth in Article I of the Remonstrance. Hence, they begin their second article with the words, "That, agreeably thereto....." Over against this view, the Reformed fathers established the Reformed truth of predestination in Canons I; and *agreeably thereto* they established the Reformed doctrine of the atonement in Canons II. There is strictest harmony, never disjunction, between predestination and atonement.

Ecumenical To The Extreme!

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The reader of Saturday's religious page in *The Grand Rapids Press* learns to expect almost anything of a shocking nature in its columns, and he becomes somewhat immune to shock. But an item on page 6 of the issue of Saturday, November 26, — complete with pictures, — certainly was too much for my immunity.

The largest of two pictures in this story carried the caption, "Visitors Pray," and was accompanied by the following explanation: "Participating in the special Thanksgiving services Thursday at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church were, left to right, Dr. John Kromminga, president of Calvin Theological Seminary; Very Rev. Don Carey, pastor of Grace

Episcopal Church; Rev. Doug Evett, assistant at Grace; Rabbi Frederick Eisenberg of Temple Emanuel, offering the prayer at the pulpit; Rev. Eugene Krieger, pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church, behind Msgr. Powers at the altar; Rev. Duncan Littlefair, pastor of Fountain Street Church; Rt. Rev. Msgr. Ellis Khouri, pastor of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, and Rev. John Myette, pastor of St. Paul's Methodist Church."

The news item headed by this picture is entitled, "Interfaith Thanks Given at St. Paul's," and the first paragraph reads as follows: "The true spirit of Thanksgiving — Brotherhood — prevailed Thursday morning at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church when eight local clergymen participated in a special service."

Needless to say, the shocking part of this story is the fact that the Christian Reformed Church's seminary president could and did participate in such a service, thereby inevitably involving the name of Calvin Theological Seminary and the Christian Reformed Church in the affair, and bringing ill repute upon that name. This is not being written in a spirit of finger-pointing and gloating, much less of pride and a holier-than-thou attitude. There can only be cause for grief in such a thing as this. But if it be possible to alert the conservatives in the Christian Reformed Church and to stir them to reformatory action, and if there be those serious-minded children of God who love the Reformed faith earnestly, but who are not yet convinced that there is something sorely amiss in the Christian Reformed Church — then let them now take notice and take warning!

For there are some dreadfully serious and inescapable questions at stake here.

This is an instance of ecumenicism in practice.

And it is an extreme instance!

If Dr. Kromminga can practice ecumenicism in this degree, then he can also use his position of leadership to urge the Christian Reformed Church to join the World Council and any other ecumenical movement. He can also use his influence in the seminary to teach the future ministers of the Christian Reformed Church the principles and the practice of such ecumenicism.

Imagine! Christian Reformed, Episcopalian, Jew, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Modernist (Fountain Street Church), Orthodox, and Methodist, — all participating in a Thanksgiving service and unitedly offering a prayer of thanksgiving!

To whose God was this offered? Judging from the fact that one would have to find the lowest common denominator in such a situation, one would conclude that it would have to be the God of the Rev. Duncan Littlefair, who is notorious in our fair city for his outspoken modernism.

In the name of whose Christ was this prayer offered? Was it perhaps in the name of Rabbi Eisenberg's Christ? Ah, but he has none!

The Grand Rapids Press judged correctly that this service has to be expressive of some kind of brotherhood, some kind of communion. But what communion, brotherhood, was this? Was it the communion of saints? That could not possibly be. For the communion of saints is in Christ Jesus exclusively. And outside of that communion of saints, remember, true prayer is impossible and thanksgiving becomes an abomination to the Lord.

But perhaps the solution lies herein, that each one, — the Christian Reformed, the Episcopalian, the Jew, the Lutheran, the Roman Catholic, the Modernist, the Orthodox, and the Methodist, — each one prayed his own prayer, offering his own thanks, to his own God, in the name of his own Christ (if he had one). Ah, but that has its problems also. Then the prayer should have been silent. Then, in fact, the entire service should have been silent. But then there would be no service! Then they all could have remained home. But then, at least, a Reformed man, if he truly wanted to be Reformed, could offer the only truly ecumenical prayer of thanksgiving, — in the communion of saints, in the unity and the catholicity of the church of all ages, which is characterized by purest holiness!

Indeed, this thing called ecumenicism involves one in some dreadfully serious and inescapable questions!

And one of the questions for our Christian Reformed brethren is: how can you allow your seminary president to continue in office in good standing?

...It must be strongly emphasized that this calling unto salvation is indeed a divine calling, and that, therefore, it comes to us with authority and power. It is not a weak human plea, nor a mere invitation which one may either accept or reject, nor a generous offer one may receive or decline: it is the Word of God that comes to the sinner when Christ calls through the preaching. And "the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4:12. And again: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isa. 55:1.

H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p.56

FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Book of Hebrews

by Rev. G. Lubbers

THE UNIQUENESS OF GOD'S SPEAKING IN HIS SON UNDERSCORED (vss 2b-4) (continued)

This uniqueness of God's speaking in his Son is also set forth in bold relief in the exalted place which the Son has been appointed, and which he has received through his death and resurrection and his glorious exaltation at the right hand of God.

Perhaps it can be helpful for a correct understanding of this mystery of godliness to call attention to the grammatical construction in Greek text. It is quite evident from the text that the sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty of God is dependent upon Christ's work on the Cross. God did not simply exalt His Son at His right hand by His might apart from history, apart from the Fall, the history of sin and grace in the world. Cross and crown are connected; Christ is perfected through suffering of death. He is exalted in no other way. This is made abundantly clear in the Greek text. The tenses in the Greek participle having purged (*katharismos* ... *poiesamenos*) and the aorist tense of the verb to sit down (*ekathisen*) indicate that this is looked at as one act of the Son; the one is not apart from the other. The use of the participle here also indicates that the purging away of sin is basic to the sitting down at God's right hand. In Ephesians, Chapter 1, Paul also presents the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ as one act of God.

Furthermore, we ought to notice that there is an inner connection between such purging away of sin by Christ himself and his exaltation, and what the writer says about the person and identity of the Son. This purging on the Cross is performed by him who is "upholding all things by the word of his power." Here too the grammar is important. The verb form for "upholding" is present active, masculine, nominative participle. He is constantly upholding all things by the word of his power. All things were made by him, and nothing was made that was not made by Him. And thus too there is nothing now existing in heaven or on earth but what exists by his word of power; his is the providential power that upholds all things. He holds the entire world in his hand. Such is this Son. And this he can do because he is the one "being" the expressed image of God's being, the effulgence of God's glory. This is evident from the relationship of the two participles "being" (*oon*) and "bearing" (*pheroon*).

Being what he is he bears the world by the word of his power. This inner connection is brought out very strongly by the Greek text which has really a word which gives us the duty to paraphrase "Since he is the one being the expressed image of God's being, there he also is the one upholding all things by the word of his power." What Christ does in creation and in recreation is due to his being the expressed image of God's being. He is very God in the flesh.

This all points up the uniqueness of God's speaking in the Son. For we are here taught that the Son is not simply the effulgence of God's glory in the inner-Trinitarian life, as the One begotten of the Father, but that this Christ *in the flesh* is also this same effulgence of God's glory, the expressed image of his being. He who denies this is anti-Christ. He has no mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. He has a mere man on the Cross, and such a mere man never arose from the dead and went and sat down on the right hand of God. Yes, this Son is the effulgence of God's power, revealed in the word of his power, in all of creation. He is such as the Logos not in the flesh but in creation and in the guidance and control of history. He is this equally in the work in redemption. It is the effulgence of God's glory which we see in Christ when he by himself purges sins, and in consequence of this sits down on the right hand of God. In him all the lines meet because from him they proceed. All things were made by him and unto him. (Colossians 1:16b) Thus he is the Firstborn of all creatures as the Firstborn out of the dead.

Such is the greatness of the Son of God in the flesh. And in these last days the Son has been exalted and glorified with the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world in God's counsel. His is the Name above every name. The "name" of Christ here refers to his place in all of creaturehood in heaven and on earth. And to demonstrate this greatness the Son is not compared with a worm or an ant, but he is compared with the greatest of the celestial beings: the angels, who do always behold the face of God. He has received a Name greater than all, far above all principality, powers and might. He is given as Head over all things and creatures to the church.

In this Son in creation and recreation the God and Father of us has spoken in these last days. For this Son is one who has "inherited" a name. He is the Heir-Son. In him history finds its consummation and

close. Until he comes all things are open-ended. But now the fulfilment has come. Such is the grand theme of the book of Hebrews. For this Heir is the King-Priest after the Order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 1:5-14

"For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thine hands; they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. But unto which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation?"

THE WRITER'S PROOF FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

Except for one passage quoted from II Samuel 7:14 all the proof for the greatness of the Son at God's right hand is taken from the Psalms. The writer quotes passages that serve his purpose from no less than six different Psalms. Even the quotation from II Samuel 7:14 may be found in Psalm 89:26, 27. Therefore we may confidently affirm that all the proof of Christ's exaltation and of having a name than which there is none greater is derived from the Psalms.

A remarkable understanding of the Psalms is taught us here by the writer to the Hebrews. Here we have some good examples and case studies of the Biblical rules for exegesis, that is, for the science of interpretation as applied to the Scriptures. No Philo need be our guide; we need not compare the writings of Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, with the book of Hebrews to understand the latter. We need simply to understand that all the Old Testament Scriptures speak of this Son of God; we need to see the Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures. Did not Jesus, after his resurrection, teach his disciples concerning Moses, the Psalms and all the prophets? And did he not show from them how the Christ must suffer, and rise the third day out of the dead, and that upon his name repentance unto the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem? (Luke 24:44, 45) And when he by his Spirit had opened their minds, did they not thus understand these Scriptures?

These various quotations from the Psalms do not constitute a mere hodge-podge of religious sentiments;

they are not a collation of unrelated sayings rather haphazardly thrown together. On the contrary when we study these passages we see that the writer, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, shows three rather distinctive view-points of the exaltedness of Christ at God's right hand.

CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD AND TO ALL THINGS PROVEN FROM THE PSALMS

The Psalms in question here are Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 89:26, 27. (II Samuel 7:14). When the writer quotes there two Psalms he will show that he is solely interested in the Word of God as we have this in the sacred Old Testament Canon. And the starting-point of the proof is what God "ever" said. He refers, of course, to what God ever said in the Scriptures through the prophets to the fathers of old time. Psalmists too are prophets; they utter the prophetic word which is most sure. Outside of this word of prophecy God has never spoken. Well, then, where has He in all the Scriptures spoken to angels as he speaks to His Son in the Scriptures.

He begins with Psalm 2:7 which is a classic passage in the Scriptures. This passage is quoted in the New Testament by Paul in Acts 13:33 and again by the writer in Hebrews 5:5. The remarkable thing is that the Psalmist here stands in the midst of the nations and of the heathen who imagine a vain thing; they imagine that they can cast off the dominion of the God of heaven. They take counsel against the LORD and against his Anointed one. Then the Lord laughs with Divine laughter; He will have them in derision. For God's counsel will stand and He will perform His good-pleasure. God has a Decree, His eternal Counsel according to which He works all things. And in that Decree the Son is destined in the way of suffering, through his death and resurrection, to be exalted at God's right hand. History is the theatre in which God is bringing His Son to glory, and this is the "begetting" of the Son from the womb of God's counsel. That is all that is born from that Counsel; and all the imagination of the nations are birthpangs which do not bring forth anything like a Son; such alone is the prerogative of the Most High God!

Such a place is not destined for the angels in God's Testament. When God writes the book of the Old Testament he only speaks of one Heir. The angels may look down in rapt attention upon this work, but they are never sons; they are always the high and exalted attendants of the throne. But God never says: history and all things revolved about and are centered in you, the angels. Take the angels, great and mighty, Cherubims and Seraphims, Gabriel or Michael; there is none found in heaven and on earth to whom God speaks as He does in Psalm 2:7. The Son inherits a Name above every name in the Scriptures everywhere. Thus we read in Psalm 2:7. Vainly would one engage in tiresome and fruitless labor to search the Scriptures for a contradiction of this Word of God; a Word in which He so confidently laughs in holy and Divine delight.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

The Evil Spirit Returns

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul....
I Samuel 18:10

Suddenly in a moment, as though struck by a fiery bolt of judgment, Saul's life was cast into the depths of dark depression. For a time things had looked so much better. His problems had appeared solved, his fear had abated, it had seemed that the light again shone upon him. Saul had nearly come to believe that Samuel was completely wrong, that the God of Israel had not left him forsaken, that His blessing did rest upon his life. That blessing he had thought to find personified in David. David had slain the giant, David had come to fill the royal court with gaiety and life, David had gone with them unto victory after victory in battle, David had seemed to bring to him everything good in life. But then all had changed, suddenly and without notice. It was those shallow and farcical songs of the women which they were always singing when they came out with their dances to greet the returning army. Those songs weren't normally anything that anyone should take very seriously, but somehow that song that day cut him to the quick. "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." That was it. All at once he saw it. David was not his blessing. David was actually favored above him. David was really his curse, that neighbor of whom Samuel spoke who was destined to take from him his throne and the kingdom.

It was all that Saul could do to get home without giving sudden vent to those waves of fury and blinding rage and fear and hatred and anguish that came one after another to engulf his soul. But no one was paying any attention to him and no one noticed. They were all too preoccupied with David; and that in itself only drove that dart in deeper and aggravated the more his inner pain and anger.

But it was not long before the truth was no longer hidden. By morning the whole palace was aware of it. All through the night the king had not slept, but had alternated between furious pacing and wild demands hurled at his servants, as though they were to blame for all of his troubles. It was as though one great shudder went throughout the palace, shaking it down to its very foundation — an evil spirit from the Lord had settled again upon their sovereign. No one knew better than those who lived in the royal residence what dreadful implications this held. They had been through it once before. But this time it was different and even more terrible, if that were possible, than the time before. Then he had merely sat for hours and days in dark, moody fits of deep depression. Now he did that too, but they were periodically broken up by sudden

outbursts of angry curses and prophecies of black foreboding. The servants of the king and all of the royal household trembled within themselves in terrified fear. For them there was only one consolation. Once before David had proved himself to be the solution to this same problem, and now he was right there in the court. Surely now again he would be able to drive out this evil spirit to bring peace again to the palace and the kingdom.

Little did anyone besides Saul himself realize how completely things had changed since the first time David had appeared with his harp at the palace to play for the king. Then he had been to the king only a stranger, a mere shepherd boy called from the field because he was able to make such sweet music. As such Saul had received him and listened to his music and enjoyed it and even allowed it to carry his fears away. But now it was different. He knew David. He recognized David for what he was even if no one else did — the challenger to this throne. To Saul it must have been like a cruel joke to have David of all people set before him to try to cure this depression. O yes, Saul could understand it. He may have even anticipated it. He had not lost his mind, although sometimes it felt like it. It was but natural that David's harp should be brought in to see if it couldn't do again what it had done so ably before. But now the sound of that harp was to him like a taunting refrain, designed to remind him of his misery. Every tune that was played seemed but another one made to fit the words of the women, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." For a time the king sat silently and sullenly trying with all that was in him to endure the sound of that music, so that no one would know how he really felt about David; but at last his feelings became so pent up within him that he could withhold it no longer. With one sudden lunge he swept up the javelin that was always lying ready beside him and flung it with all of his might at the unsuspecting musician.

To those who were present there in the court, it was little short of miraculous that David should have escaped the thrust of that javelin. Saul's ability with the javelin had a reputation which was not to be despised. He was a tall man with arms that were long and powerful, and his aim was true when he chose to use it. And yet David, although he had been completely relaxed and absorbed in his music, started to spring from his seat almost before Saul had lifted his javelin from its position beside him. It was as though something within him had sounded a warning so that, by the

time that javelin arrived at the place where he had sat, it only dulled its sharp point against the stones of the palace wall and clattered harmlessly to the floor.

No one, however, was more astonished at the escape of David than Saul himself. He found it almost impossible to believe his eyes. He could hardly have been more amazed if the javelin had passed straight through David's body without drawing blood. For a long hard moment he stood staring at that empty seat as though he had seen a ghost, while waves of amazement and anguish and hatred and fear and terror swept one after the other across his face. And then he slumped down into his throne and sat in deep, moody silence, unmoving, while hour after hour passed by. Now he knew, that power of God which once had strengthened him had passed on to David and was keeping him from harm.

Meanwhile, David was perhaps less affected by the whole incident than anyone else. In a sense it was his youthful innocence. He had grown up in the quiet of the open field alone with his sheep and his faith in God. As yet he had not come to the maturity of having experienced the subtle complexities and sorrows of life. He knew only one kind of enemy — those heathen nations which were openly hostile to Israel. To the simplicity of his young mind, all who belonged to Israel were basically good, and especially was this true of Israel's king who had been appointed to his office by God. To David it was really impossible to be afraid of the king; he couldn't bring himself to distrust him, and fear for him was unknown. As he looked upon the king sitting silently in his fit of dark depression, his heart went out toward him in sympathy so that, even if he couldn't understand this strange malady, his concern was only with what he could do for the king to cure him.

Thus it was that, before many days were past, David had taken up his harp again to enter the royal court and to try once more to sooth the king with his music. He would perhaps have come earlier if the other servants had not tried to prevent him. For himself, he could not feel that there was anything to fear, he could not imagine that the king should see in him anything but a faithful servant who only sought the king's good. As for that javelin thrust, that he could only understand as the accidental quirk of a troubled mind and he could not believe that there was any reason why it should soon be repeated. Calmly and with hope, David again sat down before the king to make for him sweet music upon the harp.

This time, however, it did not take long at all for everyone to realize that David's music was giving king Saul no pleasure. Before it, the king's face reflected only distaste and disgust. Sooner than anyone might have expected, his hand reached out for the javelin and heaved it toward David's seat. Only this time there was none of the speed and strength and determination there had been the first time. It was almost as though the king knew that his javelin would never be able to strike home, but still he had to throw it anyway. And so it was not quite so quickly, almost sadly, but well in time that David leaped aside and retreated from the presence of the king.

Now it was evident to everyone, the anger and hatred of Saul had centered itself upon David. It was strange. Before this Saul had wanted David with him wherever he went. David had revived him and added a gaiety to his life that he had never known. There had been no end to the gestures of favor which he had shown to this young man. And now it had suddenly become the exact opposite. He could not stand the sight of David and did all he could to drive him away. In the presence of David his ready tempter burst forth in uncontrollable fury. He seemed to hate David with a passion which he had never shown toward anyone else. It was hard for anyone to understand and most of all for David. To him hatred was completely foreign. In all of his life, he had never really come to hate anyone personally, except perhaps for Goliath and that was but for a few short hours there in the valley of Elah. That now Saul should hate him was completely incomprehensible. It bothered him, it made him sad, but he couldn't really grasp it and felt every moment quite sure that something was sure to happen that would make everything right once again.

For himself, Saul also knew that things couldn't continue to go on this way. It was not that his hatred was in any way abated. He still hated David, every day a little more it seemed, and he knew with a certainty that David had to be killed. It was just that his own sword and his own javelin ought not to do it. David's reputation was too great in the kingdom, and if his own hand would kill him, the people would never forgive.

He had to get David out of his sight so that those sudden bursts of uncontrollable anger could be restrained; and maybe it would be best if he could find some place where someone else would be apt to end David's life.

Something had happened to king Saul, something which in its own way gave him a certain relief. It wasn't that his depression was really cured or taken away; it was just that it didn't hold him paralyzed anymore. At last he had been able to localize his trouble, to center it in David. And so it gave to him a certain sense of satisfaction just to sit and think and plan what he could do to destroy this enemy, it gave a certain sweetness in the midst of his bitter hatred, it gave a hope in the midst of his fear. From now on Saul's life was to be preoccupied with that one thing, how to get rid of David. If only he could do that, then the curse of Samuel would be overcome.

Thus it was that Saul devised his first great plan affecting the whole military structure of his kingdom. Before this he had always gone himself out into the field to meet the enemy, a practice he had never really liked because of his natural fear for his own safety. Now he promoted David to a position of captain over a prize-fighting force of one thousand men and sent them out to wage the battles of the kingdom while he remained safely at home in his palace. It gave him a sense of satisfaction to order David's force from one battle to another while he waited at home for the day when the enemy would finally overcome David and take his life.

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

Ordination To The Ministry Of The Word

Introduction

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

At some time or another you have undoubtedly heard the expression: "Ministers are born, not made." The expression has been used with more than a singular application. It is subject to diverse interpretations, but the one main thought which it conveys is very clear. The point is that ministers of the Word are the product of God's making, not man's. In the latter sense of the word, ministers cannot be made. Without minimizing the importance of a sound theological training for those who aspire to the ministry of the Word, we assert that the most skilled professor of theology is unable to produce a single minister of the Word. Years of study and training are in themselves inadequate to fit a man for the task of the ministry of the Word. Professional training may produce an orator, a social worker, a politician, or a man skilled in promotional work in any number of areas in the community, but it fails to produce the minister of the Word, even though that title is improperly given to all of the above. Years of study may serve to develop a man's intellectual acumen, but it does not fit him for the ministry.

The minister of the Word is one through whom God is pleased to speak His own Word. He, like the prophets and apostles of old, is chosen and called by God Himself. This essential ingredient in the composition of the minister of the Word is so important that without it every human effort to make a minister is doomed to futility. A minister is one through whom God speaks, and God is pleased to speak His Word only through vessels whom He has chosen and appointed unto that end. Conceivably God could today, as He did in the past, call His ministers personally and immediately, without the aid of men. The independent and sovereign God does not need seminaries and professors to prepare His ministers. We, that is the church, do not prepare men for the Lord, but the Lord calls and prepares men for His Church. Without this Divine preparation there is no ministry of the Word. We are always dependent upon God; never is He dependent upon us.

All of this does not preclude the fact that God does call and prepare men for the ministry of the Word mediately since the time of the apostles. Not that God is bound to the church, but for reasons of His own pleasure He sees fit to call men through men and through the church, and when this takes place it is only proper that this calling should be publicly confirmed and sealed in the midst of the church. The ceremonies and declarations attendant to this we

hope to consider in connection with our brief discussion of the Form for the Ordination of the Ministers of God's Word.

The Form that is used for this purpose in Reformed Churches dates from the year 1586. Before this time there was no generally used form in the churches. The Synod of Hague in 1586 furnished forms for the exercise of Christian discipline, and at the same time forms for the installation of the office bearers. Hence, also this form for the ordination, or installation, of the minister of the Word dates from that same year and from that synod.

As to its content we may note that it is to be divided into three main parts. The first part contains a brief description and explanation of the office of the ministers of the Word. The second part prescribes the questions that must be asked of him who is to be ordained or installed, and it also contains various liturgical acts. The last part of the form contains various admonitions and exhortations to the ordained minister as well as to the congregation, and then the form is concluded with appropriate thanksgivings. Following this division we will discuss the content of this liturgical form of the churches.

The Office Of The Ministry Of The Word Of God

By far the largest part of the Form for Ordination is devoted to describing and explaining the office of the ministry of the Word. This is also proper. It is very important, not only for the person who is to be ordained in that office, but also for the entire congregation, that the office is clearly understood. We must know what we are doing. The minister to be must realize the nature of the work unto which he is called and the congregation must understand what is expected of him. Especially is this important in our day, when ministers of the Word are more and more expected to function in every conceivable task except that which pertains to their office. This, being utterly wrong, is a great contributing factor to the spiritual decline and ruination of the church. From this point of view it might be well that this Form for Ordination of Ministers be held before the congregation more often. It should be reviewed and studied in the societies. Its content should be brought to the attention of the church in the preaching of the Word now and then. After all, the Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons is read at least once a year, but this one is used only when a

congregation receives a new minister. Even then, if this happens every four or five years, it is not often enough to keep the congregation aware of the nature and function of the office. Other means of instruction must be used to hold the content of this Form before the mind of the church, and it is important that this be done.

Before the Form for Ordination speaks of the institution of the office of the ministry, there is an announcement made that must not be overlooked. The announcement is to the effect that the consistory has announced on three different occasions the name of him who is to be ordained, and since no one has appeared to register lawful objections against his ordination, the church will proceed, in the name of the Lord, to carry out that ordination. The importance of this stems from the fact that it is imperative for the church that unworthy and unqualified men be kept out of the office of the ministry. Every possible safeguard to this end must be taken. Every opportunity must be given to any and all in the congregation to attain this end for the welfare of the whole church. Although it may not become apparent immediately, the church will surely suffer when the office of pastor and teacher is occupied by a profane and unworthy person. The sheep will be led astray, and undisciplined evil will be allowed to take root and develop in the church. The time to prevent this is not after, but before the ordination. In some instances, of course, this is not possible because the evil-doing of the person ordained does not come to view, and then it is mandatory to take other measures to have that kind of shepherd suspended and deposed from the office. But where there are lawful reasons to prevent the ordination of a certain person, these must be brought to the consistory before and, if none are, it may be rightly assumed that no one has anything against his ordination. In that case, the congregation may certainly proceed in the faith that God, Who uses the ministry of men to call and gather a Church from amongst the corrupt race of men unto life eternal, will also follow this ordination with His favor and blessing in the Church.

The first part of the ordination form is devoted to showing that the ministry of the Word is instituted by God. It is not another job which men create in a certain society. Christ Himself, as the Son of God and the Head of the church, has instituted this office. This is proved by Ephesians 4:11 and 12 where the apostle writes: "And He (Christ) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors (shepherds) and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

From this the general task of the ministry of the Word may be gathered. Ministers are "shepherds" of the church. They must, to quote the Form, "feed, guide, protect and rule the flock committed to their charge." These pastors are to explicitly observe that the pasture in which they are to feed and lead the flock is nothing else but "the preaching of the gospel, accompanied with prayer, and the administration of the holy sacraments." They must be careful not to lead

these sheep into other pastures where there is no spiritual food, for the sheep cannot live there. In their very nature as sheep they need and can thrive only on the spiritual food of the Word, and so it is the task of the shepherd to bring them continuously into the green pastures of the Word.

The sheep, as they often do, may clamor for other pasture. They express dissatisfaction with the food of the Word. Doctrinal preaching is too deep and practical preaching is too personal, they will say. The shepherd will be subject to much criticism by the sheep, and although he must certainly give consideration to that criticism and weigh its constructive possibilities, it may never deter him in the execution of his God given task to feed the sheep in the pasture of the Word. He must also remember that, as shepherd, he holds the shepherd's staff, and he must also use that staff to smite the sheep. That staff, according to the Form, is "the same Word of God" and the shepherd must not hesitate to use that Word to *guide* and to *rule* the sheep. Here, too, the shepherd must take every precaution that he does not rule or attempt to rule the sheep with a rod of the flesh. There is always a natural danger and tendency that this is done. The minister wants certain things done in the congregation and he gets them, not because these things are always right according to the Word of God, but because he wants them. He wields a big stick and has a strong influence in the church. He has the consistory on his side and the sheep acquiesce, not because they are convinced that things are right, but because they fear to attempt to do anything about it. Then the church is ruled by the rod of flesh and not by the staff of the Word of God. This is all wrong and, when it happens, the inevitable consequence is that the church suffers under the tyranny of man.

Let us remember then that the general task of the ministry of the Word is to shepherdize the flock of Christ in the truth of the Word of God. The minister's task is a spiritual labor throughout. As a shepherd he must enter upon that labor with the avowed determination to seek the sheep of Christ, to feed them, to love them, to protect them, to guide them, to counsel them and in every possible way promote their spiritual well-being. To accomplish this task he has only one source of material, only one piece of equipment to work with, and that is the Word of God. Oh, his task is not an easy one, and frequently, as he faithfully cares for the sheep, his own life and position become endangered, for the enemies are strong and many who attempt to dispose of him so that they may get at the sheep. But a good shepherd will lay down his life for the sheep. He is ordained in his office, not as an hireling who works for wages, but as one who loves the sheep because he loves Christ, and by that love he is constrained in all his labor.

More specifically the labor of the shepherd of the church is spelled out under four separate headings in this Form for Ordination. Our consideration of these details, however, must wait, D.V., until our next article.

IN HIS FEAR—

Honour To Whom Honour

Continued

by Rev. J. A. Heys

"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed."

I Timothy 6:1

The text above is one among many that demand of the servant that he honour his master. We shall refer to the others presently. This one uses literally the word *honour* and is an amplification of the teaching of Paul that we are to render honour to whom honour is due. The Paul who by divine inspiration declared that truth to the church at Rome also amplifies his teaching to Timothy and points out that servants are to honour their masters in order that the name of God and the truth concerning Him be not blasphemed.

That the text speaks of those who are in the very literal sense of the word slaves cannot be denied. Men under the yoke were men who had no choice as to whom they would work for and whose good they were obliged to seek. Scripture does not condemn slavery but unjust treatment of slaves. Paul writes a letter to Philemon whose slave had run away. He neither encourages nor upholds the flight for freedom; nor does he demand of Philemon that he set this slave free, especially since he is now a fellow believer. Many who would preach a "social gospel" today are concerned with an earthly freedom and equality that ignores and does violence to spiritual freedom and advocates dishonouring the superiors and authorities, in order to get a social freedom that does bring blasphemy to the name of God and His doctrine. Rendering honour to whom honour is due is still our calling today in our day of emancipation and abolishment of slavery in that literal sense. We are not, of course, advocating a return to the days before the Civil War, and of buying and selling of the bodies and souls of men. We are interested at the moment with honour to those in authority over us also in the sphere of our present day working conditions, and the social structure that speaks of employer and employee rather than master and slave, and even of capital and labor.

There is only one difference between the slave of yesterday and the employee of today and the honour which he must render to his master or employer. And that difference is that the employee of today has the privilege of choosing who it is for whom he will work, and whom he will so honour, and he can quit at any time he wishes; or he is in a position to draw up a contract for any specific period of time he and the employer choose and agree to mutually. The matter of obligation to honour the employer is not one whit different or less than it is between the slave and his

master. A man may hire himself out and so become a willing servant. Shall we quibble about the words servant and slave? Scripture has one word which is correctly translated both ways. The *doulos* or slave of the text above, who is under the yoke, is designated no differently from the *doulos* who speaks in Luke 2:29 (None other than just and devout Simeon, who was waiting for the consolation of Israel) and declares, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace..." And Paul, who speaks of servants under the yoke to Timothy also calls himself such a *doulos* or servant. Let the servant who has hired himself out to his employer count his master worthy of all honour. That is the point.

The other passages which we mentioned a moment ago, Ephesians 6:5, Colossians 3:22, Titus 2:9 and I Peter 2:18 simply speak of servants without the addition of "who are under the yoke." And therefore every man employed by another today is under this obligation of rendering honour to his employer. How he got under the authority of another is not the question. He is under it. He is as surely under it when he willingly gives himself out for hire and agrees to work for the employer as he is when he is a servant bought with money or born of one bought with money. As one who hires himself out, he has agreed to place himself under the authority of another, and he is obliged to honour this man as his master in the sphere of the work which he has agreed to perform.

And it is not difficult to determine what that honour is which we must render to the man whose employees we are. We must count them worthy of the honour of being our masters. We dishonor them the moment we take things in our hands and assume their position. Peter warns us not only to be subject to the gentle employer but also to the froward, and that with all reverence and respect before him as the master who has the right to demand what he will of us. And he adds in I Peter 2:19, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." The sweat shops of a few years ago that spawned the organized labor movement were not unknown to Peter. He knew of the cruel bondage of Egypt upon Israel. He knew of brutal, arrogant and froward, that is crooked, perverse (as the word is used in Philipians 2:15), unfair, surly masters, for whom one would not like to work, if he could only escape.

And there exactly is the point today. We have not this slavery according to which we are bound to work for a certain employer. Let a man not satisfied with his wages, let a man who has been refused a raise by a surly, unfair, crooked, greedy employer give notice of quitting his job and of leaving when his contract has been filled. But let him not take things in his own hands. Let him not take to himself the honour of the employer and insist on holding his job but refusing to work and forbidding the employer to hire someone in his place. Let him not go on strike and boycott the establishment. Then he takes to himself the honour that is to be rendered to the employer. Then he gets up in the driver's seat and tells the employer what to do. That is the evil of today's labor unions. And they cause the name of God and His doctrine to be blasphemed when these strikers, these rioters, these revolutionists, these revolters carry the name of Christ and the name of member-of-His-Church into the battle!

Unionism itself is not evil. Let men unite and organize. God is a God of order and of organization. God is One, and He loves unity. But one must be organized on a good, spiritual, righteous foundation. And men must unite in the truth and in the love of God. Men must unite in order to do righteousness. Laboring men may unite, but then they must unite in order to honour their employers and never to dishonor them. Men may be organized as a group of employees, but then it must not be in order to try to make might be right. It never is and it can never be made to be right. The right is God-given, and all the employees in the world pitted against one employer cannot take from him the right that God has given him. Let men unite and organize and then with a united front let their desires (not demands) be made known to their employer. If then, in the light of the fact that so many have this same grievance or desire, the employer sees the justice of the claim or request, they have gained their point in an honest and righteous way. And the evil of the ten tribes was not that they asked unitedly for lighter taxes and a load more easy to bear. They were even willing to give Rehoboam time to consider and weigh their arguments. Their evil was that they would not continue to honour the foolish and churlish king. They took themselves from under his rule. They refused to honour him as their king. And they began to slide rapidly down to ruin and extinction as a nation. God is not mocked. He is not mocked today either in all the dishonouring and coercion and strikes and boycotts of today. We, as a nation are suffering for it and will suffer even more in the future. Lawlessness, riot, revolt, rebellion, revolution are spreading to every department of life in our country. And now there is no hope of putting on the brakes. We have priced ourselves out of many markets; and American manufacturers are forced to have their goods made in Japan to be sold here, because the Labor Unions have brought the manufacturers to the point where they cannot continue to pay and give paid vacations and benefits and turn out a product that will compete in price and even quality of imported goods. Not only that, but with every raise due to a

"successful" strike, the manufacturer raises his prices; and the cost of living soars and inflation threatens the whole economy.

Holding a stick over the head of the employer is not honouring him as the employer. It is not walking in love with him. It is not walking in His fear and is utterly devoid of the love of God. And the name of God is blasphemed thereby. It is God Who put that man in the position where he could hire you. It is God Who gives him the right to decide how much he will pay you. We did not say that God gives him the right to underpay you. But God did give him the right to have the determination of that pay. If he is wise — and not foolish as Rehoboam — he will listen to you and weigh your cause, whether you come as an individual and explain your family needs, or whether you come through the representatives of a group, so that he sees that yours is not an isolated and personally prejudiced case, and he will, if he is a regenerated child of God who walks in his fear, give you what he can. If he does not, and you cannot support your family on that wage, you are free to leave his employment and seek it where you can. But you have no right to hold a stick over his head, threaten to cause him financial damage by shutting up his factory, destroy his property and the like. You dishonour him, and you blaspheme the name of God!

God is The Authority. And when you dishonour one whom He has invested with authority, you dishonour the God Who gave that authority. Paul says in Romans 13:2, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." We live in a day and age when we do not like to have things stated so sharply. We want to be like God as much, and even more so, than Eve did, when she took the forbidden fruit to be able to be in the position where she could decide for herself what is good and what is evil. O, yes, that is the case with us as well as with the world. The church-world is not a sphere where one is isolated from the passions of the flesh. We need but remind you again of ten tribes in Israel, the sphere of the church, the church world of that day. Before that time it was Korah, Dathan and Abiram. And is not every sin that we commit simply an admission on our part that we want to be in God's place, yea that we have in that very sin assumed the position where we do decide for ourselves what we are going to call good and evil?

It is so extremely difficult for us — and by the flesh impossible for us — to abide by the authority of those God placed over us and thus to render them the honour due unto them. If there is any way that we can manage to get our way and to circumvent their way, we are going to take it. We will let them keep the title and still go under the name of employer, but we will hold them in line with threats and harassments until in weariness they give in to our way. Our honour we will not lay in the dust for another upon whom God has bestowed an honour above us. Although we do not say it, and would perhaps be surprised if one would call our attention to it, we sound so often so very much like

blasphemous Pharaoh who said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" Just a minute now. Calm down and consider, you who are ready to go on strike against the man upon whom God has vested the honour of being your master, you who have your employer "over the barrel" and now can and intend to "pour it on," you who have managed to get your employer in a corner so that by force, by coercion, you threaten him with financial ruin, you who are willing to bring him much loss because you think that he has made you endure much loss, you who think your ideas are so far superior to his and intend to put pressure on him to get your way. Does or does not the Word of God say? "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." Does or does not the Word of God say? "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the gentle, but also to the froward." And when you intend to lord it over your employer and master him and bend and turn him to conform to your way of thinking, have you not said to God Who speaks in

the verses above, "Who art Thou, that I should obey Thy voice?" To honour the employer, the master who stands above us with God's authority, is to receive him as master, to leave him in the position of being master. Fail to do that and you blaspheme God's name as surely as Pharaoh. He was open enough to come out with it in words to Moses. The rebel, the revolutionists, the rioters, the strikers, the boycotters, the users of force and threat over their superiors say it just as surely by their deeds. Unless we render all honour to those in authority over us we dishonour God and tell Him that we do not think that He is One Whose voice we have to obey.

What a society it really is then, in which we live! How little of His fear there is to be found anymore. How bold men have become. How sin has developed so that the branches of the tree hang low with all the evil fruit. It is almost ready for the harvest and the fire! But, the Lord willing, we will continue this element of honour to the employer next time.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Providence of God Miracles

by Rev. H. Veldman

Speaking of miracles in connection with the providence of God, the subject is surely of sufficient importance to merit special attention and consideration. On the one hand, the miracles of Holy Writ are usually treated in connection with the providence of the Lord. And, on the other hand, the subject itself is surely of sufficient significance. The Scriptures record many miracles, especially in the New Testament. Miracles are recorded, of course, also in the Old Testament, especially during the ministry of Elisha. But they abound in the New Testament. And this is easily understandable and exactly what we would expect. The New Dispensation marks the appearance of Immanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the midst of the world. He Himself is centrally *the* Wonder of the Lord, the Wonder of Grace. And it lies in the very nature of the case that His appearance should be accompanied by a tremendous display of miracles.

Calling attention to the nature of miracles, Prof. L. Berkhof, in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, writes on page 176 as follows:

A distinction is usually made between *providentia ordinaria* and *providentia extraordinaria*. In the former God works through second causes in strict accordance with the laws of nature, though He may vary the results by different combinations. But in the latter He works immediately or without the mediation of

second causes in their ordinary operation. Says McPherson: "A miracle is something done without recourse to the ordinary means of production, a result called forth directly by the first cause without the mediation, at least in the usual way, of second causes." The distinctive thing in the miraculous deed is that it results from the exercise of the supernatural power of God. And this means, of course, that it is not brought about by secondary causes that operate according to the laws of nature. If it were, it would not be *supernatural* (above nature), that is, it would not be a miracle. If God in the performance of a miracle did sometimes utilize forces that were present in nature, He used them in a way that was out of the ordinary, to produce unexpected results, and it was exactly this that constituted the miracle. Every miracle is above the established order of nature, but we may distinguish different kinds, though not degrees, of miracles. There are miracles which are altogether above nature, so that they are in no way connected with any means. But there are also miracles which are *contra media*, in which means are employed, but in such a way that something results which is quite different from the usual result of those means.

It is evident from this quotation of the late professor that he views the nature of a miracle as a supernatural work or operation of the Lord. And I believe that we may say that miracles are generally

regarded as such supernatural works of God, which are therefore not brought about by secondary causes that operate according to the laws of nature.

Then, after writing on the possibility of miracles, the same author, writing on the purpose of the miracles of Scripture, writes as follows, page 177:

It may be assumed that the miracles of Scripture were not performed arbitrarily, but with a definite purpose. They are not mere wonders, exhibitions of power, destined to excite amazement, but have revelational significance. The entrance of sin into the world makes the supernatural intervention of God in the course of events necessary for the destruction of sin and for the renewal of creation. It was by a miracle that God gave us both, His special verbal revelation in Scripture, and His supreme factual revelation in Jesus Christ. The miracles are connected with the economy of redemption, a redemption which they often prefigure and symbolize. They do not aim at a violation, but rather at a restoration of God's creative work. Hence we find cycles of miracles connected with special periods in the history of redemption, and especially during the time of Christ's public ministry and of the founding of the Church. These miracles did not yet result in the restoration of the physical universe. But at the end of time another series of miracles will follow, which will result in the renewal of nature to the glory of God, — the final establishment of the Kingdom of God in a new heaven and on a new earth.

From this quotation it appears that the late professor certainly realized that the miracles of Scripture are not mere wonders, exhibitions of power, but that they have revelational significance. In this quotation he connects the wonders of the Word of God with the economy of redemption, connects them with the redemptive grace of God. However, this does not remove the fact that he views the essence and nature of the miracle as a supernatural work of the Lord.

As stated above, Prof. L. Berkhof also speaks of the possibility of miracles. In this connection, however, we wish to call attention to what Hodge writes concerning miracles in his *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, beginning on page 617. Writing on "Definition of a Miracle," he expresses himself as follows:

According to the Westminster Confession, "God, in ordinary providence making use of means, yet is free to work without, above, or against them at pleasure." In the first place, there are events therefore due to the ordinary operations of second causes, as upheld and guided by God. To this class belong the common processes of nature; the growth of plants and animals, the orderly movements of the heavenly bodies; and the more unusual occurrences, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and violent agitations and revolutions in human societies. In the second place, there are events due to the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men, such as regeneration, sanctification, spiritual illumination, etc. Thirdly, there are events which belong to neither of these classes, and whose distinguishing characteristics are, First, that they take place in the external world, i.e., in the sphere of the observation of the senses; and Secondly, that they are produced or caused by the simple volition of God, without the intervention of any subordinate cause. To this class belongs the original act of creation, in which all coopera-

tion of second causes was impossible. To the same class belong all events truly miraculous. A miracle, therefore, may be defined to be an event, in the external world, brought about by the immediate efficiency, or simple volition of God.

An examination of any of the great miracles recorded in Scripture will establish the correctness of this definition. The raising of Lazarus from the dead may be taken as an example. This was an event which occurred in the outward world; one which could be seen and verified by the testimony of the senses. It was not brought about either in whole or in part by the efficiency of natural causes. It was due to the simple word, or volition, or immediate agency of God. The same may be said of the restoration to life of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, on Christ's pronouncing the words, *Talitha cumi*; and of his healing of the lepers by a word. So when Christ walked upon the sea, when He multiplied the loaves and fishes, when He calmed the winds and the waves by a command; any cooperation of physical causes is not only ignored, but, by clearest intimation, denied.

So, according to Hodge, a miracle is an event, in the external world, brought about by the immediate efficiency, or simple will of God.

Objections, so Hodge continues, have been raised against this definition of the miracle. Hodge sets forth this objection in the following words:

It is objected to this definition of a miracle that it assumed that the laws of nature may be violated or set aside. To this many theologians and men of science object, and declare that it is impossible. If the law of nature be the will of God, that of course cannot be set aside, much less directly violated. This is Augustine's objection. Baden Powell, in behalf of men of science, protests against being called upon to believe in anything "at variance with nature and law." "The enlarged critical and inductive study of the natural world," he says, "cannot but tend powerfully to evince the inconceivableness of imagined interruptions of natural order or supposed suspensions of the laws of matter, and of that vast series of dependent causation which constitutes the legitimate field for the investigation of science, whose constancy is the sole warrant for its generalizations, while it forms the substantial basis for the grand conclusions of natural theology." The question of miracles, he says, is not one "which can be decided by a few trite and commonplace generalities as to the moral government of the world and the belief in the Divine Omnipotence, or as to the validity of human testimony or the limits of human experience. It involves, and is essentially built upon, those grander conceptions of the order of nature, those comprehensive primary elements of all physical knowledge, those ultimate ideas of universal causation, which can only be familiar to those versed in cosmical philosophy in its widest sense." "It is for the most part hazardous ground for any general moral reasoner to take, to discuss subjects of evidence which essentially involve that higher appreciation of *physical truth* which can be attained only from an accurate and comprehensive acquaintance with the connected series of the physical and mathematical sciences. Thus, for example, the simple but grand truth of the law of conservation, and the stability of the heavenly motions, now well understood by all sound cosmical philosophers, is but a type of the universal self-sustaining and self-evolv-

ing powers which pervade all nature." Professor Powell's conclusion is, "if miracles were, in the estimation of a former age, among the chief supports of Christianity, they are at present among the main *difficulties* and hindrances to its acceptance.

His whole argument is this, miracles, as usually defined, involve a suspension, or alteration, or violation of the laws of nature; but those laws are absolutely immutable, therefore that definition must be incorrect, or, in other words, miracles in that sense must be impossible.

The above objection to miracles is, therefore, two-fold. First, it is objected, that if the law of nature be the will of God, that of course cannot be set aside, much less directly violated." This was Augustine's

objection. This objection is answered by Hodge by saying "that nature is not the will of God in any other sense than that He ordained the sequence of natural events, and established the laws or physical causes by which that regular sequence is secured. This relation between God and the world, assumed that nature and its laws are subject to Him, and therefore liable at any time to be suspended or counteracted, at his good pleasure. The other form of the objection against miracles, assuming that miracles are events, in the external world, brought about by the immediate efficiency, or simple volition of God, is that the laws of nature are in themselves immutable, and that therefore they cannot be suspended. To this, the Lord willing, we will call attention in our following article.

ALL AROUND US—

That Period Theory Again

by Prof. H. Hanko

In the October issue of the *Reformed Journal*, J. K. Van Baalen writes an article entitled "Evolution and the Bible." The purpose of this article is to show that evolutionism (not in its mechanical sense, but in its theistic sense) is perfectly compatible with Scripture. The article mocks the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and the idea of a universal flood. The author scoffingly speaks of the defenders of these views as "some old-time literalist theologians" and claims that those who hold to these views "meet with the most disastrous difficulties and find it impossible to adhere to the sacred Scriptures."

I am not an admirer of the light-handed way in which the *Reformed Journal* has recently written about items of current doctrinal interest. It seems to me that (although this may be a literary style to give articles readability) the issues discussed are too serious to be treated in this fashion. But, be that as it may, Van Baalen's argument here is a switch to say the least. Usually the argument made in support of the period theory is that those who maintain a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 cannot find an adequate explanation for the facts of science. But Van Baalen goes another step. He insists that these people cannot explain the Scriptures. It is his contention that anything else but an evolutionistic interpretation of Genesis 1 makes it impossible to interpret rightly the Word of God. One must commit himself to evolutionism if one is to be in a position to exegete Scripture properly.

We have no intention of answering all Van Baalen's arguments, arguments which have been adequately answered before. But there are some remarks which we shall make as we quote parts of the article.

The first chapter of Genesis informs us that God created "the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them" in *six days* (Gen. 1:31 and 2:1); and then calls the six days *one day* (Gen. 2:4).

The Bible tells us that on the fourth day God made the sun, moon, and stars to "rule over the day and over the night" (Gen. 1, 17, 18), so that the duration of the first three "days" with their "evening and morning" most certainly could not have been determined by the setting and rising of the sun.

In connection with the creation of animals, Van Baalen finds it impossible to believe that "800,000 different animals and 250,000 plants appeared within 24 hours, whereas nowadays it takes the earth a great many years to 'bring forth' a tree out of a seed." To my knowledge, no responsible defender of the creation narrative has ever maintained this; although why this is impossible, I cannot see. Whatever the number of different plants and animals is, God surely could (and did) do this by His creative Word which called the things that were not as though they were. The number makes absolutely no difference.

In writing about the creation of man, Van Baalen mocks the Scriptural narrative and puts words in the mouths of those who believe God's Word which they have never spoken.

On that same day (that is, the sixth) God also made the body of Adam "of the dust of the earth." According to a popular representation He did this by making a mud doll and breathing into it thousands of nerves, sinews, and the circulatory system; thereupon He "breathed into its nostrils the breath of life," and, lo, there was the first man, created in the image of God.

I have no idea at all where Van Baalen got his popular representation of man's creation; no one that I know maintains such a view. But the whole presentation borders on the blasphemous in describing this glorious work of God which He performed when He formed man in His own image.

In further support of the period theory, he points to the fact that Scripture uses the expression "'the last days' to denote the entire period from Christ's first advent to His second coming, and that 'the last hour' to which St. John refers has already encompassed nineteen centuries!" Precisely what this has to do with the argument, Van Baalen does not make clear. Does he mean to say that the expression "the last days" is erroneous? Does he want to imply that if nineteen centuries can be called "the last hour" in Scripture, that this is proof that a day in Genesis 1 limited by morning and evening can refer to some 2 billion years? What kind of exegesis is this?

He insists that "our anti-evolution literalists have hard going in reading Genesis 1 and 2! Is it not easier to believe that the many species have slowly developed within each separate genus?"

He is sure that because the Bible is not a textbook on science, it is also not a textbook on arithmetic. And this somehow means that the days of Genesis 1 cannot be taken literally. I have some difficulty following this rather strange argumentation. Surely the question is not one of arithmetic. It is a question of the origin of this creation. And the question is not even one of literal days or figurative days; but one of the miracle of creation vs. evolution. Did God create all things? or not? Scripture tells us He did. Van Baalen is quite insistent He did not.

But there are more arguments. He finds a very strong argument for evolution in Hebrews 11:3: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Hebrews 11:3? Proof of evolution? Yes, that is what Van Baalen says. Once again the argument gets a little fuzzy, but it goes like this:

... No mention is made at all in the text of "worlds," but of *ages*, rather, of *aeons*. Now aeons are not days of 24 hours, but very long periods of time. *Eternity is the aeons of aeons!* And God is the Aeonios, the Everlasting One. And those *aeons* are not said to have been *made*, far less, *created*, but directed, controlled by the Creator, so that the results of these aeons are *not* worlds that have been there from eternity, as the eternal body of the eternal soul — no pantheism, and no matter from eternity.

Just exactly what Van Baalen's point is, is difficult to say. Does he mean that Hebrews 11:3 should

read: "Through faith we understand that long periods of time were controlled by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made from things which do appear?" This doesn't make very much sense.

But be that as it may, it is true that Hebrews 11 uses the word *aeons*; and this word is different from *cosmos*. No doubt there is also good reason why the Holy Spirit chose this word in this connection in distinction from *cosmos*. But obviously the reference is nevertheless to the creation which God formed. The author explains that this work of creation took place "by the Word of God" and in such a way that "things which are seen were not made from things which do appear." A brief session with a concordance will show that the word *aeons* means far more than "long periods of time" and that the use of it in connection with creation is not foreign to Scripture.

Further, the verb *kataartizo* is used to describe the work of creation. Now Van Baalen knows that this verb comes from the adjective *artios* which means *complete* or *perfect*. The verb therefore means "to render complete." And this is the meaning here. God made complete the worlds by His Word. And He did this in such a way that the things which we see were not made from things which do appear. In fact, this last negative expression is precisely the bane of evolutionism; for the evolutionists teach that things which are seen do come from things which do appear.

In a similar fashion, the author speaks of the flood. He is certain that it is only "stark literalism" which prompts anyone to believe in a universal flood. For one thing, when Scripture says that the waters covered all the mountains, this must surely not be taken literally, but only "from the viewpoint of the beholder." In proof of this, Van Baalen points out that many times the word "all" is used in Scripture when "all" is not meant. E.g., the "all have sinned" in Rom. 5 excludes Jesus.

And so he goes on, finding other reasons why we cannot believe in a universal flood; and finding in this reason why we cannot believe somehow in a literal interpretation of Genesis 1. Here again his argument is a bit obscure, for it is not clear how his arguments against a universal flood support the period theory. Unless his point is that this same method of exegesis which he follows must be applied to many other passages of Scripture. But if this is the point, then this is also the evil of the whole view. Already many are finding it impossible to believe in the literal interpretation of Genesis 3 which records the narrative of the fall of man. This also must fall under the hammer blows of unbelief. But with this, the whole truth of Scripture collapses.

But one further paragraph strikes our attention:

Next. It is our duty not only to read the Bible correctly, which can be done only by comparing Scripture with Scripture; we must also read aright natural and physical facts. Surely, God does miracles. But miracles are supernatural, i.e., they go beyond the laws of nature known to us. They are never *counter* natural. When God does a miracle He brings into work forces unknown to us, but *never* forces that

are contrary to His own laws of nature. A miracle is excluded in driving back by a wind waters from one part of the globe if all the globe is covered with a sheet of water six miles high.

One has the distinct impression that here we really come to the heart of the matter, for here a fundamental rule is laid down. This rule is that a miracle never goes counter to nature, never uses forces contrary to natural laws; but always only goes beyond nature and uses forces in nature unknown to us. This is evidently a fundamental point upon which the whole argument swings.

But, apart now from the question of whether this is an accurate description of a miracle (which, most emphatically, it is not), I find it extremely difficult to understand what Van Baalen has in mind by this distinction. Especially when he insists that a wind blowing waters off the earth if the whole earth were covered at the time of the flood is something counter to nature.

This, it seems to me, brings up the inevitable question of the other miracles. Is it not true that the sun standing still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon at Joshua's command is, by Van Baalen's definition, also "contrary to nature?" Hence, not a miracle? Hence, not literal history? Did forces

unknown to us, but nevertheless, forces of nature, operate in the miracles of raising the dead? In the miracle of Jonah alive in the whale for three days? And what about the virgin birth of Christ? Were natural forces unknown to us operative here? Something beyond the laws of nature known to us? Or the resurrection? Are not these miracles "contrary to nature?"

This is, to me, extremely serious business. And it is precisely at this point that we find the insidious evil of the period theory. If one denies the miracle of creation and falls back upon evolutionism, then one is inevitably led to deny all the miracles of Scripture and find a natural and "scientific" explanation for them.

But the question is finally one of the authority of Scripture itself. We may come again and again with all sorts of "scientific" reasons why Scripture must be interpreted differently from its obvious meaning. But in doing so, we deny Scripture. And this denial is only a refusal to bow before Scripture's supreme authority. This is the only issue.

I have not always agreed with what has been written in the *Reformed Journal*, but I have enjoyed reading it because the articles were well written and worth reading. But such an article as this makes one wonder if the quality of the articles will remain high.

EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

World Congress On Evangelism

by Rev. G. Van Baren

In the Nov. 1, 1966 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, page 69, the Rev. H. Hanko called our attention to a striking gathering in the city of Berlin. For background information, re-read that article.

Christianity Today, sponsor of this "World Congress on Evangelism" has a further explanation of this gathering in its Oct. 28, 1966 issue:

To refocus the twentieth-century Church's sight on the great commission of Jesus Christ, more than a thousand Christian leaders will be meeting in Berlin for prayer, panels, and planning sessions in the famous Congress Hall October 26 to November 4. Delegates to the World Congress on Evangelism include evangelistically concerned clergy and laymen from all races and from around the globe, from modern frontier tribes and from Christendom's most ancient churches. The Auca Indians of Ecuador, whose tiny band of believers sprang from the blood of recent missionary martyrs, are represented, as is the Mar Thoma Church in India, which ascribes its origin to the first-century apostle Thomas.

The congress theme is "One Race, One Gospel, One Task." Proceedings will be simultaneously trans-

lated into English, French, German, and Spanish. A few special-interest sub-sections will be conducted only in Japanese.

Many of the delegates consider the gathering the most significant opportunity for evangelistic planning in the modern era, and they fervently hope it will light the fuse for a worldwide evangelistic explosion....

...The World Congress on Evangelism has one overarching aim: to see the fragmented world in relation to the universal need for the New Testament Gospel and Christ's unrescinded command to evangelize the earth. The congress is not orientated to any one ecclesiastical agency; participants have been invited without regard for ecumenical position. The congress does not claim to speak for any grouping of contemporary churches; rather, it is a platform that makes visible the devout determination of multitudes of evangelical Christians to proclaim the Gospel to their contemporaries.

The theme of Christian witness to God's saving grace will be uppermost in the minds of the participants....

As background for discussion, involving all the delegates, distinguished evangelical spokesmen are

presenting panel position papers....

These six papers will prepare the way for thirty-six panels (each with four participants) on special facets of interest. An hour of open discussion will follow each panel. (p.3)

That will give you a bit of an idea of what is the purpose of this World Congress of Evangelism. And worthy though the cause of missions itself is, one cannot help remembering that it was a similar missionary conference of some 50 years ago which was the beginning of the present-day World Council of Churches. The way man's reasoning appears to run is this: First, since unity appears impossible on the local level, there is this one area in which we can work together — in sending forth the gospel to the heathen. Secondly, when we do go to the heathen, we are rather hard-put to explain how it is that so many denominations exist — all supposedly proclaiming the one Christ and the one church. Thirdly, we had better then seek to mend our own fences at home before we go to the heathen and tell them the way they must live. Though greatly over-simplified, this appears to be how the World Council of Churches came into being. Will the present-day World Congress on evangelism herald the beginning of another union-movement? This is not the avowed intent of the meeting — but one wonders what its final fruit will be.

THE BASIC THEOLOGY OF EVANGELISM

In the *Christianity Today* of Oct. 28, 1966 there were presented six "position papers" for the Congress on Evangelism. Each paper represents the author's own individual opinion and will serve as basis for discussion. Each paper sets forth guidelines for proper evangelization of the world. These are interesting — particularly one entitled: "The Basic Theology of Evangelism." This one was written by Dr. Harold John Ockenga, pastor of the Park Street Congregational Church in Boston. His paper sets forth only his own ideas, yet I suspect that it represents the general opinion of all those attending this congress. What, according to Ockenga, is the "basic theology" of evangelism? He rightly emphasizes first of all the authority of Scripture.

The Bible is our authority. A Bible that is the infallible rule of faith and practice is the reason for the existence of Protestantism. The Reformation rediscovered three major truths that established Protestantism as a return to New Testament Christianity. The first truth, called the formal cause of the Reformation, is that the Bible is the final and infallible authority in matters of faith and practice. This is the principle of *sola scriptura*. The second truth is justification by faith, called the material cause of the Reformation. This is the principle of *sola fide*. The third truth is the priesthood of the believer....

...The necessity for a return to biblical authority is the reason for our gathering. We are under the Word. Let us therefore give proper place to the Word of God in all our deliberations.

So far, so good. And on the basis of this infallible Scripture, Ockenga maintains that the theology of evangelism must be trinitarian "for each person

of the Trinity bears an important role in evangelism." From this point on Ockenga goes astray, setting forth that old Arminian position as the only proper position for evangelization in our day. And if Ockenga's position will be the position of the Congress on Evangelization at Berlin, then no Reformed man could ever have any part in this endeavor.

In the first place, Ockenga points to the work of the Father in evangelism.

In speaking of the role attributed to God the Father in evangelism, we emphasize the decrees of God, the election of God, and predestination by God. The divine decrees constitute the plan of salvation....

...The decrees of God...established the end from the beginning and the steps along the way. These embrace the fall of man, the atonement made for sinful man through the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus Christ..., the offer of salvation through universal preaching, and the salvation of those who believe or respond affirmatively to this preaching.

God's part in redemption is called election. Here there are competing theories. The five points of Calvinism speak of the sovereignty of God, the depravity of man, a limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the believer. Not all Christians share this formulation; but those who do hold it believe that God elected some and passed by others. Calvinism declares that the Gospel must be preached in all the world and that those who are elected will accept the Gospel, believe in Jesus Christ, and persevere in good works unto the end. It also teaches that no one can know who is elect except by the fact that he continues in good works and perseveres unto the end....

The second view is that named after Arminius, who taught in the University of Leyden from 1604 till his death. Arminius returned to the pre-Augustinian view of conditional election. God, by his eternal and immutable decree, ordained in Jesus Christ to save those who by the grace of the Holy Spirit believe in Jesus Christ and persevere in that faith and obedience of faith. Christ died for all and each, so that he gained reconciliation and remission of sins on the condition that believers remain faithful.... God foreknew this faith and elected believers unto salvation.

The view one adopts is of great importance to his evangelistic fervor. The matter of election is no mere question of semantics. The resolution of the matter rests in giving proper place to each biblical emphasis. We must not neglect either emphasis. For my part, I approve a practical synergism of affirming prevenient grace, the responsibility of each individual, and election in Christ of all who believe. Thus I say that salvation is all of God, reprobation is all of man. I cannot throw the responsibility of man's reprobation upon God.

This raises the question of predestination by God and the invitation to accept Christ. The Bible makes it plain that the Holy Spirit attends the preaching of the Word and enables a sinner to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour. The offer of salvation is real, and God does not mock us. It is the Spirit's work to attend that offer with life-giving power. (pp. 9-12)

Ockenga wants to combine the "best" of the ideas of Calvinism and Arminianism. He ends up with a

creature that bears no resemblance to Calvinism at all — and its Arminianism shows forth all over the place. If this is his basis for evangelism — the theology which must govern it — and if this is adopted by the Congress on Evangelism, then their evangelism is doomed. Then it assumes the form of that performed by Billy Graham (who is serving as honorary chairman at this congress) — and with such evangelism no

Reformed church may participate. I fear that this theology is what the vast majority at the Berlin meeting will want. Its participants and the denominations they represent intend to go forth and “evangelize the world in this generation.”

Dr. Ockenga also explains the work of the Son and of the Spirit in evangelization. To these I will call your attention next time, D.V.

HEEDING THE DOCTRINE—

Barth's Doctrine of Scripture

The Scriptural Basis (cont.)

by Rev. D. J. Engelsma

With this article, we conclude our study of Barth's doctrine of Scripture. In the August 1, 1966, issue of the *Standard Bearer*, we took note of Barth's explanation of the classical, Biblical passages on inspiration, an explanation that centered on the phrase in II Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is God-breathed.” We saw that the main elements of Barth's explanation of this crucial phrase include:

- 1) The suggestion that the word *God-breathed* (in the Greek: *Theopneustos*) should be translated “God-breathing” so that the passage does not state what Scripture *is* but what Scripture *does*, namely, breathe forth God.
- 2) The insistence that the meaning of the statement, “Scripture is inspired,” is that the Spirit made the writers of Scripture especially obedient to God's revelation so that they wrote down a fairly reliable account of spiritual things. That Scripture is inspired does not mean that Scripture, a book, has the quality or attribute of “inspiredness.” In other words, inspiration refers to what once happened to the writers and not to the product of their writing.
- 3) The claim that the truth of inspiration has two parts: a) The inspiring of the writers to pen the Scriptures. b) The inspiring of readers to believe and understand Scripture.

This interpretation of II Timothy 3:16, and of II Peter 1:19-21, which Barth explains similarly, gives full support to Barth's view of Scripture as a fallible, human book that can be called the Word of God, not because of what it *is* but because of what God can and does accomplish through it.

When the elements of this explanation are examined, however, it becomes clear not only that the interpretation is wrong but also that the interpretation does not take seriously the words of Scripture in the passage at issue. Barth is controlled in his explaining of the passage by his dogmatic presuppositions so that he does not set forth what II Timothy 3:16 says

but rather pours into the passage his own erroneous notions. This distortion of Scripture's words and imposition upon Scripture of notions alien to the text is nothing other than a consequence and a manifestation of Barth's low view of Scripture as the word of men. If Scripture is the word of fallible men, one may handle Scripture as Barth handles it here. Only a lively regard for Scripture as the Word of God will keep the interpreter from such wresting of Scripture's words. Nor is this an isolated instance. Barth's treatment of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, from creation to the last things, is characterized by the same deliberate ignoring or twisting of the plain words of Scripture in order to “interpret” the text as he pleases. Seldom does Barth come out with the blunt declaration that Scripture errs, on this or that point. This fact, combined with the equally obvious fact that Barth demands that the Church be Biblical and constantly appeals to and works with the Bible himself, could be deceiving. For someone might say that Barth's un-Reformed doctrine of Scripture, that is, his teaching of a fallible Bible, makes no practical difference — Barth still esteems Scripture highly, works with the text of Scripture in his preaching and in his theological study and seldom if ever criticizes a passage. In fact, some of Barth's liberal colleagues in Germany have accused him of orthodox tendencies in his view of Scripture (a devastating accusation in German, scholarly circles!) because he refrains from outrightly criticizing any passage in Scripture. Especially, they have assailed him for not condemning and dissociating himself from the doctrine of reprobation taught in Romans 9. The fact is, however, that Barth's heretical conception of Scripture bears bitter fruit in all of his study of Scripture. The fruit is not, to be sure, that Barth scoffs at Scripture nor that he frequently criticizes definite, Scriptural passages but rather that he wilfully ignores the teaching of Scripture in a given passage and imposes upon the text his own notions.

(to be continued)

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

Dec. 1, 1966

Rev. G. Lanting, of Holland, Mich., has accepted the call which came to him from our church at Edgerton, Minn. Installation service will be conducted Dec. 9, by Rev. R. Decker, of Doon, Iowa.

Holland's new trio consists of the Revs. D. Engelsma, C. Hanko and M. Schipper. Rev. J. A. Heys declined Randolph's call, and Rev. Engelsma Hull's call.

* * *

Jamacia News. The Correspondence Course furnished by our Mission Board is enjoying full co-operation by the ministers in the Prot. Ref. Churches of Jamaica. Rev. J. A. Heys, of South Holland, Ill. continues to conduct this class via the mails. Here are excerpts from some of the letters received from that island recently. One of them wrote: "I want to continue as a saint by persevering to the end by irresistible grace. And the reason is this, I am being unconditionally elected. And although I was born depraved, through the instigation of the Devil, yet I am being saved on the basis of limited atonement...." "notice the that 'being unconditionally elected' shows heed of further instruction, but one cannot help but smell the sweet odor of God-glorifying praise of the correspondence course truths given him)." Another wrote: "The people accept the Reformed faith. Oh, yes, there is no shadow of doubt about this. It is enjoyed by the people when I visit these congregations. When I put forth the Reformed Faith, explain the Five Points of Calvinism as best I can, then our Covenant God gathers His elect sons and daughters." Still another wrote: "I....your faithful servant, am so glad and happy for the lessons you are sending me. When I preach and teach the Five Points of Calvinism in the congregations they say, 'Amen.' They never heard such truth before." And their instructor, Rev. Heys writes: "I cannot begin to tell you how thankful I am to our covenant God for the opportunity to teach these brethren of another color and race on an island of the sea...." And may we write to Rev. Heys and all those who preach the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ: *Ye are the salt of the earth.*

* * *

The work accomplished last year by Mr. Zwak and Mr. Meulenberg in Jamaica is still being remembered at sundry times. Holland's Ladies Society, Nov. 18, scheduled Mr. Zwak to show their film of Jamaica accompanied by a narration of their experiences in the Island.

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The Deacons of First Church sponsored a "grocery shower" for the benefit of our Seminary students the three evenings preceding Thanksgiving Day. The notice read, "All non-perishable food items and/or money will be greatly appreciated." The results were highly gratifying and the families involved are deeply

appreciative of this stretching of their food budget for weeks to come.

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Oak Lawn's Young People's Society invited the adults of the congregation to their Nov. 29th meeting to help them discuss Psalm 1, and to hear a debate by the young folks.

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After 25 years in the ministry Rev. J. A. Heys, of South Holland, enjoyed the privilege of baptizing an infant whose mother he had baptized when she was an infant. The former was the *second* baptism of his 26th year and the latter was the *second* baptism of his first year. This reminds one of the faithfulness of our Covenant God Who calls his people in the line of continued generations.

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The November issue of "Highlights" a monthly publication of Hope's School was an outstanding one. It contained editorials by Miss A. Lubbers, Mrs. I. Quenga, D. Huiskens and J. Huiskens. Two Chapel Talks were also included; one by Rev. H. Veldman, a Reformation Day speech, and one by Rev. G. Lubbers. Rev. Lubbers' speech was written and scheduled to be given some years ago in the High School in Pella, Iowa, but the engagement was cancelled by someone in authority in that place. The speech was on "The Ten Commandments" and Rev. Lubbers was happy to give the talk after having kept it in mind (and in his files) for such a long time. The very last paragraph of the issue was a farewell to the children of Rev. and Mrs. Lanting who were moving to Edgerton, Minn. their father's new charge.

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The November issue of South Holland's school publication "The Reflector" featured the work of the Junior High students. The Student Editor, Margaret Worries, wrote an editorial on "Praying Hands" a masterpiece painted by Albrecht Durer, in the 16th century. The subject of the painting served as the theme of her Thanksgiving Day editorial which concluded with a quotation from I Cor. 5:18. A news item in the magazine told of the plan to purchase a new flag from the State which has flown over the State Capitol one time for historicity sake.

* * *

Loveland's school magazine, "The Loveland Ledger" for November was headed by an editorial by Rev. D. Engelsma. The theme of that Thanksgiving Day message was their own school. He wrote in part, "Our Protestant Reformed Church School is thanksgiving. Both the origin and the continued existence are due to thankfulness.... The school stands as a visible, tangible expression of thankfulness to God."

* * *

Thought for today: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will." Prov. 21:1.

....see you in church

J.M.F.