

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Editorial: An O.P.C.-C.R.C. Merger?

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I. C. C. C. (3)

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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ANNOUNCEMENT

As is customary, the *Standard Bearer* will appear only once during the months of June, July, and August.

MEDITATION—

The Still Small Voice

by Rev. J. Kortering

"It is enough; now, O Lord take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers . . . after the fire a still small voice and it was so when Elijah heard it that he wrapped his face in his mantel and went out and stood in the entering in of the cave. . . and the Lord said, unto him, Go, return."

I Kings 19:4b, 12, 14, and 15a

The juniper tree!
What a lonely place.

It was there that Elijah sighed, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." Despondency, as a treacherous viper infected his soul with the venom of doubt. It was no use to go on. The cause of God was lost.

O Lord, take away my life!

Jehovah, however is not affected by the vacillating faith of a pilgrim. In His steadfastness to His people

He suffers long with their doubts and fears. He condescends in mercy and heals the broken-hearted. We so aptly sing,

"The Lord upholds the falt'ring feet

He makes the weak securely stand.

The burdened ones bowed down with grief
Are helped by His most gracious hand."

Here too, Jehovah mercifully preached to the preacher.

Let's join Elijah at Horeb. Jehovah dwelt in His

Sanctuary. The mountain was His pulpit. The valley the pew. The sermon was the still small voice. It is profitable to spend a moment there, for a dejected servant entered this sanctuary, but an invigorated man of God departed.

The vestibule to that sanctuary was the wilderness.

It was there that a lonely juniper tree sheltered a pitiful servant of God. Elijah had decided to run away from God. He asked God to kill him.

What brought this on?

This question takes on an added measure of preponderance when we recall that this Elijah was the servant of God who only days before arose to the pinnacle of power at Carmel. What a thrill it is to recall this moment of faith. He brazenly announced to Ahab there would be no rain, but by the word that he would bring. For over three years the barren waste of Canaan groaned for water. Fearlessly, Elijah called fuming Ahab to Mount Carmel to witness his challenge to the prophets of Baal. They had agreed that the God who would answer by fire and consume the offering on the altar would be heralded as the true God. Derisively he jeered at the futility of the prophets of Baal, "Cry louder!" Feverishly they danced about the altar, lancing themselves with knives. All this was to no avail, heaven remained stonily silent. How we tingle in ecstasy as Elijah unwaveringly called them to surround the drenched altar. With words of simple faith, he addressed the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God of fire consumed not only the offering, but the altar as well. How awesome to hear Carmel's heights reverberate with the chant, "Jehovah, He is the God." Without favor the people slew the priests of Baal.

The rains descended.

It was all so beautiful. Faith in full blossom.

Here beneath the juniper tree, the hot blast of the desert wind wilted that faith. The arid soul of the same Elijah cried out, "It is enough, take away my life."

Yes, it was Jezebel who occasioned this change. Fickle Ahab had tattled to this adulterous woman. In fiery breath, baited with hellish anger she shrieks, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." That was too much for Elijah who had just come out of his three years of banishment. It was more than he could take. He yielded to his sinful nature and decided to run.

His problem was spiritual. What good did it do to preach? He had hoped that a change would take place, that Israel as a nation would now recognize their historic relationship with God. He must have fondly imagined that even Ahab would put Jezebel in her place. He aspired to see a national revival. All this to no apparent avail. Again his life was at stake, no one offered to come to his rescue. He concluded that there weren't any children of God in Israel anyway. He might just as well quit. "I, only I am left, and they seek my life to take it away".

Sounds familiar doesn't it? We too are often under that juniper tree. Life seems not worth living, we feel like giving up. God's cause appears so weak.

We cringe in fear as we face the modern Jezebels. The world of sin flaunts in arrogant display their weapons of destruction and we shrink back in holy horror. What does the true church amount to today? It seems as if all the power is on the side of our mortal enemy. Place the Church of Jesus Christ on one side of the balance with the world on the other, then judge them according to human standards, and the scales will tip in favor of the world every time. Numbers—the world has the edge by far, money—the church can't compare, learning—the schools of our land indoctrinate thousands of students to be enemies of the church, prestige—it was once popular to be christian, but not today, influence—the moral fibre of society gets worse, not better. The forces of Anti-christ manifested in both government and false church are determined either by persuasion or persecution to undermine the faithful church of Christ. The cause of Christ appears ridiculously naive. We often ask, what is the use, is there yet faith on the earth?

We feel this constricting influence within our own churches. We are not immune to the attack; we are called of God to bear the brunt of it. We are small; that often occasions discouragement. We have many ambitious programs, but feel our hands are tied over and over. We love our truth and desire the witness to go forth, yet we have no missionary. Our Seminary, so vital to the well-being of our churches is small; we often ask, why are there not more young men that desire the ministry? Is the influence of this world so great upon our youth that they almost forget this need? Our vacant churches spend a great deal of time beneath the juniper tree. They wrestle with the question, will we ever get a minister of our own; can we go on this way? Government is fingering its way into education; we begin to question, can our schools exist? We can hardly supply the needs of the existing schools; why talk about beginning more grade schools and high schools. The darkness of doubt soon closes in around us and we throw ourselves down beneath the juniper and say, "It is enough". We might just as well give up. The future is dark, the cause appears hopeless.

When we talk that way, our feet are faltering.

The Lord upholds such feet. He called Elijah to His holy mountain. It is good to spend some time in God's dwelling place; then we get the proper perspective once again and go on encouraged.

Nourished by the food that the angel provided, Elijah traveled to Mt. Horeb. As soon as he had arrived, Jehovah began to prepare him for the sermon that He was about to preach. That was necessary, for the transition from the juniper tree to the still small voice on the mountain is not easily made. We know that when we enter the church for divine worship. Here too, a despondent, grumbling, stubborn Elijah had to be made ready for such a glorious gospel. As he was, he could never be receptive to such sublime truths. So God asked him a personal question. He called him from the cave and said, "What doest thou here Elijah?" As the perfect Psycho-analyst, God posited a leading question that required Elijah to do some introspection.

Elijah was quick to answer. It sounded pretty good

tool I am jealous for the Lord God, I have preached and maintained the truth, but all to no avail. Israel has forsaken the covenant, thrown down the altars of God, killed His prophets, and I'm the only one left. You get the point? Elijah said, it was because of *jealousy* for God that he left. He could no longer associate with such a people; he was alone anyway: he might just as well die in the desert; for God's sake he couldn't stand it any more.

There was something basically wrong with his reasoning. Jehovah now proceeded to show what was wrong.

God caused three powerful displays to pass before Elijah: wind, earthquake, and fire. Each time God was not in them. These three were followed by the still small voice. Elijah recognized this voice as God and therefore went forth and stood upon the cleft with head covered by his mantle. It was then that God applied this sermon to Elijah. "Go return, I have work for you; anoint Jehu, Hazael, and Elisha as instruments for the destruction of all the worshippers of Baal, and above all I have 7000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal; go preach to them, they need you."

Let's notice three things that God will tell us when we become weary and would think the cause of the church to be hopeless.

First, by outward appearance God's cause is always small. That is the first idea of the three powerful displays contrasted to the still small voice. God was not in the wind, fire, and earthquake. They did not represent His cause. This is not to say they were not brought about by God's control; they obviously were, for "the Lord passed by", but he was not *in* them. Similarly, the cause of the world is always great. Antichrist that reigned throughout history and will personally reign in the end will possess a grand display of power and splendor. The cause of God in contrast from an outward point of view doesn't amount to much. Elijah thought the *nation* of Israel would turn, he expected big things, but God now wanted to remind him, no, there is a small *remnant*, and that from human standards isn't much. So for us today, we must not think God's cause is in grand world revival and national conversion. God's cause today is not in the redemption of society; we must not expect

governments to become christian, we can't expect worldly organizations to be persuaded to adopt christian principles. God's cause is small and distinct. It is always a remnant in the midst of a wicked world.

Secondly, Elijah as a servant of God had to be a servant of destruction to the Baal worshippers and to all who continued in sin. We easily forget this too. The calling of the church is to testify against all evil and bring God's judgment upon all workers of iniquity. Elijah had to anoint three men who would be instruments in God's hand to inflict His judgment upon the enemies of the church. It is also through the preaching, the still small voice, and the daily testimony of the believer in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation, that God leaves them without excuse and the measure of iniquity is filled. Through contact with the believer, the world rises in greater enmity and thus hastens its own destruction.

Thirdly, the true power of the church is found not in outward things, but in the Word of God, the still small voice. God speaks and the fruits of His word must not be determined by mere men, but God will use it to fulfill His will. He has His covenant people, the 7000, seven times 10, times 10, times 10 or the complete number of the covenant children in the world. The power for gathering and preserving this remnant is not determined by men, but by God Himself.

Remember Pentecost! We have just celebrated this glorious day in the church. This is a reflection upon that wonder. Elijah had to be reminded in type and shadow, we have to be reminded of the fulfillment. If we take our eye off God and His Spirit, things sometimes looks very dark and hopeless. When in faith we see the 7000 who struggle in this world of sin, know that through the Spirit of our living Lord not one shall be lost, but all shall surely be gathered into the fold and retained in safety, we have every reason to continue. Even the Jezebels can not destroy us but are under God's almighty direction to fulfill His will.

Elijah had work to do, he had to return! He did.

We have work to do, we must press on! We will.

Remember the still small voice; remember the Holy Spirit of God. God is our refuge and strength.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and congregation of the Lynden Protestant Reformed Church wish to express our sympathy to our fellow member, Mr. Andrew Van Den Top, in the death of his father,

MR. JAKE VAN DEN TOP

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints". Psalm 116:15

Pastor, B. Woudenberg
Clerk, H. Vander Veen, Jr.

EDITORIAL—

An O.P.C.-C.R.C. Merger?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Coming before the Thirty-third General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which convened April 26 at Oostburg, Wisconsin, was a brief report which proposed working toward organic union with the Christian Reformed Church. From an interested friend I received a copy of this report, which reads as follows:

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO CONFER WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

The Committee to Confer with Representatives of the Christian Reformed Church held a meeting with the corresponding committee of the Christian Reformed Church in Princeton, New Jersey on January 24, 1966. All of the members of the Christian Reformed committee and all but one of the Orthodox Presbyterian committee were present.

Your committee recommends:

1. That the General Assembly call attention to the advantages of supporting the Back to God Hour and of using Back to God Hour materials in the families;
2. That the General Assembly encourage, wherever practicable, (a) pulpit exchanges, (b) joint youth activities, (c) joint home missionary activities, (d) cooperative publishing, (e) mutual exchange of publications and the holding of common conferences, (f) representation at existing conferences and meetings;
3. That the General Assembly urge the reporting to church courts of successful activities of the above mentioned categories;
4. That the General Assembly request the Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government and Book of Discipline to invite to a joint meeting the Church Order Revision Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, the Committee on Closer Relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of the Christian Reformed Church, and the present committee to determine whether progress cannot be made in the immediate future toward agreement between the two Churches on principles of church government;
5. That the General Assembly declare its opinion that the present committee should work toward the definite goal of organic union between the Orthodox Presbyterian and the Christian Reformed Churches.
6. That the committee be continued.

Respectfully submitted,

Calvin A. Busch
Edmund P. Clowney
Bert L. Reber
Paul Woolley, Chairman

COMMENT

At this writing, I do not know what action was taken by the General Assembly; nor do I know whether a similar proposal will come before the Christian Reformed Synod at Pella. As far as mergers go in this day of ecumenicity, this is not a large one, of course; nor would it be counted very significant. Nevertheless, I believe it is worthy of comment because of its significance for the Reformed community. My comments are as follows:

1) This is probably one of the most significant reports coming before the OPC General Assembly; yet it is extremely brief, and it appears entirely without grounds. It seems to me that it would be extremely difficult to discuss such a proposal, either *pro* or *con*, for the simple reason that it fails to state grounds and assumes what ought to be proved.

2) The main assumption appears to be that there is a sufficient degree of doctrinal and confessional agreement to warrant organic union between these two denominations. This is not discussed in the report. Surely, however, it is exactly such doctrinal and confessional agreement which is basic to organic union. In this respect I can see no obstacle to merger. Both denominations are officially Reformed in their confession. Moreover, on matters such as common grace and the well-meant offer of salvation there is also no significant difference between the two churches. From this point of view, therefore, I can understand the recommendation that the General Assembly declare its opinion that the committee should work toward the definite goal of organic union. It ought to be noted, however, that a decision to this effect would virtually commit the OPC to union, provided the CRC also favors it.

3) Whether the church political issues, which have proved rather troublesome in past discussions, can be resolved remains to be seen. It is, I think, noteworthy that point 4 speaks of agreement on "principles of church government" rather than on full agreement in practice. Perhaps this will be the way out of this problem.

4) I find it rather strange that the report recommends a virtual practice of organic union and a kind of trial union before the definite goal of organic union is achieved. Yet this is practically recommended in points 1 and 2. If these recommendations are fol-

lowed, then it seems to me that the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches will commit themselves to such a degree before the union is consummated that it will be very difficult to retreat at a future date. Very strange, too, I think, is the recommendation that "successful activities of the above mentioned categories" be reported. Why not also possible unsuccessful activities? Surely, these would also be pertinent to any final decision.

5) The entire proposal leaves some significant questions that ought to be answered. The first of these, — and it should weigh heavily with the OPC, — is this: is the Christian Reformed Church actually faithful to its own official confessional and doctrinal position? As much as I know of the OPC, they cannot be in agreement with some of the liberal tendencies evidenced in Christian Reformed circles. I refer to matters like the inspiration-infallibility question, the Dekker Case, the World Council matter, etc. I know, too, that there must be some concern about these matters in the OPC, judging from the fact that the CRC's fraternal delegate to last year's General Assembly tried to quiet some of the fears about these issues. A second consideration is this: what will become of the identity of the OPC in such an organic

union? The OPC is by far the smaller of the two denominations. Will this proposed merger actually be a merger? Or will it mean that the OPC will simply be swallowed up in the larger CRC and completely lose its historic Presbyterian character in the process? This question certainly should be considered; and the advisability of organic union is closely connected with it. Nor should any such merely practical consideration as a possible hope that the conservative OPC will buoy up the conservative element of the CRC be permitted to obscure this question. A third consideration involves Westminster Seminary. I am well aware of the fact that Westminster is not a denominational school. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the ministers of the OPC for the most part have been trained at Westminster. Should a merger be consummated, what will become of Westminster? Calvin Seminary is, of course, the denominational school for the training of CRC ministers. Will Westminster be given equal status with Calvin, even though the former is not a church school? Or will Westminster become a kind of orphan through this proposed union?

In the light of the above considerations, I would suggest that a word of warning is in order for the OPC. It is this: CAUTION!

EDITORIAL—

Tensions In "The Teaching"

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The second category of issues which the *Reformed Journal* (March, 1966) predicts will have to be faced in the Reformed community in the future is entitled "The Teaching." In this category Dr. Henry Stob calls attention to four issues, all of which are indeed very important.

The first of these issues is concerned with theology proper, i.e., the doctrine of God's Being and Nature. Dr. Stob describes this issue as follows:

Nothing is so important as the proper understanding of who and what God is. On the other hand, there is hardly a doctrine that is more in the melting within the larger theological community than the doctrine of God. His individuality is denied, His personality is denied, His transcendence is denied, and His death is proclaimed. These denials and morbid pronouncements concern us mainly in a negative way; they fix the positions that we are called upon to expose and discredit. Yet they also provide us with the occasion to review in the light of Scripture what He is really like who presents Himself as the Creator and Redeemer of the

world, and as the Covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of all their seed. Is He, for example, unchangeable in the way in which unchangeableness has often been thought of — mainly under pagan Greek auspices? Are we to think of Him, as we have sometimes done under Thomistic influences, as Pure Act, devoid of all passivity and potentiality? Are we to regard the quite human speech about Him, which is found in such abundance in the Old Testament, as merely figurative and anthropomorphic language essentially inappropriate to God, or are we to regard such language as a veritable revelation concerning God? Questions such as these, and others besides, we shall have to be asking ourselves in the coming months and years.

Comment

The last part of this paragraph is the most important. As for the first part of this paragraph, I cannot become excited about the doctrinal pronouncements of the modernist church; nor do I consider it

the chief calling of the true church to expose and discredit all the modern day mouthings of the modernist, as, for example, the "God is dead" theology. I do not share the excitement about this latest modernistic denial of the truth. In fact, I am very much inclined to say concerning it, "Let the dead bury their dead." It is much rather the chief calling of the church today to maintain and defend the Reformed faith *over against attacks and attackers from within*, perhaps over against some who have themselves become enamored of the modernist and neo-modernist theology, than to concern itself with these "far out" and far-fetched theological fads which have captured such a large part of the attention of the religious press.

In the second place, I can certainly agree with Stob's statement that "nothing is so important as the proper understanding of who and what God is." Theology in the narrower sense, doctrine of God, is of prime importance in all dogmatics. Fail to have a proper understanding of who and what God is, and you will necessarily fail to understand all the rest of theology. That is axiomatic.

However, Dr. Stob will have to be more specific with his questions than he is in this paragraph. Where, for example, is the pagan Greek influence in the Reformed presentation of God's unchangeability? Where is the Thomistic influence, and what is it? What does Stob mean by the suggestion of a possible passivity and potentiality in God? Is he suggesting a contrast, or even a contradiction, between anthropomorphisms and veritable revelation concerning God? Moreover, in all this I cannot down the question within my soul: is Dr. Stob hinting that we must begin to re-think and perhaps re-formulate the very basic truths of Reformed theology? I am afraid of all these questions, not because I fear questions or because I feel Reformed theology has no answers to them, but because I fear the questioning and doubt-creating attitude that these questions seem to betray. It is to be hoped, and expected, that the *Journal* will make itself clear on these matters.

The second issue raised by Stob in this category is probably the most important of all. It concerns the doctrine of the eternal decrees, the very heart of the Reformed faith. I quote:

As almost everyone has observed, the doctrine of the eternal decrees, particularly of the decree of reprobation is currently under review. Different theologians lay the accent differently on election and reprobation, some affirming and some denying their equal ultimacy. Others find the creeds ambiguous in their teaching on the subject. Others, through the careful study of the classical Scripture passages bearing on the matter, are beginning to entertain doubts about the reality of the supposed Biblical basis for the traditional Reformed understanding of reprobation. Still others question the propriety of employing philosophical categories like "Cause" and "Necessity" for the purpose of construing the Biblical givens. There is some uncertainty in our circles how one should proceed amidst all this ferment. Some, perhaps most, think matters of this sort should not be openly discussed, since the creeds speak plainly on

the subject; it is only a "gravamen" that the situation allows. Others think that though the language of the creeds is ambiguous the intent of the creeds is plain; that, however, this intent has not been adequately expressed in our theology; and that therefore discussion is both permissible and desirable, such discussion being nothing more than discussion in the open field of theology. Under the circumstances it would seem that we should continue to discuss, at least until the issues are further clarified.

Comment

Again, there is not the desired degree of clarity on the part of Dr. Stob with respect to the various positions and suggestions about reprobation which he mentions. He does not identify the holders of these opinions. I suspect that much of the ferment which he mentions is current in the Netherlands among theologians of the Gereformeerde Kerken, even to the extent that the orthodoxy of some of the leading theologians is being questioned openly. I suspect, too, that what ferment there is in the Reformed community in this country has been "imported" from the Netherlands. I suspect, too, that the influence of Barth's theology is to be discovered somewhere in this ferment. Time will tell whether these suspicions are correct. I have no doubt, however, judging from the past writings of men like Dr. Stob, Dr. Boer, and Dr. Daane, that the *Journal* is, to put it mildly, not entirely satisfied with the "traditional Reformed understanding of reprobation." I am thinking of Dr. Stob's conception of God's hatred, of Dr. Boer's articles about reprobation, and of Dr. Daane's continual harping on the "equal ultimacy" theme.

Without engaging in a detailed discussion of this issue, I want to make a few suggestions:

1. It is high time that those who refer to "equal ultimacy" furnish a clear definition of what they mean by it. This also is, after all, a rather philosophical expression; perhaps its propriety may as well be questioned as the other terms which Stob characterizes as philosophical categories. But precisely what does it mean? Do those who use this term mean equal sovereignty? Do they mean to denote the idea that election and reprobation are equally grounded in God's sovereign good pleasure? Or do they mean to denote the conception that in the order of the decrees the decree of election and that of reprobation are coordinate? And when they use "equal ultimacy" as a charge against one's view of predestination, are they trying to suggest that reprobation must, at least, be conceived of as conditional? If the *Journal* intends to discuss this issue, I suggest the need of some precision.

2. If there is to be discussion of this issue, it must indeed be *responsible* discussion. This is a most serious matter in itself. Besides, the history of the dogma of predestination has been such that it was the decree of reprobation which was particularly disliked and attacked. In fact, it is a rather safe test of one's orthodoxy with respect to the doctrine of election to inquire how he stands with respect to the decree of reprobation. That is due, of course, to the fact that

the truth of sovereign election cannot possibly be maintained where the truth of sovereign reprobation is denied. Predestination is indeed *praedestinatio gemina*, double predestination.

3. Certainly, for Reformed men it must be *a priori* established that all discussion must take place strictly within the confines of the confessions, particularly the Canons of Dordrecht, unless there is a willingness to file a gravamen against the confessions. For my part, the confessions are quite sufficient on this score, even though their language is infralapsarian. It would seem to me that it should be recognized that one who has such serious questionings of the confession that the possibility of a gravamen arises as to this doctrine, is in the nature of the case rendering himself suspect. For the truth of sovereign reprobation, ever since the pronouncements of Dordrecht, belongs to the things which are most surely believed among us. But let the *Journal* speak out; the *Standard Bearer* will listen and react, — on the basis of Scripture and the confessions.

4. It seems to me that 1924 and its supposed grace for the reprobate, as well as Prof. Dekker's redemptive love of God for all men, inclusive of the reprobate, must needs have a place in the discussion proposed by the *Journal*.

The third issue raised by Dr. Stob is the question of evolution. I will not quote all that he writes about this, but call attention to the following items:

1. Stob calls in question Prof. L. Berkhof's calling "theistic evolution a contradiction in terms. He suggests that it is possible to think of evolution theistically, "in a way compatible with God's creative activity." I invite a debate on that proposition. For I certainly hold that "theistic evolution" is, in the light of Scripture, a contradiction in terms. I believe indeed that "theistic evolution" is an unthinkable idea, and that in the name of theism it nevertheless rules God, the Creator, the God of the Scriptures out, and that there ought to be no room under a Reformed ecclesiastical roof for the theistic evolutionist. I am afraid, however, that for the most part the Reformed community has moved so far away from that strict position that to maintain it would result in ecclesiastical upheaval. The theologian and the church that dare to maintain strictly a literal and realistic creation in six days have become increasingly rare.

2. That the issue of theistic evolution is a matter of "responsible exegesis" must surely be maintained, even as Stob suggests. In the abstract, that this responsible exegesis must be carried on, "not in isolation from, but in maximum awareness of the deliverances of science," I also subscribe to. But when Stob begins to explain this as meaning a "verdict

reached through the correlation of the data supplied both by believing exegesis and by faith-directed inquiry into the empirical state of affairs," then I begin to have serious doubts as to his emphasis on "responsible exegesis," and I begin to fear that he after all means exegesis dictated by the alleged evidences and claimed data of natural science. And the true character of such "exegesis" is not exegesis at all, but *eisegesis*, or what the Dutch call "*inlegkunde*." Nor have previous deliverances of the *Journal* given evidence of a different tendency in this regard.

The fourth issue which Dr. Stob mentions is that of what is commonly called the "Dekker Case." Stob makes mention of various viewpoints in this connection, including that of "writers from the Protestant Reformed Church" (correctly: "Churches"). He also makes mention of Synod's study committee, whose report at the time when Dr. Stob was writing was not yet published. Significantly, he makes the following statement in this regard: "There is no warrant for prejudging the Committee's conclusions, but it is perhaps legitimate to express the hope that open theological reflection will not be prematurely arrested by *ad hoc* decisions made in reference to a matter of considerable complexity. The issue needs ongoing exploration within a framework of mutual trust and respect."

Since Dr. Stob penned the above words, the Study Committee Report, some seventy pages long, has become public. Its conclusions are not favorable to Prof. Dekker's views, but rather to the old, traditional, and altogether inconsistent position of 1924. But if I read Dr. Stob correctly, he does not want any *binding* decisions on this matter, especially not if those decisions are contrary to the position of Prof. Dekker. In other words, Stob wants "*leervrijheid*," freedom of doctrine. How that is possible under Reformed church polity and on fundamental issues is a conundrum to me; nor does Stob explain it.

But I have the feeling that here at last the "cat comes out of the bag." If the *Journal* has its way on all these important issues, — and that way has always tended to be the "liberal way," — then they will forevermore be pleading for "ongoing exploration within a framework of mutual trust and respect." The result will be that with respect to issues on which the church has long ago taken a stand and on issues on which the Reformed faith has for years and centuries been "settled and binding" they will discuss and discuss and discuss, until the last vestiges of the Reformed faith in the Christian Reformed Church have been removed.

The *Journal* bears careful watching, therefore.

Quite properly, it (the truth of sovereign election) has been called the *cor ecclesiae*, the heart of the Church. The whole system of the doctrine of salvation by grace is built on it as its foundation, stands or falls with this truth. If you deny or distort this basic truth, you may, perhaps, inconsistently continue to speak of salvation by grace for a time, but ultimately you will surely lose all the great doctrines of salvation.

— H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 23

EDITORIAL—

Study Committee Recommendations in the Dekker Case

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The long awaited report of the Study Committee appointed two years ago with respect to the doctrinal position of Prof. Harold Dekker appears in the Synodical Agenda of the Christian Reformed Church for 1966. This report is some seventy pages long; and it is, of course, impossible to present a detailed summary and critique in this issue of our *Standard Bearer*.

Because, however, this is a matter of great interest, I will, even though my editorial space is more than used up, present the bare conclusions of this report, so that our readers may be informed of what is happening. Those conclusions, with the grounds omitted, are as follows:

"I. That, in the light of Scripture and the Confession, there is a qualitative distinction between the general love of God for all His creatures and His special love for the elect." *Comment:* This, of course, is the traditional common-and-special grace distinction of 1924; and it stands opposed to Dekker's conception of one redemptive love of God to all men.

"II. That, in the light of Scripture and the Confession, the doctrine of a definite or particular (limited) atonement must be maintained." *Comment:* This, as it stands here, is Reformed; and again, it stands opposed to Dekker's general atonement. There is, however, some significant maneuvering in the alleged grounds of this second point, which nevertheless compromises, or attempts to compromise, this particularism. Treatment of this must come later.

"III. That, in the light of Scripture and the Confession, it is unwarranted to posit a universal atonement and a particular redemption." *Comment:* This is over against Dekker's doctrine of a universal atonement that is efficacious only in the elect.

"IV. That in the light of Scripture and the Confession, it is unwarranted to say to each and every man without distinction, 'Christ died for you.'" *Comment:* Again, some rather strange grounds are adduced for this point; and oddly enough, there is no single reference to Scripture and the Confession in these grounds. Of course, this fourth point stands directly opposed to Dekker's claim.

"V. That, in the light of Scripture and the Confes-

sion, the doctrine of definite atonement is an incentive for rather than a hindrance to mission enthusiasm and endeavor." *Comment:* The grounds again fail to refer to Scripture and the Confessions; instead they try to show the other face of the Janus-head and maintain the general offer of 1924 in juxtaposition to the gospel of definite atonement.

A few concluding remarks must suffice for the present:

1. It will be interesting indeed to see whether the Synod adopts these points, and to see whether or not they will also follow these points by what would seem logically to follow, namely, discipline of Professor Dekker, unless he recants his position.

2. It will be interesting to observe the reaction of the *Reformed Journal* to the above recommendations,—particularly of Daane, Boer, Stob, and, not the least, Prof. Dekker himself.

3. It is significant that it required seventy pages of theological meanderings,—I call it *hocus pocus*,—to try to maintain the position of Dordrecht and at the same time to maintain 1924. The committee speaks in its conclusions of avoiding the Scylla of undue universalism and the Charybdis of an undue particularism,—whatever that may mean. Frankly, the whole report leaves the impression of the old Janus-head. When Dekker must be condemned, then the committee reveals Janus's Reformed face. But when it appears that they might be too purely Reformed and that 1924 is being forgotten, they quickly expose Janus's Arminian, universalistic, face. Quite a game, if it were not so serious.

4. If I were Christian Reformed, and if I were bound to stand on the fundamental position of 1924, I would surely plead Prof. Dekker's cause. Granted the premise of the First Point, Dekker is much more consistent than the committee.

However, I am not Christian Reformed. Nor do I stand on the basis of 1924. I stand on the basis of Dordrecht. And on that basis, I repeat what I have said before: Dekker, Daane, Stob, and Boer, *cum sociis*, are right, but dead wrong.

Moreover, when we look about us in the world, full of confusion and madness, of corruption and apostasy, is there any assurance anywhere except in the truth of God's sovereign election, that His work shall not fail, that His Church shall surely be gathered, and His kingdom shall be established and manifested in glory? Salvation is of the Lord: it shall surely be accomplished even unto the end!

— H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 25

EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

I. C. C. C.

-3-

by Rev. G. Van Baren

The International Council of Christian Churches (I.C.C.C.) has met a total of six times in its "Plenary Congresses". One of the aims of these congresses is to express together what the member churches believe need emphasis at that particular time. These resolutions show rather definitely what the I.C.C.C. and its members believe. Therefore, in this concluding article on the organization, I would like to make brief quotes from those resolutions adopted by the last Congress held in Geneva on August 5-11, 1965. The quotations which follow have been taken from the *Lutheran News*, Vol. 3, No. 17, published on August 23, 1965.

THE RESOLUTIONS OF 1965

There were some ten resolutions approved at the Sixth Plenary Congress of the I.C.C.C. These dealt with diverse but important topics. The more significant resolutions treated the subjects of the Bible, Christian education, the ecumenical movement, the new morality, and Communism. As far as amount of material is concerned, one of the ten resolutions, "Resolution on World Communism and the Christian Church," comprised more than one fourth of the total material adopted.

One can appreciate much of what was adopted at that last Congress and respond with a hearty "Amen." There is, for instance, resolutions on the Bible:

We...express our great sorrow at the declension from belief in the verbal inspiration of God's Word which is now becoming increasingly apparent in so many denominations. During the past few years the anti-Christian character of some of the leaders of these denominations has become more and more clear, as they have become more and more brazen and outspoken in their denial of Biblical truth, and in their open declarations that God's Word contains errors. . . .

Finally, we declare our complete confidence in the Bible, our uncompromising loyalty to its teachings, and our determination to hazard our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor in the proclamation and the defense of this treasure that God has given to His church.

Again, there is the encouraging statement concerning the Bible as the Word of God:

In our days many make a principal distinction between the Bible and the Word of God. According to them the Bible, as a book, is not the Word of God, but only a purely human thing. As such the Bible contains errors and mistakes. It is only in and through the proclamation of the Bible that it can become for us the Word of God. Therefore, the facts which the Bible describes are not to be viewed as historical realities,

but as given requiring special interpretation for our time. . . .

In obedience to what the Scriptures themselves teach, we confess and maintain that the Bible first becomes the Word of God for us in and through the proclamation. All that the Bible contains, just as it is written for us, is held by us to be the only and ever remaining Word of God. The Bible in its written form is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105).

On the other hand, we reject at the same time the false accusation that we make an idol of the Bible, as a book, and that we believe in the Bible of God instead of in the God of the Bible.

In its "Call to Reformation" the Congress adopted:

Such denominations, by tolerating false doctrine, and by promoting false unity, are causing divisions (Romans 16:17); we, the I.C.C.C., as believers earnestly beseech every Christian, every congregation, and every association of Bible-believing Christians, to be mindful of our common calling to obey God more than men, and to notify their denominations that they can no longer be responsible for false doctrine and unbiblical affiliations. We urge upon these believers to petition their denominations for withdrawal from the Ecumenical Movement and for a return to the historic Christian faith, in accordance with the Word of God.

Another resolution I appreciated was one "On Christian Education:"

Many institutions of learning are either "neutral" regarding the Christ of the Scriptures or positively infected with the anti-Biblical spirit of rationalism, scientism and humanism; this I.C.C.C., meeting in Geneva. . . , urges all Bible-believers everywhere to establish such institutions of training for our children and youth as will bring glory to God, be in accordance with the full counsel of God, and bring all thoughts also in the classroom into captivity to Christ, of whom, through whom, and unto whom are all things.

Another resolution condemns the World Council of Churches and the present-day ecumenical movement. Five points are briefly emphasized. First, the ecumenical movement and the W.C.C. represent a false concept of Christian unity. Secondly, the W.C.C. has no Biblical basis. Thirdly, the leadership of the W.C.C. includes men who have apostatized from the faith. Fourthly, The W.C.C. betrays the glorious heritage of the 16th century reformation. Finally, The W.C.C. acts as an instrument for building of a super-church.

There is also a resolution condemning the "New Morality."

The "new morality" is in reality immorality, a blatant disregard of God's Word and commandments. In holding that a man who really loves God does not need any laws, it takes a stand opposite to the words of Christ and the Bible in general. . . .

The churches of our time need a sincere return to teach the absolute authority of the Bible, to proclaim without compromise the holy law of God for conviction and repentance, but then also to a biblical preaching and teaching of free justification and salvation by the blood of Christ and by the Holy Spirit for the conversion and new birth of sinners. . . .

RESOLUTION ON WORLD COMMUNISM AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

This resolution, the longest of the ten adopted, shows, as far as I am concerned, two of the objections which could be raised to the joining with the I.C.C.C. In the first place, it seems to involve itself far too much in matters political. Secondly, the question arises in my mind: what is the conception of the I.C.C.C. regarding the Kingdom of God which shall be established?

I hasten to state that I can subscribe to much of the statement against communism. I have no doubt in my mind concerning its evil character today—particularly in its opposition to the church. But the question remains: is it the calling of the church to expend a major portion of its effort in opposition to one form of government which is manifestly atheistic? Did the apostle Paul, who lived during the days of that most wicked dictator Nero, show any opposition to that atheistic government? But allow me to quote a bit from the document.

By Communism we mean:

The philosophy, economic doctrine, politics, program and military adventures of the Communist parties of the world. These doctrines were first stated by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the Communist Manifesto of 1848, developed by Lenin and Stalin, and thereafter believed and practiced by the Communist parties of the world under the leadership of the Soviet Union.

Then follows a list of ten aspects of the Communist movement which the I.C.C.C. finds particularly objectionable. I have no reason to question or dispute the ten points.

Among the eight points under a "Call to Christian Action," that is, action against Communism, is stated this:

6. Pray for the liberation of North Korea, the Chinese Mainland, Viet Nam, Eastern Europe, Cuba and the Soviet homeland itself, to reopen all Communist-dominated lands to Christian evangelism, fellowship and liberty.

It is this idea in the battle against Communism which troubles one. For what does one here pray? It is far more than a prayer that God may keep His people in the midst of fearful persecution. It is more than praying that God may direct this persecution for the benefit of the church. It is more than praying that God may direct the actions of even evil rulers that His purpose may be served. Here is a prayer that

God may "liberate" various nations of their present governments. Possibly I read too much into the adopted statement. Yet it seems that there would be two basic ways in which these lands could be "liberated": by revolution or by invasion of a foreign power. Must I pray that men may rise up in revolt against instituted government? Did the apostle Paul pray that this might happen to that evil ruler Nero? Did he not rather advise: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers"? He did not advise submission to their godlessness; for refusing such submission both he and others were imprisoned and even put to death. But there is no evidence that Paul sought the "liberation" of Rome. Or must I pray that the United States (or another foreign power) engage in warfare to overthrow of the governments in Russia, China, etc.?

Yes, we must be concerned with the church in persecution. We must likewise point out that any government which uses its God-given authority in suppressing the church and destroying its members, is mis-using this authority and must stand condemned before God. And if this government would imprison me for condemning these evil actions, then so be it. But I will not rise in rebellion against instituted authority nor seek the "liberation" of nations. Paul did not either.

Related to the above is the question of the Kingdom of God which the I.C.C.C. actively seeks. I do not find much written on this particular question. There is the statement, set in contrast to the views of Communism, that "the Glorious Hope of the Church (is) in the personal return of Christ to set up His Kingdom, and the final destiny of all men in either Heaven or Hell." The statement is carefully phrased, but seems to lend itself to a pre-millennial interpretation.

But much of the approach of the I.C.C.C. appears to be almost post-millennial. The idea seems to be that if we work hard enough, pray long enough, contribute faithfully enough, we can roll back the tide of Communism and establish governments more in harmony with the Word of the Lord, that is, "government by law based on the consent of the governed, maintained by free men for the glory of God."

We can be encouraged that there are those who would yet combat the modernism, immorality, atheism of the day. But they must understand, and we must also remember, that the tide of wickedness will not be stopped—till Christ returns in judgment on the clouds of glory. One must continue to raise testimony against wickedness, but not with the idea that finally we will make of this world a better place. Certainly, the purpose of God will be fulfilled. Neither an atheistic Communism nor a non-theistic Democracy can defeat the purpose of God. But His purpose is that, through even intense persecution at the end-time, He will gather unto Himself His elect people and bring them into heaven with all its glory. There will they enjoy government as this world can not know. It will not be communism, nor dictatorship, nor democracy—but Christ Himself will be King forevermore.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

The Rejection of Saul

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

*Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,
It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned
back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments.
And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.*

I Samuel 15:10, 11

The battle of Michmash was a great turning point for the nation of Israel. Ending in the overwhelming victory which it did, it broke the strangle-hold which the Philistines had upon their land. So completely had the Philistines dominated their land that every weapon of war, except for those of Saul and Jonathan, had been taken from them, and every smith capable of producing weapons too. In the eyes of the nations, Israel had been rendered entirely incapable of waging battle. But their God was with them, and with one sweeping blow all of this was changed. A great victory was won, and from the plunder of the battle more than sufficient weapons were gathered to supply a sizable army. Once again Israel was a force to be reckoned with in Canaan.

Neither was it only in the extent of their armament that the change was to be found. In Jonathan, the people saw the faith of God working and accomplishing things which by any other measure was utterly impossible. To it they responded. A new courage and confidence began to spread through the land such as had not been known for many years. The people began to recognize the heathen nations to be their enemies, and they were ready in the name of the Lord to go into battle against them.

In fact, even in Saul a certain change seemed to take place. It was true that he had not conducted himself particularly well at Michmash, even to the point of having to be countermanded by the people. But the feelings of the people were favorable, and they were quick to forget and forgive. With their new confidence over against the enemy, the people began to rally behind their king as never before; and it was to this kind of an attitude that Saul responded with his best. He was not a man of great discernment, he was not a man of courage, and he certainly was not a man of humility; but there was a certain graciousness of character about him which could come out when the circumstances were right. Feeling the surge of popular support behind him, Saul began to act almost as a king should. He recognized the religious nature of Israel and gave acknowledgment to Jehovah in words and ceremonial observances; he gathered behind him

a large army and went out to war against all of Israel's enemies; he began to develop and set forth the kind of pomp and circumstance which the people love to see in a king. The golden period of Saul's reign had begun.

We do not know just how long this lasted. It must have been fairly long, for the accomplishments were considerable. Feeling the strength of Israel's victory over the Philistines behind him, Saul gathered together a large army and sallied forth to do battle with the enemies of Israel on every side. It was a wonderful experience for Israel as one by one the heathen enemies, before whom they had trembled so long, were found to be helpless against the strength of Israel and the power of Israel's God. We are not given the details of this period; but we may well presume that Jonathan, his courage and his strength, played a large part in it all. But also Saul, apparently, was able to overcome his natural tendency toward cowardice so as to stand at the head of his army and reflect a certain valiancy in battle. Being king, these exploits of Saul received the greatest attention; and for every new victory Saul received the greater part of the credit. For the children of Israel, it was a new experience and almost unbelievable that their small nation could be so invincible. Day by day the adulation of Saul by the people grew; and, when the booty of battle began to pour in and the nation became wealthy besides, it went almost beyond measure. Stories were circulated of his every deed, Songs were sung to his praise. His name was honored by the lips of everyone.

It was this that Saul loved more than anything else. Although he never would have admitted it, it formed the real and basic reason for his wanting to be king. He was concerned about Israel as a nation, but only because he found in Israel the means for obtaining his own praise. He was ready to give religious recognition to Jehovah God, but only because he felt that somehow the ceremonial recognition of God held the key to his own glory. For Saul, his own glorification was the primary purpose of all life; and once he had actually tasted of its addicting sweetness, it drove him with compulsion to want more and more and more. He never tired of the praises of the people and their

shouts of adulation. To obtain more and more of it, he moved from campaign to campaign and from battle to battle, always determined that each time his own reputation would surely soar to ever new heights of recognition. And it worked—until, that is, he came to the battle with the Amalekites.

Even this campaign began well enough. In fact, Samuel came to him with a special commission from God. He said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

To Saul's way of thinking, this commission in itself was flattering enough. Traditionally the Amalekites had been among the most bitter and most repulsive of Israel's enemies. Not only were they descendants of Esau the antagonist brother of their father Jacob, but when Israel was passing through the wilderness, they had made themselves abhorrent by attacking and practicing atrocities upon the weak and defenseless Israelites who straggled behind in the wilderness march. That he should be given the task of making reprisal for this and so justifying both Jehovah and His people over them, was a singular distinction and honor.

With enthusiasm and zeal, Saul gave himself to the preparing of the campaign against the Amalekites. He sent a special call throughout the land and brought together the largest army he had had for any campaign, two hundred thousand men plus ten thousand more from Judah. It was a wonderfully large army and a wonderful feeling to lead it out into the field of battle.

The battle itself was nothing spectacular. There was never any doubt but that Israel was in complete control of it from the very start. In fact, Saul even held up the battle for a time to allow the Kenites, a people traditionally friendly to Israel, time to escape. Once Saul gave the command to attack, the Amalekites were helpless before them and their armies were slaughtered at will. The difficulty came when Saul and his men returned from the battle to the task of annihilating what remained of the nation, both people and possessions. It was not particularly that Saul wanted the booty for himself. In the last few years he had gathered enough of that to be sufficiently wealthy, and besides, his ambitions did not run especially along those lines. Moreover, Saul realized that the Amalekites were cursed in a special way by Jehovah and their annihilation was required just as Jericho's had been in the days of Joshua. It was just that somehow it didn't seem right to have to return home to his people with nothing but a verbal report of what had happened. How could they be expected to feel what a wonderful victory he had won? How would they be able to understand what a great thing he had done in Jehovah's behalf? If only he could bring back

something visible, something tangible for them to see and feel and know what he had done. For example, there was Agag the king of the Amalekites bound and humbled before him. If he would slay him out here on the battle field, that would be the end of the matter and no one would think any more of it. But if he could parade him bound and fettered before the people, O how the people loved to see a monarch captured alive and humbled by Israel. Afterward he could still kill him, and what would be the difference? And then there were all the fattened cattle for which the Amalekites were famous. Already he had received several requests from the men to allow them to keep at least some. He realized that they had to be sacrificed for God; but why couldn't he take them home and make of them a great sacrificial feast in which all of the people could participate? Already Saul could feel the excitement of such a great festival as all of Israel gathered about him in praise and adoration, feasting and gazing upon the mighty Agag whom he had humbled. Could even Jehovah fail to be pleased with that? With sudden resolve, Saul determined to do it, although underneath he knew full well that he might hope never to have to explain his decision to Samuel.

But even as Saul made his way back to Israel, God was preparing Samuel for just such a meeting. At eventide, He came and said to Samuel, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments." It was a devastating blow. Oh, Samuel had felt all along that there was something terribly superficial about Saul, something insincere. But still he had come rather to like that man; and in fact he had not felt himself unmoved with the enthusiasm he inspired among the people. And he had really hoped that given a bit more experience Saul would come to understand his duty and responsibility to Jehovah more seriously. And even if he couldn't, there was still Jonathan next in line for the throne. Surely he was a young man beyond compare. Could not the Lord wait for him to be king? It grieved Samuel no end, and all night long he spent in anguished petition for Saul and Jonathan. But the word of the Lord was unchanging, and with the morning all Samuel could do was go to find Saul.

It took some hunting for Samuel. At times it seemed that Saul had purposely tried to avoid him; but at last he found him at Gilgal.

For Saul, the trip home had been a wonderful, exhilarating experience. Before his chariot walked Agag humbly dragging his heavy fetters; behind him came his men driving the best and most beautiful cattle of the Amalekites; about him flocked the people of Israel wildly shouting their praise and adoration, it seemed to Saul, as never before. This was for Saul sheer joy, so much so that his inward uneasiness at going against Samuel's command at times almost seemed to disappear. Of this much Saul was sure, it was well worth it. Especially was this so when he arrived at Gilgal and began to make plans for that great day of sacrifice and feasting when all Israel would be gathered about him to sing his praises. With heady excite-

ment, Saul worked at making preparations, until, that is, he lifted his eyes and saw Samuel approaching.

At the moment he saw him, Saul knew that there was trouble in the old prophet's eyes. And yet, for lack of anything better to do, he had to try to forestall it; and with a bold pretended innocence, he hurried to meet the prophet and said, "Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the

LORD."

But Samuel was no one to be feigned from the point. His answer was a cold, cutting, rhetorical question, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" The sheep themselves were beyond the range of human hearing; but Saul knew what Samuel meant. He had been discovered in his sin.

IN HIS FEAR—

Handle With Care

by Rev. J. A. Heys

Isaiah saw God upon His throne and seraphim before that throne.

With one pair of wings they covered their faces. With another pair they covered their feet. And with one pair they flew through the heavens. But what interests us more particularly at the moment is that they cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." Isaiah 6:1-3.

What a beautiful picture! What a God-glorifying picture! What an example of humility! What an indictment upon so much that is actually practiced by *men* upon the "whole earth"!

Do you agree with the seraphim?

Listen to the conversation of men round about you. Listen carefully to your own speech. Observe whether you cover your face and figuratively stop your ears or absorb and remain untouched by the blasphemy, the cursing, the swearing wherein God's name is taken in vain, before you answer the question as to whether or not you agree with the seraphim that holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts!

It is rather difficult to say and prove the point that we live in a day and age when God's name is taken in vain more widely and boldly than ever before. We have lived only in this age, and the writings of men, their published works, do not necessarily reflect with accuracy what the common man spoke on the street, in private and in his conversation with others. One thing has become evident in the life span of the generation to which the undersigned belongs: whereas formerly an evil word, a word that then was considered objectionable and liable to be branded as cursing and swearing was present only by its first letter to be followed with a blank space, today it is spelled out in full and appears in what formerly were considered refined and cultured writings. Radio and television still have their restraints so as not to offend the public. But God's name is not lifted with reverence today in

many circles. It is not handled with the care demanded and revealed in Holy Writ. And the tragedy of it all is that the ears of the believers in God's church become calloused so that the daily hearing of it does not pierce our souls as it once did and always ought to do.

Yet the third commandment is plain: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain. The commandment deals with God's name and the vain, empty use of that name. It warns us that using the name of God for any other reason than those for which He gave it, that lifting it up and taking it upon our lips for our own carnal benefit is an act of hating Him and that He, the jealous God will most assuredly visit this act of hatred with the everlasting punishment of hell! In His fear we will handle His name with care, yea with tender loving care!

When you mention a person's name you touch him. You can mention sin after sin, heap ridicule upon ridicule upon an action and present a deed as utterly foolish without hurting anyone. But the moment you mention one's name in connection with such actions, you have touched that person and hurt him. David could allow Nathan, the prophet, to present the case of a selfish and thieving rich man who took the one little lamb from his neighbour, which was this neighbour's sole possession, to feast a guest that had come to his house. David could become furious at such injustice. But when Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man", he touched him; and all that evil came to rest on David's head. The same, of course, is true from the other point of view. By the mentioning of a name, a person is designated to a place of honor, and you have touched him pleasantly. The seraphim do that when they cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." May that be the way in which we use His name!

The name identifies the person. And whereas our names say nothing about us and may be attached to the

neighbour as appropriately as to us, there is an element of confusion and misunderstanding at times as to who is meant and to whom this good or this evil is to be attached. But there is one God. And there is one Jehovah. Whenever we say, "My God", we have touched Jehovah. We have called upon Him; we have asked Him to listen to us. We have handled His name with or without care. We have lifted it from its holy position either with holy or unholy tongues. The idol is nothing. It is a nonentity, and therefore every time we say God, whether we say it and write it with a capital letter or a lower case letter, He is touched. He knows that there is no God besides Him. He knows that He is God alone. And when you say "God", He without exception considers it a reference to Himself. As the jealous God that He is, He cannot and will not consider that anyone else is implied when that name God in any form is used.

He is jealous of His position as God alone. He is jealous of His glory as God. And exactly because He is the sovereign God of heaven and earth, the Creator of each and every creature, He has a perfect right to be jealous and to punish all those who show hatred against Him by their vain use of His name. He "exacts exclusive devotion" and "is intolerant of rivalry." This He may be because He is God alone. And whether we like it or not, we cannot change that fact. Man has tried to do so for well nigh six thousand years. Man has tried to become His equal. He has tried to reach up and drag God down to his level. He has tried to climb up to sit next to Him. But he has failed utterly and will always fail, for he has been made by God and depends upon Him for all things.

Let us beware then lest we provoke Him by our evil use of His name. What is evil use of that name? The third commandment speaks of vain use, and the word vain means empty, idle, purposeless. Of course, a man does not always use that name purposelessly. There are times when he need not mention that name at all and when he does so nevertheless. That is a purposeless, vain, idle use of the name. So often His name falls off the lips of men (and women) when they do not have Him in their thoughts at all. That is vain use. That is purposeless use. But the idea of vain use means much more. It means each and every use of that name for any other purpose than that for which God has given it.

He has given us the name of God, with all its variations, in order that we may speak to Him and of Him with reverence. Without knowing His name we could not pray to Him. Without that name we could not teach our children concerning Him. We could not sing His praises. Without that name we could not comfort one another by reviewing His promises and work. And if we use His name for any other reason than to speak to Him and of Him with reverence, we have taken that name in vain. Whenever we use His name without having Him in our thoughts and without consciously referring to Him, we have misused His name and sinned against Him! The seraphim use it to praise Him, to speak to Him of His glory. And they do so with the fear of reverence. For they hide their

faces before Him with one pair of their wings. They handle His name with reverent care. They lift it delicately and in effect in their cry express that His name is holy.

Now that which is holy is set aside, cut off from and separated for a special purpose. That we are holy means that we are cut off from sin, are a separate people. The temple of God was holy in that it was set aside as the house in which He dwelt symbolically. This was not true of any other building. Even this temple had a holy place and a most holy place. These were set off from the rest by veils, the one in the inner part of the temple, cut off more completely than the other and might be entered only by one man one day in a year. And that God's name is holy means that we are not to use it whenever we please and in whatever way we please, but that it must be used with great discretion and reverence before God.

We live in a day of cursing, swearing and blasphemy, and these are acts of hatred against God. Let us see that once. Consider that to curse is to call upon God to damn, to put in hell, to punish. It makes no difference then whether we actually use the name of God literally or simply use the word damn, and consign to hell, it is God alone Who can and does damn and punish with hell fire. Let us remember that, if we are given to damn this and that and the other thing. Let us remember that we are calling upon God to do something for us and that we want God to curse, to pour out hell's torments upon someone or something. It is at the same time an awful thing to call for, and often also utterly ridiculous. In our carelessness we hit our finger with the hammer and damn the hammer! We dare for such a triviality to call upon the great and glorious God in heaven to seek vengeance upon the hammer. And we are calling for a ridiculous thing for hell fire is for persons and not for inanimate things. God's wrath in hell is against sin and sinners. Indeed, God hates the sinner as well as the sin. He puts *sinners* in hell and not sin. There will be no sin in hell, but there will be sinners. And unless we want to take the impossible and unscriptural position that there is change in the unchangeable I AM, Who can never say I was or I will be, we must insist that His attitude towards the sinner today is the same as it will be in that day when He has brought the sinner into hell. He does not have a temporary love, mercy and grace but an eternal love and mercy and grace.

But what an awful thing then for a mother to damn her child! For a brother to call upon God to place his brother according to the flesh or spiritual brother into the torment of hell! Yet that is done! A little anger, a little provoking, and men will dare to call down hell's torment upon their fellow men and to "bother" the almighty God to ask Him to do this. Think it over! It is sin against the neighbour as well as sin against the living God. How awful when we curse ourselves! This Peter did as we read, when he cursed and swore that he did not know Christ. And it makes no difference then whether we are squeamish and lack the courage to use the word damn and resort to other words beginning with the same letter such as darn, dang and

the like, it is calling upon God to punish the creature for our benefit.

Think of it! Little specks of dust that are utterly dependent upon this great and glorious God before whom the seraphim wisely in utter humility (and we were created a little lower than these seraphim) cover their faces, guard their tongues, handle His name with care and use His name only to praise Him. Who are we anyway that we dare to call this sovereign and great God to come down and do something for our sinful flesh? We have no right to bother Him with our sinful lusts and ambitions. We have no right to treat the living God as a servant, and surely no right to treat Him as one whom we can ask to further us in our sinful ambitions and carnal aspirations. Do we forget that He is God? Are we—for indeed we are—walking in violation of the first commandment and of the second by a god of our own imagination to whom we

run for protection in our sin and lust? We have said it before: all sin is a violation of the first commandment. No matter in what form the sin may appear, it is always an act of going against Jehovah and His holy will. It is pushing Him aside, denying Him, setting ourselves up in His place, deciding for ourselves what is good and what is evil. If we live in the faith and consciousness that He is a sovereign and jealous God, we will live in His fear and lift His name with due respect and reverence.

And does it bother you at all to hear the world round about you take God's name in vain with cursing? Do these words ring in your ears so often that they stick there, and although not uttered yet silently present themselves when you are provoked and irritated, for your own giving vent of displeasure? In His fear cleanse your hearts and minds and keep your tongue clean. Handle His name with loving care.

FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Good Shepherd of Israel

John 10:1-39

by Rev. G. Lubbers

THE "MYSTERY" OF CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE OF HIS SHEEP (*John 10:14, 15*)

Great is the *mystery* of godliness. The Christian lives by the revelation of the "mysteries" of God, the mysteries of his will in Christ Jesus. And mystery, according to the Bible, is not that which is shrouded in darkness by human cults and superstitions, but refers to the plan of God in salvation, the secret counsel of our redemption, which Christ came to reveal to us as the chief prophet. Wherefore we intentionally write above this little exposition the "mystery" of Christ's knowledge of his sheep. The knowledge which Christ has of his own, and which his own have of him, we only know because it is revealed to us! And we understand these mysteries by a faith which is the gift of God. Wherefore the Scriptures speak of the mystery of faith.

Jesus unfolds for us the mystery of what is implied in his being the good shepherd. Although he had spoken of his being the good shepherd in the former verses he nonetheless speaks of this once more here in the verses 14, 15. This is no more repetition; it is rather a picking up of the chief subject once more to tell us some more of the implication of this Divine mystery of redemption. The subject deepens as it progresses in the mouth of Jesus. In our verses we see the very heart of what constitutes Christ as being the good

shepherd, and, incidentally, we also see why all others who came before him must be either hirelings or thieves and robbers by comparison.

It should be carefully noticed that the reasoning here is Theological and Christological. The reasoning is from the relationship of God to Christ, and the relationship of Christ to the sheep! This thought is, sad to say, somewhat lost in the King James Version. The *comparison* between the Theological and between the Christological is not stated. The translation in the KJV makes of "As the Father knoweth me" an independent sentence, a new sentence, while in the Greek it is quite evident that the translation should read "I am the good shepherd, and I know the mine, and the mine know me, *even as (kathoos)* the Father knows me and I know the Father." In other words the KJV does not allow for the comparison between the Father's knowledge of the Shepherd and the Shepherd's knowledge of the sheep, nor for the comparison of the Shepherd's knowledge of the Father and the knowledge which the sheep have of the Shepherd. That element of the comparison is lost in the KJV translation. Nevertheless such a comparison is clearly taught by Christ in the text. It constitutes the very heart of the "mystery" earlier referred to by us!

Christ takes his stand and starting-point amongst the sheep as the good shepherd. He stands on earth

among the sheep when he thus speaks; he stands in his relationship to his sheep. From out of that position he speaks here in the text, and shows the relationship between what we see and experience by faith concerning his relationship to us and the original pattern between him and the Father. Were there no relationship of original knowledge between the Father and the Shepherd, the Mediator, there could be no corresponding relationship between him and us!

The question may be raised in connection with the text: what must we understand by this knowledge of the Father to the Shepherd? And the answer to this question depends in good measure on what, according to the text, must be understood by the concept "Father." There are those who would here speak of the relationship within the Trinity. They hold that Christ speaks here according to his divine nature as the Son and that the Father is the first person in the Trinity. But this view is evidently not according to the text nor according to the common teaching of Scripture in like passages.

For Christ is here speaking as the Shepherd, that is, as the Son in our human nature, who will suffer and die on the Cross and be raised up again on the third day from the dead. And as the Son in our human nature, really man, he stands under the law, and there says of the triune God: My God and my Father! John 20:17. Thus we read in Ephesians 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . .". It is evident that the Father is God, the triune God. The same is also the truth of the matter in Matthew 11:27 where we read "All things are delivered to me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." In all these passages it is the Son in our human nature who is speaking, standing in our midst as the Mediator. Here in our passage, under consideration, it is the Son in our human nature who is the Shepherd. He is God in the flesh. Such is the mystery that is great.

Concerning the good shepherd's position to the Father it should be noticed, that, in that relationship, he is also standing in a unique relationship to his own sheep, the church of his choosing. Christ knows both the Father and the sheep. But Christ is known by the Father and also known by the sheep. Only the knowledge which God has of the Shepherd and the knowledge which the sheep have of the Shepherd are not on the same level. God's knowledge is first and is original with God. Our knowledge is derivative and is a gift of the grace of God.

What does it mean that the Father *knows* the Son? We should notice that the text speaks four times of knowing, and each time in the *present* tense. The "Father *knows*", "I *know*", "My sheep *know*" and "I *know*!" The tense is expressive of a present situation which ever prevails and continues. Each *knows* in his own way and in his own place and relationship. The knowledge of the Father for the Son is the pattern of the knowledge of the Son (Shepherd) for the sheep. And the knowledge of the Shepherd of the Father is the basis for the knowledge of the sheep for the Shepherd.

That is the mystery of this knowledge. It is out of the Father for the Shepherd and thus for the sheep. And the knowledge of the sheep is toward the Shepherd and thus knowledge of the Father. And thus we have the truth of which Jesus spoke in John 17:21 "That they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me".

This knowledge of which the text speaks here is indeed knowledge; only it is no mere intellectual knowledge. It is indeed the knowledge that a subject has of an object, only the object is a living object, a personal object. It is the knowledge of a moral-rational being, either of God to man in Christ, or of the believer in Christ of God. It is a knowledge of experience and love. Hence, it is always a knowledge which has its starting-point in God through Christ, and a knowledge in which the believer knows God by virtue of being known of Him.

Wherefore when the Father knows the Shepherd He knows him in infinite love and understanding, and the Shepherd knows him, being loved with a perfectly reciprocal knowledge of communion and fellowship. And when the Shepherd knows the sheep he knows the sheep in a unique way. He knows the sheep perfectly in all their sin and guilt, in all their sorrows and pain, in all their joys and sorrows. It is the most understanding knowledge of a priest who can sympathize with all the weaknesses of the sheep. And the sheep know the Shepherd in His shepherd's care, his watchfulness, his caring for them even in death's dark hour. For this is the knowledge of which Jesus speaks in John 17:3 "This is life eternal, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Such is the knowledge of God's eternal covenant of grace and mercy.

Such is the mystery which Christ here unfolds concerning the good shepherd. Only such a Shepherd, who is known of God and who knows God on that higher level, is able to know the sheep and be known of them on the lower level. But even though each *knows* on his own level, the knowledge becomes the same knowledge which spells eternal life for the sheep.

THE SHEPHERD'S AUTHORITY TO LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP (John 10:15b-18)

It belongs to the good Shepherd's place among the sheep by the Father's appointment that he lays down, places his life for the sheep. There is something about the Greek structure in the text which makes the sheep to differentiate from those which are not Christ's sheep. The sheep is almost tantamount to "my" sheep. Christ does not lay down his life for those who are not his sheep. This is evident from the fact that Christ tells the unbelieving Jews that they do not hear his voice because they are not his sheep. Were they his sheep they would surely hear as those for whom Christ laid down his life.

Before we enter into the matter of Christ having *authority* to lay down his life for the sheep, we ought to notice that there is a very close connection in the text between Christ being the good Shepherd who knows

his sheep and his laying his life down for them. He knows his sheep not because certain people were willing to use their free-will for a salvation which allegedly is made *possible* for them. His sheep are those who were given him from the Father from before the foundation of the world in the counsel of peace. That constitutes them to be his sheep. This is denied by all Arminianism and Pelagianism; but it is the gospel-truth.

Christ has received a "commandment," a mandate from the Father to lay down his life for the sheep. He did not take this glory for himself by his own will. It was thus appointed him to do. He is appointed of the Father to become the good Shepherd. He is the "David, the king" of prophecy, who shall rule over all the flock

of God. (Ezekiel 37)

By virtue of this commandment Christ had "power to lay down my life" This term power is not the translation of the Greek noun "dunamis" which means "ability" but it is the translation of the Greek noun "exousia" which really means: right, authority. He is the appointed Shepherd.

As the appointed Shepherd he has the "authority" to lay down his life in order that he might take it again. And in this he merits the Father's love as the Shepherd of Israel and fulfils all righteousness. In any other event he would have been an imposter, a usurper of power, another Satan. But now he is greeted of God to be his good Shepherd to whom all the sheep belong, both of the Old and of the New Testament.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Providence of God

According to the Confessions

by Rev. H. Veldman

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM (Lord's Days 1, 9, 10)

Question 1. What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer 1: That I with my body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him.

Q. 26. What believest thou when thou sayest, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth?"

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them; who likewise upholds and governs the same by his eternal counsel and providence) is for the sake of Christ his Son, my God and my Father; on whom I rely so entirely, that I have no doubt, but he will provide me with all things necessary for soul and body: and further, that he will make whatever evils he sends upon me, in this valley of tears turn out to my advantage; for he is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing, being a faithful Father.

Q. 27 What dost thou mean by the providence of God?

A. The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs

and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.

Q. 28. What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by his providence doth still uphold all things?

A. That we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from his love: since all creatures are so in his hand, that without his will they cannot so much as move."

In connection with these quotations from our Heidelberg Catechism, we note the following. The Heidelberg Catechism, a wonderful book of instruction, certainly contains several beautiful answers. And these are surely some of those beautiful answers. Already in Lord's Day 1 the providence of God is set forth. The Catechism begins its instruction by calling attention to this providence of God, comforting us with the thought that we are so preserved in the midst of the world that not a hair can fall from our head with the will of our heavenly Father, and that all things must work together for our good. And the same truth is held before us in Lord's Days 9 and 10. Answer 26 reiterates what we read in Lord's Day 1, declaring that the Lord will not only provide us with all things necessary for soul and body, but also that He will make all evils, which are sent me of the Father, turn out to my advantage. And in Lord's Day 10 the Catechism asks and answers the question: What dost thou mean by the providence of

God? Attention is directed to the fact that nothing comes by chance, that all things happen unto us as sent by His Fatherly hand. And we do well to notice the fact that the Heidelberg Catechism, when discussing the providence of God, emphasizes this truth from the viewpoint of the Church of God and the salvation of that Church. This applies to Lord's Day 1 and also to Lord's Days 9 and 10. The Lord preserves all things and all things take place for the sake of His Church. Nothing happens by chance or fate, but all things are constantly controlled, including all the evils that become our lot, by our heavenly Father, Who causes all things to work together for our good.

THE BELGIC CONFESSION (Article XIII)

We believe that the same God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but that He rules and governs them according to his holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment; nevertheless, God neither is the author of, nor can be charged with, the sins which are committed. For His power and goodness are so great and incomprehensible, that He orders and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner, even then, when devils and wicked men act unjustly. And, as to what He doth surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire into, farther than our capacity will admit of; but with the greatest humility and reverence adore the righteous judgments of God, which are hid from us, contenting ourselves that we are disciples of Christ, to learn only those things which He has revealed to us in His Word, without transgressing these limits. This doctrine affords us unspeakable consolation, since we are taught thereby, that nothing can befall us by chance, but by the direction of our most gracious and heavenly Father; who watches over us with a paternal care, keeping all creatures so under His power, that not a hair of our head (for they are all numbered), nor a sparrow, can fall to the ground, without the will of our Father, in whom we do entirely trust; being persuaded, that He so restrains the devil and all our enemies, that without His will and permission, they cannot hurt us. And therefore we reject that damnable error of the Epicureans, who say that God regards nothing, but leaves all things to chance.

Also in this article emphasis is laid upon the truth that nothing happens by fortune or chance. The article rejects this damnable error of the Epicureans. And it is emphasized, too, that nothing happens in this world without the Lord's appointment. And the truth is also set forth that our heavenly Father controls all things, so that all things work together for the good of His Church.

We cannot quote profusely from the writings of the early Church fathers in connection with the providence of God. Neither is this necessary. The late Dr. H. Bavinck, from whom we quoted in a preceding article, wrote that the heathen's conception of the control of all things in the midst of the world is such that they ascribed it to chance or fate. This is also stated in the confessions we have quoted. Just a few excerpts from the writings of these early Church fathers should be sufficient.

IRENÆUS

Irenaeus is generally supposed to have been a native of Smyrna. He was bishop of Lyons in France during the latter quarter of the second century. He is supposed to have died about A.D. 202. Whether he died a martyr's death cannot be definitely determined. We now quote a few excerpts from his writings as they are recorded in Vol. I of the *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. In this writing Irenaeus sets forth the truth that the world is ruled by the providence of one God, Who is both good and just:

God does, however, exercise a providence over all things, and therefore He also gives counsel....Again, that they might remove the rebuking and judicial power from the Father, reckoning that as unworthy of God, and thinking that they had found out a God both without anger and merely good, they have alleged that one God judges, but that another saves, unconsciously taking away the intelligence and justice of both deities. For if the judicial one is not also good, to bestow favours upon the deserving, and to direct reproofs against those requiring them, he will appear neither a just nor a wise judge. On the other hand, the good God, if he is merely good, and not one who tests those upon whom he shall send his goodness, will be out of the range of justice and goodness; and his goodness will seem imperfect, as not saving all; for it should do so, if it be not accompanied with judgment.

And then Irenaeus proceeds to refute the heresy of Marcion who divides God into two, maintaining one to be good and the other judicial, which, so Irenaeus maintains, puts an end to deity.

EXCERPTS FROM VOL. VII OF THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS

Afterwards Epicurus said that there was indeed a God, because it was necessary that there should be in the world some being of surpassing excellence, distinction, and blessedness; yet that there was no providence, and thus that the world itself was ordered by no plan, nor art, nor workmanship, but that the universe was made up of certain minute and indivisible seeds. But I do not see what can be said more repugnant to the truth. For if there is a God, as God He is manifestly provident; nor can divinity be attributed to Him in any other way than if He retains the past, and knows the present, and foresees the future. Therefore, in taking away providence, he also denied the existence of God.

Let the commencement of our work therefore be that inquiry which closely follows and is connected with the first: Whether the universe is governed by the power of one God or of many. There is no one, who possesses intelligence and uses reflection, who does not understand that it is one Being who both created all things and governs them with the same energy by which He created them. For what need is there of many to sustain the government of the universe? unless we should happen to think that, if there were more than one, each would possess less might and strength. And they who hold that there are many gods, do indeed effect this; for those gods must of necessity be weak, since individually, without the aid of the others, they would be unable to sustain the government of so vast a

mass. But God, who is the Eternal Mind, is undoubtedly of excellence, complete and perfect in every part. And if this is true, He must of necessity be one.

Another question follows: Whether there be one God or more? And this indeed contains much ambiguity. For not only do individuals differ among themselves, but also peoples and nations. But he who shall follow the guidance of reason will understand that there cannot be a Lord except one, nor a Father except one. For if God, who made all things, is also Lord and Father, He must be one only, so that the same may be the head and source of all things. Nor is it possible for the world to exist unless all things be referred to one person, unless one hold the rudder, unless one guide the reins, and, as it were, one mind direct all the members of the body. If there are many kings in a swarm of bees, they will perish or be scattered abroad, while, "Discord attacks the kings with great commotion." If there are several leaders in a herd, they will contend until one gains the mastery. If there are many commanders in an army, the soldiers cannot obey, since different commands are given; nor can unity be maintained by themselves, since each consults his own interests according to his humours. Thus, in

this commonwealth of the world, unless there were one ruler, who was also its founder, either this mass would be dissolved, or it could not have been put together at all.

These excerpts should be sufficient. We need not doubt but that the early Church fathers certainly maintained the truth that the providence of God is the Lord's almighty and omnipresent power whereby He, having created the universe, also continues to uphold and govern it even according to His will. However, there are several important details to which our attention ought to be directed. Interesting, of course, is the providence of God when viewed as government. And one cannot deny the importance of the relation between God's providence and sin. Fact is, sin and misery constitute a terrible reality. What must the Church confess and believe with respect to the Lord's providence in connection with them? To these matters we certainly expect to call attention in subsequent articles. We do not expect to solve the problem of God's sovereignty and sin. But we certainly believe that the Scriptures do throw light upon this question.

HEEDING THE DOCTRINE

Barth's Doctrine of Scripture -8-

The Reformers on Scripture (Continued)

by Rev. D. J. Engelsma

The Reformers did, as Barth contends, maintain that Scripture cannot be believed or understood without the activity of the Holy Spirit. In his *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther hammers on this point with vehemence:

"nobody who has not the Spirit of God sees a jot of what is in the Scriptures" (p. 73. These quotations are taken from the translation of Packer and Johnston—D.E.). "The Spirit is needed for the understanding of all Scripture and every part of Scripture" (p. 74).

Calvin is in full agreement:

"For as God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit" (Institutes, I, VII, 4). "Then only, therefore, does Scripture suffice to give a saving knowledge of God when its certainty is founded on the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit" (Institutes, I, VIII, 13). "we need not wonder if there are many who doubt as to the Author of the Scripture; for, al-

though the majesty of God is displayed in it, yet none but those who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit have eyes to perceive what ought, indeed, to have been visible to all, and yet is visible to the elect alone" (Commentary on II Timothy 3:16). "without the illumination of the Spirit the word has no effect" (Institutes, III, II, 33). "the word cannot penetrate our mind unless the Spirit, that internal teacher, by his enlightening power make an entrance for it" (Institutes, III, II, 34).

In harmony with the Reformers, Dr. A. Kuyper wrote: "The Holy Scripture without the accompanying activity of the Holy Spirit is for us a dead book" (*E Voto*, Vol. II, p. 402. my translation—D.E.). The Rev. H. Hoeksema expressed the same thing when, in *The Lord of Glory*, he wrote: "without the Spirit the Scriptures are dead" (p. 175). And all Reformed believers confess their dependence upon the Holy Spirit not only for their belief of the content of Scripture but also for their reception of the 66 books as canonical when they say, with the Belgic Confession: "We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical . . .

believing...all things contained in them...because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God..." (Art. V). There can be no quarrel with Barth over the fact itself. The teaching of the necessity of the Spirit for one's acknowledgment and belief of Scripture occupies a rightful and important place in the Reformed doctrine of Holy Scripture. For this teaching is Scripture's own testimony. The thrust of the second chapter of I Corinthians is that man cannot know God and the things of God except God reveal Himself to a man by His Spirit. Neither could Paul himself know God's wisdom nor can any man know the words Paul speaks and writes except the Holy Spirit teach that wisdom and those words in their hearts. "...the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them..." (I Cor. 2:14). Jesus, in John 14:26, promises the disciples that the Holy Spirit "shall teach you all things." And Paul gives the Church to understand "that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (I Cor. 12:3).

But Barth's use and application of the truth that the Scriptures avail nothing apart from the internal work of the Spirit involve a serious error. For he appeals to this truth, especially, as expressed in the writings of Luther and Calvin, as an evidence of the weakness of the Bible, that is, the Bible's fallibility and "humanity." The Bible, according to Barth, can only be understood by a man when the Spirit's internal work accompanies the reading or preaching of the Bible because the Bible is the fallible, erring and weak word of man. That this is the application Barth makes of the "internal testimony of the Holy Spirit" comes out clearly when he quotes approvingly Luther's statement, "Thus Scripture is a book, to which there belongeth not only reading but also the right Expositor and Revealer, to wit, the Holy Spirit. Where He openeth not Scripture, it is not understood," and goes on to speak of Scripture's "human imperfection," of Scripture's "capacity for error," which extends also "to its religious or theological content," and of the Bible's being "the vulnerable word of man" (CD, I, 2, p. 508ff.). This explanation of the Bible's dependence upon the internal work of the Spirit in imparting the knowledge of God to men is the exact opposite of the explanation of the Reformers. That the Bible cannot be understood without the Spirit is not due to the weakness of the Bible but is due, rather, to the weakness of men. Because all men by nature are spiritually blind and ignorant, that is, totally depraved, the Bible alone does not suffice. When Luther, in *The Bondage of the Will*, defends the perspicuity of Scripture over against Erasmus, he admits that "to many people a great deal remains obscure" but he explains this to be due "not to any lack of clarity in Scripture, but to their own blindness and dullness, in that they make no effort to see truth which, in itself, could not be plainer" (p. 72). Men who do not know Scripture, in the pregnant sense, are "like men who cover their eyes, or go from daylight into darkness, and hide there, and then blame the sun, or the darkness of the day, for their inability to see" (p. 72). Again, Luther em-

phasizes that "nobody who has not the Spirit of God sees a jot of what is in the Scriptures" (p. 73). But immediately he adds, "All men have their hearts darkened, so that, even when they can discuss and quote all that is in Scripture, they do not understand or really know any of it" (p. 73). Calvin's view is precisely the same as Luther's. He states: "without the illumination of the Spirit the word has no effect" (*Institutes*, III, II, 33). Why is this? "...such is the proneness of our mind to vanity, that it can never adhere to the truth of God, and such its dullness, that it is always blind even in his light" (*ibid.*) As far as the Word itself is concerned, "A simple external manifestation of the word ought to be amply sufficient to produce faith..." The reason it does not is "our blindness and perverseness" (*ibid.*). The Word is the gloriously bright sun that shines on us; "we are all naturally blind..." (*ibid.*, 34).

It is the same with Scripture and us as it was with Jesus and His audiences. Jesus taught and preached God's Word, infallibly. Yet, many of His hearers remained ignorant of Jesus' words, while those who did come to know them did so only because the Spirit was their internal Teacher. This may not be explained in terms of the weakness of Jesus' words but rather must be explained in terms of the spiritual impotence of all men by nature. And even when men, lacking the illuminating Spirit, remain deaf to the words of Jesus or blind to the Scriptures, the words of Jesus and the words of Scripture have power and effect, through the same Holy Spirit — to harden in unbelief.

Having noted the illegitimacy of Barth's appeal to the Reformers in support of his doctrine of Scripture, we must still come to grips with Barth's conception of the work of the Spirit in bringing the Word of God to men through the Scriptures. Barth denies that the internal testimony of the Spirit consists of the Spirit's binding the Scriptures upon our hearts. The Spirit does bind upon our hearts the "Word of God" and He binds this "Word" upon our hearts in connection with the Scriptures but that which is bound upon our hearts is not the Scripture itself. It is a "Word of God" that stands somewhere behind the Scriptures and a "Word of God" that may very well say the direct opposite of that which the Scriptures say in a given passage. Indeed, not only does not the Spirit's internal testimony consist exclusively of convincing us of that which is written in the Scripture but the Spirit often is a *critic* of the Bible. The Spirit tells us, with regard to this or that passage of the Bible, that the Scripture is in error, also theologically, and then, presumably, instructs us, with regard to that same erroneous passage, what the truth of the matter really is.

This activity of the Holy Spirit, we emphatically deny. The Holy Spirit is no critic of the Scriptures. If He were, He would be a critic of Himself, for He gave the Scriptures. The Spirit testifies *to* the Scriptures, not "through" them, and He gives us understanding *of* them, not in spite of them. It is obvious that such a view of Scripture and the Spirit as Barth's opens the way for any and every conceivable "explanation" of the words of the Bible. The criterion of

exegesis (interpretation of Scripture) is not Scripture itself but this strange "Spirit" in the individual interpreter's heart. In the end, the measure of the Scriptures is the mind of man.

An example may serve to make plain the dread error to which Barth's view exposes the Church. Several years ago, Markus Barth, son of Karl, debated a Christian Reformed theologian on the question of the infallibility of the Bible. It became plain that Markus' doctrine of Scripture was similar to his father's. In the course of the discussion, the subject of the imprecatory Psalms was brought up, especially, Psalm 137:9: "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." Markus was asked whether this passage was infallibly inspired. He replied that it was indeed God's will that this text be in the Bible but only as an indication that the secondary authors were sinful men who let their cruel and bloodthirsty natures get the best of them, from time to time. In other words, the Holy Spirit testifies to our hearts that Psalm 137:9 is the product of the Psalmist's corrupt nature, to be explained in the congregation as an evidence that the Psalmist was a wretch, no better than any one of us.* What havoc does not such a notion of the Scriptures and the Spirit wreak with Scripture? Such a theory gives to every interpreter of the Bible the right to make the Bible

say what he thinks it should say or what he wants it to say.

Ultimately, Barth's view of the Scriptures and the Spirit does not differ from the view of the "fanatics" in Luther's day who discarded the written Word in favor of "Spirit." Both discard an objective written Word of God and bring in a Holy Spirit to replace that written Word. The Reformed reaction to this doctrine should not differ from Luther's reaction to "the heavenly prophets." Said Luther to them: I flatten your Spirit with the Scripture. "*Ihren Geist haue er uber die Schnauze*" ("I slap your spirit on the snout").

Footnote

*Compare with this "exegesis" of Psalm 137:9 the remarks of Calvin on the same passage: "It may seem to savour of cruelty, that he should wish the tender and innocent infants to be dashed and mangled upon the stones, but he does not speak under the impulse of personal feeling, and only employs words which God had himself authorized. . ." Calvin, who supposedly holds the low view of Scripture that permits such exegetical outrages to be perpetrated upon the Bible, recognizes full well the offensiveness of the passage to every human mind but does not on that account reject it. He does not reject it because for Calvin the Bible is not the word of man but the Word of God. Therefore, Calvin bows, even when the Word of God offends him.

BOOK REVIEWS—

Inasmuch, Christian Social Responsibility In 20th Century America

The Theology of Augustine

The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin

Missionary Principles

INASMUCH, Christian Social Responsibility In 20th Century America; by David O. Moberg; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965; 216 pp.; \$2.45 (paper).

The subject defined in the sub-title of this book, a Christian's social responsibility, is a burning issue at present in the Church. There are liberal churchmen who see no end at all to social activity and who turn the gospel into a social gospel. There are others who strenuously protest this involvement in social issues and insist that this is not the calling of the Church. The author of this book claims to occupy an evangelical position halfway between these two extremes. He

repudiates outright liberalism and rejects a social gospel. But he also calls the church to greater participation in the social problems of the day and reprimands the church for being slothful in this regard.

The first part of the book is the most important since in it the author discusses the principles upon which he bases his position. The last part deals with an elaborate program for social action.

Insisting that, while the Christian must work for the regeneration of the individual he must also labor towards social renewal, he establishes what in his opinion is the Scriptural and theological basis for social action. He finds the calling for social involvement in the

command to love one's neighbor; in the example of Jesus who fed the hungry, healed the sick, etc.; in the parable of the sheep and the goats recorded in Matt. 25:31-46; and in other parts of Scripture. He finds the theological basis in God's universal love for men, in the universal brotherhood of man, in the general atonement of Christ and in man's free will. He ties social action in closely with missionary work insisting that social action is a form of missionary work; or, at least, a means to open the door to missionary labor.

Inasmuch as we must reject the doctrinal basis, presumably we must also reject the social program founded upon it, since, as he himself contends,

action comes forth from principles. But the question which still needs answering is the question of Scriptural bases for social action. In spite of the attempt to prove this calling from Scripture, the question still persists. Scripture does not call the believer to an elaborate social program but rather insists that the Church's business is to preach the gospel in order that the full number of the elect may be gathered. The efforts of the world (with which the author admonishes us to cooperate) are always doomed to failure, for the world lives under the curse. Only in Christ is surcease from the world's ills.

The Theology of Augustine, Part II: The Doctrine of God According to Augustine, by Prof. Dr. A. D. R. Polman, 411 pages, f 19.75; Published by J. H. Kok N.V.

Prof. Dr. A. D. R. Polman is a professor at the Theological School of Kampen, Netherlands. His other book on the theology of Augustine is: "The Word of God as According to Augustine. In this volume, Part II, the professor discusses this subject under the following headings: Preliminary Orientation, the Existence and Knowledge of God, God Triune, God in the Riches of His Virtues, Resume of Some Results. The book is written in the Holland language.

This book is not a book for laymen. It contains several foreign quotations. Although the question whether Dr. Polman presents an objectively true presentation of Augustine's conception can be answered only when comparing it with the writings of the eminent church father, I would assume that the professor is accurate in what he sets forth as the doctrine of this renowned church father. In His opening chapter on Preliminary Orientation, he emphasizes the difference between Augustine's conception and doctrine of God and that as set forth by heathen philosophers. The value of the book is, of course, that it sets forth this doctrine of God as taught and proclaimed by Augustine. Considering the fact that we should value highly the works of Augustine, we surely can recommend this book of Dr. Polman to all those who are able to read it.

H. Veldman

THE REGISTER OF THE COMPANY OF PASTORS OF GENEVA IN THE TIME OF CALVIN, Edited by Philip E. Hughes; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids; 380 pp.; \$12.50.

This is a very valuable book for all

those who are interested in the Calvin Reformation. It contains the minutes of the Consistory in a period from 1541, ten years after Calvin's first arrival in Geneva, to 1564, the year of Calvin's death. While the minutes are not complete (for they were irregularly kept), they give considerable insight into the affairs of the Church during this important period of the Reformation. Their value is to be found especially in the light they shed upon the relations between church and state in Geneva—a relationship oftentimes very much strained; in their extensive records of the cases involving Servetus who denied the eternal Sonship of Christ and was burned at the stake, Jerome Bolsec who denied eternal predestination, and Berthelier. In the case of the latter, the question of whether the ecclesiastical authorities or the civil authorities had jurisdiction in the important matter of excommunication came to a head. This case dragged on for years while the council refused to recognize Berthelier's excommunication to the anger and annoyance of the ministers. Finally, in January of 1555 it was conceded that "the Consistory should retain its status and exercise its accustomed authority, in accordance with the Word of God and the Ordinances previously passed."

The book contains a valuable introduction by the editor in which the minutes are put in their proper historical perspective. There is also a translation of the ecclesiastical ordinances by which the Church of Geneva was governed—ordinances which, in many respects, contain the roots of our own Church order. The translation is eminently readable.

The book is highly recommended to all who are interested in a study of Calvin and his life and ministry in Geneva; but especially to students of the Reformation, to whom it is essential. A word of commendation ought to be given to Prof. Hughes and to the publishers for making this book available.

MISSIONARY PRINCIPLES, by Roland Allen; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964; 168 pp.; \$1.45 (paper).

If one, reading the title of this book, expects a discussion of the fundamental principles underlying the missionary calling of the Church, he will be disappointed. The book is not this. It is rather intended to be inspirational material to arouse the Church to her calling to preach the gospel to all creatures. But even in this it fails,

for the book draws too much of its material from outside of the Scriptures to be truly inspiring towards Scripturally directed missionary work.

BIBLE STUDY COURSE ON THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS, by John H. Schaal.

This small book of 48 pages is put out by the Reformed Bible Institute in Grand Rapids. It is accompanied by another small supplement book of 24 pages, both of which together are intended primarily as a correspondence course for those interested in becoming more thoroughly acquainted with Scripture in general and with the book of Ephesians in particular. It is one of nine such courses offered by R.B.I. The price of this book is \$1.00; the enrollment fee for the correspondence course is \$5.00. No doubt the book itself may be purchased separately from the course. The introduction suggests that the material can also be used in societies.

I have often pondered the advantages of correspondence courses as a means of witnessing to the truth. In fact, a few years ago a few of our ministers discussed this type of program at some length and one suggested lesson was even drawn up. It was intended to supplement a pamphlet program. I think there is room for such a program as this.

Whether this particular textbook fills the need is another question. It seems to me that a correspondence course should meet at least the minimum requirement of treating some aspect of the truth in a complete, clear and easily understandable way—especially inasmuch as such a course would be intended primarily for those who are unacquainted with the truth. I find this textbook deficient in this important respect. But soaring truths of predestination, redemption, salvation by grace alone, the elect church as the body of Christ, as well as the sobering truth of total depravity as taught in Ephesians are only very superficially and briefly treated. The same is true of the profound practical implications Paul draws from these truths in the last three chapters of the book with emphatic emphasis on the antithesis. The treatment is disappointing.

Perhaps the course (only 10 short lessons) is much too brief to do justice to this glorious book of Scripture. It might be of some help to those who are studying Ephesians in society; but a couple of good commentaries are a must. Prof. H. Hanko

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

May 15, 1966

Rev. J.A. Heys, of South Holland, has declined the call which came to him from our church at Edgerton, Minn.

* * *

This week, beginning June 1, the 1966 Synod will make decisions affecting our denomination, meaning each one of us. One of the items of business, of interest to would-be-ministers, is a proposal to offer a pre-seminary course in our Theological School. The Mission Board is planning greater activities, under the Lord's guidance and favor, and is asking for a larger committee to carry out this work. You may expect to read of some of these resolutions on your church bulletins when they have been decided. In all these matters that deal with our denominational life let us remember that Synod is not "they" but "we" who make decisions and carry them out. Let us remember this broadest gathering of our churches before the Throne of Grace.

* * *

A Report of the Western Ladies' League held April 15 at Doon Church was received over the signature of Mrs. C. Klein, secretary of the League. Mrs. R. Decker was Chairman of the day; Rev. J. Kortering was the speaker, his theme: "Enduring Friendship", based on Prov. 17:17. The societies of Hull and Edgerton provided special musical numbers. Rev. R. Decker answered questions on one of the articles in the Canons, on the necessity of society life, and on the Protestant Reformed stand on divorce and remarriage in comparison with that of the Christian Reformed Church. This was an afternoon meeting and was concluded with a lunch wherein the theme, "Christian Fellowship," was graphically portrayed.

* * *

One of Lovelands' young men, Aaron Schwarz, is stationed near Da Nang in Viet Nam, partaking in the "skirmish" which dare not be named a war. In a letter to his pastor, Rev. D. Engelsma, he writes that he is "confident of God's care for him so that he need not be afraid" even though he expects to be sent to an area where heavy casualties have been reported. That, young people is faith, an abiding trust that "God is ever mindful of His own".

* * *

Are you within easy driving distance from Hudsonville? Then plan to attend the Singspiration scheduled for June 19, sponsored by the Beacon Lights Staff.

* * *

The Spring Banquet of the Young People in the Grand Rapids Area was held May 10. Prof. H. Hanko was the speaker. His topic was "The New Morality".

* * *

The Board of the Northwest Iowa Prot. Ref. Christian School Society recently printed a Newsletter giving the statistics to date. The Society has been in-

corporated as a non-profit society in the State; lots have been purchased in Doon on Highway 167; a building has been approved at the estimated cost of \$20,245.00; \$13,000.00 of this has been received in cash and pledges; another drive for \$4,000.00 is planned for late summer; and, D.V. they hope to open the doors of their new school in the Fall of 1967.

* * *

From Doon's bulletin we learn that Edgerton, Minn. had been designated as the place for the rendering of the Choral Society's program schedule for May 1.

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Rev. G. Vos, *emeritus*, has tendered his resignation as Moderator to Hudsonville's church and Rev. H. Veldman has been appointed in his stead.

* * *

Revs. M. Schipper and R.C. Harbach had a rewarding trip "out east". They met with a congregation in New Jersey and preached and discussed our doctrine. They rejoice that many contacts were made for future correspondence.

* * *

The Young People of First Church have elected to work for some of the donations they are expecting from their congregation towards the expenses of the coming Y.P. Convention. They are announcing a Car-wash in Adams St. School parking lot on Saturday, May 28. Folks who do not have cars or who cannot bring them out to the car-wash will be given opportunity to donate to the cause by envelope in the church collection plate, May 29.

* * *

The Kindergarten Roundup was held in Adams St. School gym Thursday, May 12. This is usually conducted by the teacher expecting to have the class next season, but Adams' new teacher, Miss Hilda Meelker, is still in California and could not therefore be present. Adams' Principal, Mrs. H.C. Hoeksema, conducted the roundup and introduced the pre-kindergarteners (and new mothers) to school life, picturing this with the aid of a life-size doll who was made to learn all that the youngsters are supposed to know, and how to dress for different occasions. After this combined session, the mothers were taken into a room to discuss school life with a representative of the Mothers' Club, while the children were alone with the teacher. This little taste of school seems to whet the appetite of the children so that they are anxious for September and are more than willing to leave their mothers on that First Day of school!

* * *

Quote from South Holland: "If thou art not born again, all thy outward reformation is naught. Thou hast shut the door, but the thief is still in the house."

... see you in church.

J.M.F.