

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE:

Meditation: Intended Comfort for the Bereaved

Editorial: The Nature of the Atonement: Limited or General?

David and Goliath

The Standard Bearer: A Plan For Its Failure

Billy Graham's Answers

CONTENTS

Meditation -	
Intended Comfort for the Bereaved	50
Rev. M. Schipper	
Editorial -	
The Nature of the Atonement: Limited or General?	53
Prof. H. C. Hoeksema	
Contending for the Faith -	
The Providence of God - God's Providence and Sin	56
Rev. H. Veldman	
A Cloud of Witnesses -	
David and Goliath	58
Rev. B. Woudenberg	
Feature -	
The Standard Bearer: A Plan for Its Failure	60
Rev. G. Van Baren	
The Church at Worship -	
The Form of Excommunication - Exhortation and Prayer	62
Rev. G. Vanden Berg	
In His Fear -	
Honour to Whom Honour	64
Rev. J. A. Heys	
Trying The Spirits -	
Billy Graham's Answers	66
Rev. R. C. Harbach	
All Around Us -	
Death of the Prayer Amendment	
World Congress on Evangelism	
Nature Still Boss	68
Prof. H. Hanko	
Announcements	70
News From Our Churches	71
Mr. J. M. Faber	

THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July and August

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association

Editor -- Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to Prof. H. C. Hoeksema, 1842 Plymouth Terrace, S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. Contributions will be limited to 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten. Copy deadlines are the first and fifteenth of the month.

All church news items should be addressed to Mr. J. M. Faber, 1123 Cooper, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Announcements and Obituaries with the \$2.00 fee included must be mailed 8 days prior to issue date, to the address below;

All matters relative to subscriptions should be addressed to Mr. James Dykstra, 1326 W. Butler Ave., S.E. Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Renewal: Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order. Subscription price: \$5.00 per year

Second Class Postage paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan

MEN'S LEAGUE MEETING

Our Fall meeting will be held, D.V., on Monday evening, Nov. 7 at 8:00 p.m., at the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. R. Harbach will speak on the topic "The Significance of the Different Races in the World."

We invite all our men to gather with us for an evening of spiritual edification and Christian fellowship.
H. Dykstra, Sec'y.

MEDITATION—

Intended Comfort For The Bereaved

by Rev. M. Schipper

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."
I Thessalonians 4:13, 14

How wonderfully the Word of God, speaking to the Christian about death, softens the blow, and removes the sting!

Death!

The last enemy that must be overcome!

What is meant by it is not what we merely see of it, merely the cutting of ties of flesh and blood, the separation of soul and body, or the corruption and

dissolution of the earthly tabernacle. This all is only the result, the emblem of death!

Rather, according to Scripture, death is separation from God and His fellowship! As the Scriptures speak of it, and as we often sing of it in our Psalters: "To live apart from God is death, tis good His face to see." One, therefore, who is really dead, is the object of God's wrath and eternal displeasure!

But for the Christian the Scripture intends to destroy this very idea of death! It does so with respect to death itself, when it reminds us that God's wrath is removed, and His curse is lifted from us; when it tells us that He has given unto us a life that is immortal, that cannot die. It does this also with respect to the death of the body, when it speaks of death as a departing, and a being present with the Lord; when it speaks of "putting off this my tabernacle" or the dissolution of "the earthly house." Or again, when it speaks of our departure out of this life as an "offering," as if my life were poured out upon the altar of God. Or, as is beautifully expressed in our text, where death is spoken of in the figure of "sleep."

Thus, when we or our loved ones who are in Christ die, we or they fall asleep, asleep in Jesus!

The child of God cannot die!

He simply sleeps in, or rather, as the original text would have it, through Jesus!

He that sleeps shall awaken again in the morning of the resurrection!

So, we sorrow, but not as those who have no hope!

This is the solid comfort we need!

So it was intended also for the children of God in Thessalonica. Also their dear ones had fallen asleep! We understand this to have reference, of course, only to the body, not for the soul. The apostle here is not talking about soul sleep. This is the conception of some. They believe that when the body dies the soul enters an unconscious condition of sleep. This was undoubtedly true of some, who were later raised from the dead, and still later died again and remained in their graves,—such as, the daughter of Jairus, Lazarus, and the son of the widow of Nain. But no where does the Scripture teach that the soul is ever in an unconscious state of sleep. In fact, according to Scripture, the soul never sleeps, but it is always conscious and active. This is true of every soul, also of the wicked, who at death go into a conscious state of torment. But especially true this is of the souls of God's children! They go immediately into a conscious state of glory with Christ! That is, that aspect of the soul which the Scripture calls spirit. Concerning these the Scriptures teach: "For we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Lord God, and . . . they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

Sleep is not for the soul, but for the body!

Just like I lay myself down at night, with the thought of rising again in the morning, so is death for the body. It is a going to rest in the hope of the glorious resurrection. Just as I close my eyes and separate myself from the world about me, with a view to opening them again after the rest of sleep, so is death of the body for the Christian!

Asleep through Jesus!

Not for all is death a sleep! The ungodly die in night that never ends! They sink away in death into everlasting destruction!

Only for those who die through Jesus, is death a sleep. That means, to be in Jesus, and then die. To be hidden in Jesus, and so to enter into temporal, bodily death, that is to sleep! To belong to Him in body and soul, for time and eternity; to become one plant with Him, so that all He is, He is for us; that is, His righteousness is our righteousness, His life is our life . . . so as the text has it in the original . . . through Jesus asleep! It is by reason of Him alone that death's darkness is made beautiful. It is for His sake that our death is no longer eternal separation from God, but the sudden removal of the soul into His glorious presence, and the entering into the rest of sleep as far as the body is concerned!

This the saints at Thessalonica evidently did not know. They sorrowed over their dead as those who had no hope. Their sorrow was aggravated by the misconception of the relation between Christ's second advent and their dead. Somehow they believed that Christ's coming was so imminent that believers must be alive when He comes. But then, what about their dead? They sorrowed as those who have no hope. That is characteristic of pagans, those outside of Christ, who are without God and without hope in the world. Like them the Christians at Thessalonica acted. But were they then not acquainted with the gospel of the resurrection? Had not the apostle proclaimed this glorious gospel to them? O, indeed, they knew of this wonderful truth, but they were unable to understand it and apply it in all its implications. They were beginners who were looking for the Deliverer to deliver them from the wrath to come. But they failed to apply it to the present situation. They believed this deliverance applied only to those alive at His coming. And they despaired of those who would be dead at His coming.

So the believers were sorely in need of comfort!

And this is the comfort we need!

Sorrow not as those who have no hope!

Though sorrow we will! It is expected!

Are not those who have fallen asleep very precious?

Do they not have a place in our hearts? Do they not make up an important part of our lives? Were we not accustomed to walk the path of life together? Did we not hold with them precious secrets? Were not our hearts and theirs filled with the same anxieties and cares? Did we not lean on each other as we walked together in life? Yea, more, were not the ties more than earthly? Were we not together in Jesus? Were there not only ties of flesh and blood, but was there not also a unity of life, of love, of faith and hope? Did we not together serve one Lord, and was not one God our Father, and did not His Spirit dwell in both of our hearts? Was not one truth very precious to us, and one confession on our lips? Did we not together fight the same battles of faith? Did we not know each other intimately, while the world knew us not? Did we not walk together as strangers and pilgrims in the world?

Were not we confronted and often surrounded with the same temptations? And did we not sing often together of our Redeemer and His wondrous love to us?

And now that loved one has left you to enter the house not made with hands, while you still dwell in the tabernacle of this flesh!

Should we not sorrow because of this pain of separation? Should we not feel it when the arm that supported us is taken away? Should we be wholly unaffected when we cannot see or hear our dear one any more?

O, indeed, we may sorrow!

Never could we possibly act as the stoic or cynic, who claims to be insensitive to pain!

But we are not to sorrow *as those who have no hope!*

Nor are we to sorrow for those who are asleep *through Jesus!*

Rather let it be the sorrow of those whose hearts are filled with hope!

Hope! Blessed balm for all our sorrow!

Hope, according to Scripture, is always assurance, never doubt! It is never the shrug of the shoulder, never hesitation! That is the way we often use the word. We say "I hope so" because we are not sure. But so the Scripture never uses the word. Always it contains the assurance, the knowledge of its object. Here the apostle emphasized the knowledge of this hope. Says he, "I would not have you ignorant;" that means positively, "I want you to know, I want you to know the hope. I want you to know the hope concerning those who sleep." That you sorrow not as those who have no knowledge of it, but that your sorrow be tempered with this knowledge of hope!

In this knowledge of your hope rests all the comfort you need in the midst of your sorrow!

And this knowledge is grounded in the faith that Jesus died and rose again!

Jesus! The God of our salvation! The revelation of the God our salvation in the flesh! Who was fore-ordained to save His people from their sins, from all the effects of sin. Who was anointed to be the Head of His people and prepare the way for them, the way that must lead through death and the grave, and which must end in unspeakable and eternal glory!

He died and rose again!

These two are inseparably connected. They form one whole. Without the resurrection His death is vain, our faith is vain, our preaching is vain, and we are of all men most miserable. Without it there is no hope for those who fall asleep.

Only in the resurrection can we see His death in its proper light! Then, and only then, was His death a victory over sin, death, and the grave. So, and so only cannot death hold its prey, while the grave becomes a part of the pathway to glory!

He died a death that had the power to overcome death so as to destroy it! As the obedient Servant He descended into the very abyss of death and hell. There He declared obediently His great love of God, while at the same time He bore the curse due to our sins.

He died and had the power to rise again, because He was the Son of God, the resurrection and the life!

His death makes our death sleep, and His resurrection makes our sleep certain of waking!

So we are not like those who have no hope! They speak of "inexorable death." They say: "thanks be to God that He has not taken any away by the cold hand of death." They aver: "how thankful we should be that we are still in the land of the living." But they speak as those who have no hope! Not so, the Christian! He has a faith that ties him to the Lord Jesus. He confesses his faith that Jesus died and rose again for his justification and life. And he has a living hope that looks with assurance and longing to the awaking, in the morning of the resurrection!

Moreover, his comfort is grounded also in the promise that God through Jesus will bring those asleep with Him.

O, surely, God through Jesus will bring those who fall asleep through Jesus from the grave! And through Jesus in united and glorified body and soul shall they appear also with Him in glory!

Why then should we stand by the graves of our dear ones who sleep in Jesus and sorrow as those who have no hope?

Yea, rather, we will rejoice in the triumph we have through Jesus over death and the grave!

Through Jesus we are more than conquerors!

...This divine calling is always effectual. This does not mean that the preacher may expect that all that come under the external preaching of the Word are also called unto salvation. Always there is a twofold effect: the preaching is a savor of death unto death, as well as a savor of life unto life. But the elect are surely called. They receive the hearing ear, the seeing eye, the willing heart. They hear the Word of God and they tremble. They are sorry for their sins, and repent. They cry out: "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and receive forgiveness. They hear the voice of Jesus say to them personally: "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest!" and they come to Him and do find rest. They hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, and know that they are of His sheep. And they follow Him, and He gives them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand. For the gifts of God and the calling are without repentance.

EDITORIAL—

The Nature of the Atonement - Limited or General?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

THE CONFESSIONS ON THE DEFINITE AND PERSONAL ELEMENT OF THE ATONEMENT (Continued)

We concluded our survey of the expression of the Heidelberg Catechism as to this element of the nature of the atonement with a series of questions as to the significance of the language which the Catechism employs in this connection. These questions were all related to this one basic question: does the Catechism teach a definite and personal atonement, or does it teach an atonement which in its very nature is general, or is the Catechism silent on the matter?

In the light of the Arminian controversy, which took place, of course, when the Catechism and the Belgic Confession were already the creeds of the Reformed churches, but when there were as yet no Canons, and in the light of the fact that the Canons are officially called an explanation of some points of the doctrine set forth in the Catechism and the Belgic Confession, we might expect to find essentially the same doctrine of atonement in the Catechism and Confession as in the Canons, — only in less clear and in more unexplained form. As was pointed out last time, the Canons are but an explanation of the doctrines already contained in the other confessions, an explanation which was necessitated by the claim of the Arminians that they, too, held to the Catechism and the Confession.

Hence, the only possible answer to the question posed above is: yes, the Catechism teaches that the atonement in its very nature is definite and personal. This is the only possible explanation of the language employed by the Catechism.

To clarify the above statement, I call your attention to the following:

1) The personal language of the Heidelberg Catechism (the “we, our, us, I, my, me” which occur so frequently) is due to the subjective-experiential approach of the Catechism in all its instruction. This approach and this language do not mean that the truths expressed in the Catechism are general, and that these general truths become in fact true for the individual when he believes them and confesses them. This approach and language do not mean that what is expressed in the Catechism is objectively true or potentially true of the entire congregation, head for

head and soul for soul, which holds to the Catechism as its creed and which preaches and hears the preaching of the Catechism. But the Catechism is the expression of the faith of believers and their seed, or, of the church, organically. Who are the believers and their seed? They are the elect, the elect church. What we have, therefore, in the Catechism is the expression of the truths of salvation by the elect church as that church exists and comes to manifestation organically at a given point in history and in a given congregation, and as those truths of salvation are subjectively experienced by that church in its conscious faith. The Heidelberg Catechism, so to speak, puts words in the mouths of believers, teaching them to express and to give content to the faith that lives in their hearts and to give account of the “only comfort” that is their blessed portion.

This may very easily be tested.

Just try to read the personal confessions made throughout the Heidelberg Catechism as though they were generally true of all men, or even as though they were generally true of every individual member of a given congregation. If you do that, it will become evident that, thus interpreted, the Catechism gives expression to some blatant lies. This is the case throughout the Catechism. That “we, our, us, I, my, me” are the same throughout. Take, for example, the thirty-fourth answer, which was quoted in the previous issue: “Because he hath redeemed us, both soul and body, from all our sins, not with gold or silver, but with his precious blood, and hath delivered us from all the power of the devil; and thus hath made us his own property.” Make these statements general, general even with respect to the church as it exists in the midst of the world as a mixture of carnal and spiritual elements, and the result is evident untruth. Change that “us” of this answer to “every man” (or to “every individual member of congregation”), and the result is something which is evidently not true. Has Christ delivered every man (or even every individual member of congregation X) from all the power of the devil? Has Christ made every man (or again, even every individual member of congregation X) His own property? You answer: that is saying too much! That is pure universalism! I agree. But then the same

must be applied to the first statement of this answer: "Because he hath redeemed us...with his precious blood from all our sins." That is the same "us" as in the last clause of this answer. The atonement does not apply, therefore, to every man, nor to every member of a historically existent congregation.

2) In this personal language of faith of the Catechism there is reflected and expressed the objective truth and fact of Christ's atonement as it was accomplished nineteen hundred years ago and as that objective truth and fact has now become the personal, conscious knowledge and confidence of the child of God. This is very important. What is expressed in the Catechism with respect to Christ's atoning death does not *become true* objectively at the moment that it is embraced and confessed by the believer. Historically it *has been true* ever since Christ died His atoning death; and in the Catechism the believer simply gives expression to this truth from the point of view of the knowledge and the confidence of his personal, conscious faith. If we do not remember this, we will become engulfed in the hopeless morass of Arminianism with all its subjectivism and relativism and with all the personal doubts that it must needs engender. A knowledge and a confidence which are purely subjective, which are not founded upon objective fact and truth, have nothing to recommend them. They are as changeable and unreliable and comfortless as imperfect believers can be. The so-called "well-being" of faith has its "ups and downs" in the process of the battle of faith. And if in that process there is no objective ground and no unchangeable fact of salvation to which faith can always and again return and cling, one must needs end with the "today you're saved, tomorrow you're lost" gospel of Arminianism, according to which the matter of salvation to the very last depends on a condition of faith.

Now what does all this mean with respect to the teaching of the Catechism about the atoning death of Christ? What does it mean concretely with respect to what the Catechism says in the statements quoted last time?

It means this, that in the objective, factual sense of the word the atonement of Christ was *personal*. When the believer says that Christ atoned for him personally, that is based upon and is the expression of the objective truth that nineteen hundred years ago Christ actually died for and redeemed him personally. Christ did not die in the abstract. He did not die for all men generally and abstractly, so that His death and the benefits of His death become the portion of a certain individual only when and if that individual is willing to believe. Nor is faith in the atonement a matter of a logical deduction, as follows: 1) Christ died for all men. 2) I am a man. 3) Christ died for me. Not at all! Faith in the atonement is based upon simple, objective reality. If any man is ever to say in that very personal sense, "Christ died for me," he can only do so because as a matter of objective fact, nineteen hundred years ago on the cross of Calvary, Christ very really did die for him personally! That man was at the cross! He was very personally there,

in Christ, Who represented him — just as really as if he had in his own person atoned for all his sins. Because of that objective fact, when that same man comes to the consciousness of faith's knowledge and confidence, he is also able to express this and to say, "Christ died for *me*." You see, if that man was very really present and represented in Christ at the cross, then all his sins and guilt have been covered in the sight of God and have been removed (not now, when he believes; but at the cross, centuries ago). That is why he is able to confess now, in the twentieth century, "Christ died for me." But it was true already long before he was born; it was true, after he was born, before he ever believed; it would be true, even if that man died as an infant who never came to conscious faith and who never said or was able to say, "Christ died for me." To make the point very emphatic, although this is an abstraction and could never take place: if would be true, even though a man would be born, come to maturity, and die without ever confessing, "Christ died for me." And, on the other hand, if a man was not personally represented in Christ at the cross, and if, therefore, his sins and guilt were never covered in the sight of God and were never removed by Christ's atoning blood, then that man can never in truth confess, "Christ died for me."

Again, let us put this to a test with respect to the Catechism. We have already noted that the Catechism employs such pointedly personal language. Now let us note that the above description is exactly expressed by the Catechism when it uses such personal language. Take, for example, the 39th answer: "...for thereby I am assured (this is a matter of the present assurance of faith, H.C.H.) that he took on him the curse which lay upon me (this is the past, objective accomplishment of Christ on the cross for me personally, H.C.H.)" Is it not very plain? Though I was not yet born, I was at the cross! There, at the cross, the curse of God lay upon me personally! And Christ took that curse which lay upon me and bore it away, removed it from me! It is gone! Gone forever, before the sight of God Himself! It can never again be imputed to me. That has been true ever since Christ accomplished it. But now, in the year of our Lord 1966, by the knowledge and confidence of faith I am assured of it.

The same is true of the 44th answer: "That in my greatest temptations, (those are my present temptations, H.C.H.), I may be assured, and wholly comfort myself in this, (this is also a matter of the present, of my present assurance and conscious comfort, H.C.H.), that my Lord Jesus Christ, by his inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies, in which he was plunged during all his sufferings, but especially on the cross, hath delivered me from the anguish and torments of hell (This, too, is all personal; but it is past, objective fact, accomplished at the cross. H.C.H.)"

And again, the same is true of the 52nd answer: "That in all my sorrows and persecutions (present, H.C.H.), with uplifted head I look for the very same person (this looking with uplifted head is also present,

H.C.H.) who before offered himself for my sake, to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me (personal; but past, objective fact, accomplished at the cross, H.C.H.)...."

Indeed, this is a tremendous truth! It is amazing! Glorious! To think of it, that I could have been personally represented at the cross and that this wonderful Jesus Christ represented and died for me personally!

But this makes the gospel vital, far more vital than that miserable and impotent, "Christ died for all men; and he died also for you...if, if, if, you are willing to accept it and believe it." Moreover, it is tremendously irresponsible to go around telling men generally, head for head and soul for soul, that Christ died for them, — that is, if you give that atoning death of Christ any real and objective significance and content. That can never produce faith, you see. For if Christ died for all men, and if their guilt has actually been blotted out, then they need not believe. They can just as well say, "Fine! Christ died for me; I don't have to worry about my sin and guilt. Whether I believe or not, Christ has died, and I can never be condemned for my sins."

But if, on the other hand, that atonement of Christ is personal and particular, then I can preach. I can call men to faith and repentance. I can do so indiscriminately, and yet, as far as the content of the gospel is concerned, particularly. And I can say: "Whosoever (or: all who) believe in Christ crucified shall surely be saved and have eternal life. All who believe in Christ crucified are assured that their sins have been blotted out forever, that they are righteous before God with an everlasting righteousness." And I can preach thus because God Himself, through that preaching of the Word, will effectually apply that preaching to those same elect for whom Christ died in such a way that they, and they only, embrace that atoning death of Christ for them personally and confess, "He died for me. He took upon him the curse which lay on me. He before offered himself for my sake to the tribunal of God and has removed all curse from me...."

3) This brings us to the third aspect, namely, that these expressions of the Catechism can be correctly understood only when we understand them to express the truth of limited, definite, particular atonement, atonement for the elect alone, and that too, in the very nature of the case. This can very readily be tested; and perhaps such a test is the clearest way of demonstrating this truth. Go back now to all the expressions of the Catechism about the atoning suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Note that they one and all speak of the objective accomplishments of that death. Note, too, that they all speak the very subjective language of "we, our, us." But then interpret that subjective "we, our, us" as being general, rather than particular. What is the result? You make the Catechism say far too much! You make the Catechism say things which necessarily land it in complete universalism.

In the second place, the Catechism itself, although

it directly mentions election and the elect but very little, nevertheless shows by such mention how the subjective "we, us, I, me" are to be interpreted. You have a clear instance of this in Question and Answer 54, which speaks of "a church chosen to everlasting life," and then goes on to have the believer say, "and that I am and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof." It is very plain here that the implication of this "I" is that he is one of the elect, and that as such he gives expression to the assurance of his abiding membership in the Church, the elect body of our Lord Jesus Christ. But notice that Question and Answer 52, which speaks directly of the atonement in connection with Christ's return for judgment, also directly connects this personal and subjective "me" with election and with the body of the elect. For it speaks of the fact that Christ shall "translate me *with all his chosen ones* to himself..." It is very plain to see that this "me" is speaking here as one of those chosen ones, the elect. But mark you well, this is the same "me" that says earlier in this answer: "...who before offered himself *for my sake*, to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse *from me*...."

In the third place, I remind you once again that the Catechism's entire description of the atonement as being in its very nature *satisfactory* and *vicarious* is so definite and clear-cut that it cannot possibly be made general. To do so is to make the Catechism say far more about the atonement than even the Arminian can swallow. I repeat: the Arminian, to maintain that the death of Christ is general, must emasculate that death of Christ and remove all the riches of its atoning character; if he does not do so, he is compelled to be a strict universalist. The same is true of Dekker and Daane, though they may not appreciate the drawing of this consequence. To make the atonement general, they must necessarily give that death of Christ a different character first; if they do not do so, they must needs accept the consequence of universalism.

But what then, in the fourth place, of the one expression in the 37th answer which seems to be general? I refer to the expression, "all mankind." Note, in the first place, that this is not the same as "all men." Note, in the second place, that in the same answer that same particular "our" occurs. Hence, the term "all mankind" is the objective equivalent of the subjective "our", which in turn is the subjective expression of election from the viewpoint of conscious faith and experience. And it means not that all men are atoned for, but that when Christ dies for the elect, the *race* is atoned for and therefore saved, while some individual branches and members of that race are not atoned for and go lost forever. When God redeems His elect church, He does not rescue a few individuals, while the race nevertheless goes lost; but, on the contrary, He redeems the real human race, while some individuals go lost.

The atonement, therefore, according to our Catechism, can only be understood to be in its very nature both personal and definite, or limited.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Providence of God

God's Providence and Sin

by Rev. H. Veldman

We remarked in our last article that the child of God must have a Scriptural explanation of God's providence and sin. He must have this explanation, first of all, because of the fact of the power of sin. Sin is so universal and such a terrible reality. To ignore it is simply impossible. Sin has all men within its grasp. And no man is exempt from its results, death and the curse of the living God. With these remarks we are concluding our last article.

However, the soul of the child of God also cries for an answer to this problem from the viewpoint of God. I must have an explanation also because of God. For He is *my* God. Him I love, the eternal and only true God. As I am confronted by the reality of sin, I must have an explanation exactly because I am a child of God. Does the Lord delight in iniquity? But is He not good? Or, does sin exist independently of that eternal Jehovah? Or, if God be sovereign, the only Ruler of heaven and of earth, how must we explain that the world may continue in its course of evil and mad iniquity? To answer that the Lord permits these things to happen does not satisfy, because the Lord does not merely permit anything to happen. He works all things according to the counsel of His sovereign will. But, to say that the Lord does iniquity would be in conflict with His adorable holiness and perfection. Then again, to give sin a place independent of the Lord would be a denial of His sovereignty. And because my soul thirsts after the living God, because I desire that that God remain God, I must have an answer to the question concerning sin in connection with the providence of God. Indeed, I do not demand an answer because I would curiously pry into the secrets of the Lord, because I would understand with my finite and limited mind the ways of the Lord. The text: "For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things," must surely be applied also to the reality of sin and iniquity. In other words, also the fact of sin must somehow impart comfort to the child of the living God.

In answer to this urgent question, it must be maintained, first of all, that God is really God in all the operation of His providence. We cannot emphasize too strongly that this must be understood in the absolute sense of the word. The Lord does not only support and sustain all things, but He is also absolutely sovereign in His Divine government. We may and must surely maintain that there is nothing more certain than the word of His mouth. When He speaks it is,

when He commands it stands. All things take place through that almighty word of the Lord. In general this truth is conceded. Scripture states it so plainly, so as to tolerate no discussion or dispute, that even all the hairs of our head are numbered, and that a sparrow does not fall from the house-top without the will of the Father.

However, we must be absolutely consistent with this truth of God's sovereign control over all things. We must also understand that the reality of sin, too, takes place by the providence of the Lord. Concerning this truth, Scripture does not leave us in doubt. The Word of God speaks plainly to this effect. Do we not read in the Scriptures that God forms the light and creates the darkness, yea, that He makes peace and creates evil? Joseph is brought into Egypt through the abominations of his brothers, but when these brothers finally appear before him in Egypt he declares unto them very plainly that God turned all their evil thoughts unto good. Repeatedly we read in the Scriptures that God hardens the hearts of men. He hardens Pharaoh's heart and even proclaims unto Moses that He will work in Pharaoh's heart unto that end, and this is also announced to the monarch of Egypt, — surely, Scripture employs a language here in this connection which we otherwise would never have dared to take upon our lips. The king's heart, we read in Proverbs, is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He will. Was it not the Lord Who caused David to count the people, and we all know how Shimei cursed David when he fled from before Absalom; yet David himself declares that this cursing by Shimei was of the Lord. Godless hands nailed the Lord Jesus Christ to the accursed tree, but nevertheless He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Upon the question whether sin is independent of God, or whether this power of evil occurs alone through the providence of God, so that the Lord from moment to moment is realizing His counsel, there can be but one answer, without a single moment's hesitation: There is no evil in the city which the Lord does not perform. He, He alone, also now, is the Cause, the supreme Cause of the existence of all things; every curse, every evil thought, every rebellion of sinful man is of the Lord, not only from eternity, but He also realizes His counsel, even unto the minutest details, from moment unto moment.

Yet, confessing this truth of God's Word, this connection between God's providence and sin, we come seemingly into irreconcilable conflict with the holiness and righteousness of God. We cannot escape the word of the Lord in Job 34:10: "Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the Almighty that He should commit iniquity." Or, turning to Habakkuk 1: 13 we read: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." And the apostle John writes so uncompromisingly in his epistle that He is a Light in Whom is no darkness. Hence, the Lord God and sin must certainly be viewed as excluding one another. There is in God nothing that resembles iniquity. The Lord is truly a Light, He is Light, the overflowing fountain of all good. How now is it to be harmonized with our God, Who doth not behold iniquity, that nevertheless sin is not to be explained as independent of Jehovah, Who has formed the wicked, note well, the wicked unto the day of evil?

When discussing the question how the providence of God and sin must be understood in relation to one another, another question forces itself upon our attention: What is freedom? Many are of the opinion that freedom and responsibility are inseparably connected, and they understand freedom in the sense that the natural man, the sinner, is able not only to choose the evil but also the good. To do justice to the concept, responsibility, the ability of the sinner to choose the good must be maintained. However, we must never confuse freedom with moral sovereignty. This is the error of the pelagian. He simply explains the responsibility of man as his free will. And when he speaks of man's free will, the pelagian means that man must be free to choose between good and evil in the sense that he is able to choose either of the two. Now it must certainly be maintained that man always chooses between good and evil, and that he is also free in that choice. But today it is no longer understood that one can be responsible for his action without being able to choose the good. Of course, this pelagian conception of things is wholly impossible. It is impossible, first of all, in the light of the Word of God. The fact remains that, according to the Word of the Lord, not man determines his course of action, but the Lord. This is a Scriptural truth so clearly taught in the Word of God as to permit no contradiction. We are born dead in sins and in trespasses, and the flesh cannot desire the things that are of the Spirit. I do not determine the action which I pursue, but my heart determines this action. Throughout the Word of God we have the refutation of all pelagianism. Every thought and every desire, every emotion of the soul, every action of the will is controlled and directed by God, so that there is no action within me independent of the Lord. The Scriptures state this truth very clearly, especially in the book of Proverbs. We read in Prov. 16: 1: "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." When the man of God speaks here of the preparations of the heart he refers to the deliberations which man has in order before his consciousness out of which he must choose. Notice that the answer of the tongue, his decisive

choice is from the Lord-He alone determines our course of action. The same thought is stated in verse 9: "A man's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He will." We must bear in mind the power of an eastern monarch as he held absolute sway over the life and death of his subjects. Note that his heart, the deepest fountain of his spiritual life, is controlled by the Lord so that he does only what the Lord wills. And this we also read in chapter 19:21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Throughout Scripture the same truth is ever held before us.

Besides, we must never confuse true freedom with the ability to choose the good as well as the evil. God is surely free in the highest, the absolute sense of the word. Yet, the Lord cannot do evil. He is a Light in Whom is no darkness. God's freedom consists herein that he unhindered and unmolested wills and maintains Himself. And we must also bear in mind that God's freedom determines our freedom. This is not freedom that I can do whatever I please. This is surely not the desire of the reborn child of God to be lord himself, and that he also be able to do evil. It is not the desire of the bird to be in the water as well as in the air, or of the fish to be in the air as well as in the water. But the desire of the reborn child of God is to serve God alone; and then I will be perfectly free when I will be able to serve the Lord perfectly and unmolested by sin, in purity of heart and life. Understanding all this, we conclude that man's responsibility does not consist in this, that he is able to do the good as well as the evil; if this were man's responsibility, then we would never be able to speak of man as a moral-responsible being, and this for the simple reason that the natural mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, and neither indeed can be.

So, we must always maintain that responsibility is never sovereignty. Indeed, we shall not say that the child of God is a slave of grace, because slavery belongs in the sphere of sin, and my freedom is the service of God, to Whom I am adapted and Whom to serve is life everlasting. But man by nature is surely a slave of sin, is not truly free, is a slave in the full sense of the word, who must walk in iniquity, who cannot desire aught but evil, who is wholly darkness in all his desires and deliberations. This we must confess. And the Lord does all His good pleasure.

Nevertheless, the providence of God and sin are so related to one another that sin is always a deed of man and never of God. Man, although never sovereignly free, is morally free. To be sure, he does not possess the true freedom of the service of Jehovah. Fact is, only Adam, in the state of perfection, was able to choose the good and the evil. The natural man is unable to choose the good, can choose only the evil. The reborn child of God, as in heavenly perfection and immortality, cannot choose the evil, will never again be able to choose the evil. Man, however, although never sovereignly free, is morally free. This demands some elucidation. The Lord willing, we will continue with this in our following article.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

David and Goliath

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

I Samuel 17:42-46

We are not told whether Saul recognized David when he was brought to him at the battlefield of Elah or not. It may well have been that he did not. Although for a time David had become a very familiar figure in the royal court, the circumstances and even the appearance of David were so different as to almost defy identification. Then David had been dressed in the finest clothing that his father was able to provide; now he stood before Saul in the rough but serviceable clothing of the field. Then David had been presented in the capacity of a musician with all of the tenderness and poetic sensitivity of his nature on the fore; now he stood as a young but courageous youth ready to go and do battle where all of the strongest of Saul's warriors had backed down. Besides this, Saul's own outlook was now so completely different. Then he had been moody and depressed. Samuel had spoken some very harsh and deprecating words to him and had broken off friendship with him completely. He had been looking for some encouragement and assurance that he wasn't so bad after all. But now he was frightened, even terrorized. There was Goliath each day down in the valley calling for some one to fight him. Saul knew what was expected. He was the leader of Israel, he was the one who should meet Goliath's challenge. But he had never been a man of that kind of courage, and now all he could remember was Samuel's curse. Was this the moment so soon when the kingdom was to be taken from him? All Saul's heated mind could do was to search about desperately for something that might save him from this peril. It was no time to ask about the familiarity of someone's face. Saul's only concern was with what this young man was able to do.

At first glance the appearance of David must have been terribly disheartening. Surely when first it had been mentioned to the king that someone had been found who was willing to go out and fight with Goliath, his mind must have imagined some new recruit of unusual strength and stature whom he had not met as yet; but now there was brought before him a young man, scarcely more than a lad, with nothing more than shepherd's togs upon his back. Gently and hiding his own disappointment as best as he could, Saul said to the youth, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

Still, Saul was not able to dismiss the young man

that easily. For one thing, it was the only ray of hope he himself had. This was the only one who had appeared willing to do battle with this Philistine. As impossible as it seemed, Saul could not bring himself to let this one possibility slip away. But even more, there was the answer which the lad gave to his comment. He said, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Here was something which Saul knew full well. He had met it often before in the old prophet Samuel. It was the voice of unwavering courage arising from a living faith in Jehovah God. He had never really known it himself. In a way he had never wanted it because it implied a sacrifice of personal ambition which his nature would not allow. But he recognized that power when he saw it, and with the expression of this faith David grew before him to a stature which the eye could not measure. He did not dare to countermand him but humbly answered, "Go, and the LORD be with thee."

Nevertheless, Saul could not send the youth directly into battle without making some effort to prepare him properly. Perhaps it was a rather foolish gesture; but there was no better armor in the camp than the king's own, and so he took it off and instructed David to put it on himself. Patiently the youth submitted and put the armor on piece by piece until it became perfectly evident that it would not do. Not only was the armor much too large, but David was completely unused to such cumbersome wear as that. Respectfully but emphatically he told the king, "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them." Nor did the king dare to urge him further, for he felt himself completely outclassed by this youth. In these days when he smarted so under the curse of Samuel, Saul recognized in David that blessing he did not have for himself. In fact, as long as he could identify himself with this youth, it was almost as though he was able to escape the effects of that fearful curse. With very

unusual humility, the king left this young man to go in the way of his own choosing.

There was surely a hushed stillness that fell over the camp of Israel as this youth, of whom they all had become aware, descended from the camp into the valley to meet Goliath. To many it must have seemed the final proof that the king had lost his senses. The absurdity of it all was too evident. It was just incomprehensible that a person with any common sense would even think of sending a child against the mighty Goliath, and that was saying nothing yet about the fact that this youth had nothing but a shepherd's cloak and stave while Goliath was fully armed. Still, we would believe that there were some in that camp who against the tide of doubt held on believing to the hope which they had in God. They had heard of this youth's confession, and they remembered what such faith in God had accomplished in the past. Although they themselves had not had faith so strong as to go forth as David was now going, they did recognize and love it when it appeared in him. Thus even as the youth went down into the valley, their prayers of faith were ascending above in his behalf.

To no one, however, was this appearance of David more disconcerting than to Goliath himself. Forty days now, that great Philistine had stalked the valley of Elah calling for someone to meet him in battle. Perhaps wisdom would have dictated that long before he should have given up this approach and called for the whole army of the Philistines to make an attack upon the army of Israel. But he didn't want to do that. He wanted so badly for their victory over Israel to be a personal victory for which he alone could receive the credit. Day after day he continued to hope that Israel would finally break down and send their strongest and most capable soldier into battle. Maybe they would even send forth their king, a man known to be of considerable stature himself, or maybe they would surrender without a battle. It mattered only to Goliath that he should receive all of the credit. But now, when he looked up to see nothing but a shepherd boy coming out to meet him, and with challenge and determination in his every gesture besides, it was more than the pride of Goliath could stand. This was a cruel joke; it was an outright mockery; it was an unendurable affront. They were sending a child to fight him and one who wasn't even armed. With a sudden surge of hot anger, the blood rushed to his head while the anguished cry escaped his lips, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field."

But David was not one to tremble at words. He was not one to be concerned for his own safety. One

thing rested upon his mind and that alone. He had heard the name of his God held up in mockery, and against this mockery the name of God had to be justified. With even temper but with determined indignation, he answered the Philistine, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands."

The words had been spoken, the challenge given, and now all that remained was the battle. The giant angered beyond restraint hurried toward the youth with all of the speed that his long legs were able to provide. But David was equally determined. He was prepared for he had already stopped at the brook to place five smooth stones in his pouch; and with the light speed of an unencumbered body he came toward the Philistine equally fast. But the battle was over before Goliath ever came close enough to strike. In David's hand was his sling, and while he was still running a stone had been drawn from his pouch. It took but a moment for him to place the stone within the sling and deliver it upon its way; but it was the hand of the Lord which brought it to rest deep within the forehead of the giant. David's hands were skilled enough; but "the battle is the LORD's" he had already confessed.

One can imagine the electrified stillness which filled the air when suddenly that towering body stopped in its onward rush and then slowly began to crumble. One can imagine how the sound of that great carcass hitting the ground must have seemed to sound as thunder and the shock wave to make the hills to tremble. And still for a moment all stood in stunned silence while that youth in the valley below with careful but swift determination drew that great sword from its sheath and cut off the head of the giant; but then the hillsides erupted. With anguished surprise, the Philistines turned and ran wildly away from that fearful valley. But the armies of Israel were soon upon them. With the exhilarating speed of a sure victory, they poured into the valley and up the other side to follow the Philistines. There for a moment all knew that they had beheld a miracle. "The battle is the LORD's," David had expressed it. In this confidence they went forth, and in that faith victory only could follow.

But how is this union (with Christ) accomplished? The answer of Scripture is unequivocally: this union is unconditionally and absolutely the work of God's grace in Christ Jesus. By grace are ye saved! That implies, too, that by grace, and by grace only, you are incorporated into Christ, so that you become one plant with Him.

- H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 39

FEATURE—

The Standard Bearer - **A Plan For Its Failure**

by Rev. G. Van Baren

Last September 29 the Reformed Free Publishing Association held its annual meeting at Hudsonville, Michigan. Some of the reports of this meeting were published in an earlier issue of the *Standard Bearer*. At these annual meetings it is customary that a short speech is given by one of our ministers. This meeting, the speech was given by the present writer. I would like to share with you a few of the thoughts of this speech.

We are, and we ought to be, concerned with the publication of our *Standard Bearer*. After more than 40 years one begins to take it for granted. It comes regularly in the mails. The editor does a tremendous job by seeing to it that the *Standard Bearer* comes out on time. The various writers faithfully contribute for each issue. We pay (if we do not forget) our annual subscriptions. And we are, though vaguely, aware that someone or some group must be involved in the task of keeping the *Standard Bearer* financially solvent. Yet we have been taking this magazine rather much for granted.

Therefore, I wish to point to ways in which we can cause the *Standard Bearer* to fail. We do not want it to fail; we do not seek its failure; but through our own neglect, we unwittingly contribute towards this plan for failure. To emphasize this point, I wish to set forth a plan for the failure of the *Standard Bearer*.

First of all, one must seek to destroy or undermine the association which is responsible for the publication of the *Standard Bearer*. It should be obvious that a lively, faithful association arouses interest in its own magazine. Very likely, to many of our people outside of this association, the *Standard Bearer* is considered not only a good, but the best, religious magazine available. But it is not *their* magazine; it belongs to the R.F.P.A. But those within the association own the magazine. And because it is their magazine, they are more inclined to promote it by encouraging others to read it and to subscribe to it.

Therefore it is essential in any plan for failure, that the association itself be undermined. One can do that by discouraging membership in that organization. Convince our people that it is far easier and more beneficial personally to sit home in that easy chair.

Or convince those who do belong, that their presence is not so essential. Decisions will be made whether they are present or not. Reports will be given

whether there are 60 present, or 200. Members will be elected to the board by the votes of others without any assist from those who fail to come. So, why be there?

Encourage those who do come that this work is one which can be performed merely by the effort of man. Tell them that this is not an activity in which one is completely dependent upon the blessings of our God.

By following such a procedure, the association which publishes the *Standard Bearer* will grow gradually weaker till finally it collapses. That, it seems to me, would be a fatal blow against this magazine. If we would have it to fail, it is at this point that we must begin.

Secondly, if we are to cause this *Standard Bearer* to be destroyed, we would encourage faithlessness in the reading and study of it. You understand, the careful perusal of this or any magazine arouses interest and concern. It becomes habit-forming. The more one reads, studies, contemplates its articles, the more he looks forward for the next issue. There develops a proper craving for such materials which serve to edify him.

And not only is there then spiritual growth in the individual who reads, but such an one can hardly keep silent concerning those articles which he has read. Those which particularly interest him, those which stir up his thoughts, are also articles of which he will speak to others. In his regular visits with friends, this reader will ask the opinion of his friends on some of these articles. And if these have not read the issue under discussion, they would likely make it a point to catch up on that reading in which they were admittedly lax. Thus the one reader's interest arouses the interest of others in a sort of chain reaction. Try it once and see.

The result would be, of course, that the *Standard Bearer* would grow. The number of subscriptions would grow — for there would be more and more who would want to find out what it says. But more important, it would grow in importance to our own people. The *Standard Bearer* would become ever more important and valuable to them.

Then any plan for failure would have to seek to destroy this desire to read the magazine. First, one would gradually eliminate his own reading of the *Standard Bearer*. The reading must not be dropped

all at once. For those who were taught in the importance of reading good spiritual material, their conscience would doubtlessly disturb them were they to take such a drastic step. Therefore the reading of the *Standard Bearer* ought to be eliminated in steps. Certain of the more difficult articles ought to be passed over. Do that regularly till the articles are not even missed as far as you are concerned. Then omit a few additional articles and read two or three which appear the most interesting. This too ought to be done for a length of time before further action is taken. Next, convince yourself that you have many other and more important things to do — so many, in fact, that you will have to “postpone” reading several issues. Do not stop reading — but only “postpone” it till such a mass of material piles up that it is impossible to catch up. Pack up those old unread issues — and begin the process over again. You’d be surprised how well that works. Before long even this pretence is cast away.

Secondly, one must begin working with the next generation. If the *Standard Bearer* continues so long, we can raise a generation which cares nothing for reading — and particularly for reading spiritual materials. One must begin teaching the children now. Tell them that they are too young for the reading of the *Standard Bearer*. Suggest to them that they could better wait with reading such a magazine till they are graduates of high school — or even till after they have made confession of faith. Point out to them that the material is too “deep” for young people. Nor discuss any of the articles of the *Standard Bearer* with them or in their presence. They’ll grow into adulthood then without any care or concern for the *Standard Bearer*.

And without readers, concerned and interested readers, no magazine can long continue. It will wither and die.

One final step I could suggest towards the failure of the *Standard Bearer*. Subscriptions must drop — and they will if disinterest can be encouraged. After the faithful study of this magazine decreases and finally ceases, there continues a period in which a remnant of loyalty causes one to continue to subscribe. Or

possibly for the sake of appearance, the *Standard Bearer* can continue coming into our homes. When such a religious magazine is seen lying in our homes, it would seem as though here is a home which places emphasis upon the spiritual rather than earthly.

But one arrives at a point where it seems silly to continue subscribing to an unwanted and unused magazine. Five dollars are five dollars. The price of the subscription each year could beneficially be used for something else. Possibly one could even contribute that five dollars to the church — that serves to soothe the conscience.

Thus would the *Standard Bearer* cease to exist.

And we could readily find substitutes. There are so many other magazines which can be very beneficial. There is TIME, NEWSWEEK, LIFE, POST, and others. These can be informative and interesting at the same time. They keep us posted on those things which happen in the world about us. They provide background information for an intelligent conversation with others. Or there are other good religious magazines which are easier for children to understand. These might even have a children’s section in them. The material for us too is not so “deep.” And, after all, all other religious magazines are not evil — even though we might not always agree with everything. We do also have many other activities which can furnish us with instruction of the truth of God’s Word: societies, catechism, and centrally: the preaching of the Word. We could give up the *Standard Bearer* then.

The above represents a plan leading to the demise of the *Standard Bearer*. You for yourself can know in how far you have contributed towards making this plan a success.

But God forbid that such a plan should ever succeed. Both we and our spiritual seed need today more than ever such spiritual reading materials in our homes. By God’s grace, the *Standard Bearer* must continue to serve as a means for instruction, for warnings, for comfort. It must continue to be the bearer of that one Standard: the Word of God. By that same grace will we continue to support it, read it, discuss it — and guide our covenant seed to use such materials for their spiritual benefit.

...The preacher must be conscious of the fact that he is a minister of the mighty Word of God, and he may not leave the impression that Christ is a poor and weak beggar, Who would fain persuade men to open their hearts to Him and let Him in, but Who is powerless to enter if they refuse. In much of our modern preaching there is no longer the note of authority and power; and men, instead of being convicted of sin, and humbled in dust and ashes, receive the impression that they really would do Christ quite a favor if they would leave their wicked way and repent. God’s calling is authoritative. When He says to you: repent! woe if you don’t! But God’s calling is also powerful. When through the preaching of the Word, He enters into your inmost soul, and calls you, it is no longer in your power not to repent and not to return from your wicked way. For the Word of God is quick and powerful; it accomplishes all God’s good pleasure.

H. Hoeksema, “The Wonder of Grace,” p.56

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

*"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."
(Psalm 96:9a)*

The Form For Excommunication

Exhortation and Prayer

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

The congregation which instrumentally enacts the excommunication of the impenitent brother, is no better or more worthy than he who is excommunicated. Each member of the church, as they witness the excommunication, must feel in their hearts that apart from the grace of God this is also their just portion. None of us deserves a place in God's Kingdom. It is only the grace of God that continually leads us to repentance that gives us that place and preserves us in it. Only in the spirit and attitude of deepest humility then may the church proceed in this disagreeable but necessary work.

In connection with the actual excommunication therefore, each member of the congregation must be exhorted with respect to his attitude toward the one who is being excommunicated as well as with respect to himself. Concerning the former he may not look down upon the brother with contempt, think himself to be holier than he or treat him as scum but he is enjoined "to keep no company with him, that he may be ashamed; yet count him not as an enemy, but at all times admonish him as you would a brother." The "beloved Christians" addressed in the Form for Excommunication are Christians, not in name only, but in life and practice and as such they continue to have concern in their hearts for the eternal well-being of the brother who has been ensnared and fallen into heinous sin. They continue to pray for him, to admonish him, to direct him in the ways of the Lord in the hope that he may yet be saved. With him they cannot and may not walk for to do that would be to partake of his sin, but they certainly must manifest in every possible way their concern for his soul. This spiritual attitude is often lacking among Christians to the serious detriment of the church.

But the members of the church must also take heed to themselves. They are further exhorted with these words: "In the meantime let everyone take warning by this and such like examples; to fear the Lord, and diligently take heed unto himself, if he thinketh he standeth, lest he fall; but having true fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, together with all faithful Christians, remain steadfast therein to the end, and so obtain eternal salvation." The

seriousness of this admonition cannot be over-emphasized. It is essentially the same as the direct calling of the Word of God that we work out our salvation "*with fear and trembling*," and that we make our "calling and election *sure*." To accentuate this emphasis the attention of the brethren and sisters in the Lord is focused directly upon the example of the excommunicated member in order that we may all see what can very really happen to anyone and all of us. We are to observe how this "brother began to fall, and by degrees is come to ruin." The fall is gradual. Step by step the sinner departs from the way of truth. At first the departure may not appear to be so serious and may not even be detected as sin. But it is only the beginning and soon it is followed by another step and then another, each one more intensely wicked, until finally he is completely overcome by the power of evil. How careful we must be to avoid that first deviation from the law of God! But since we are departing every day, how necessary it is that we have the grace of repentance by which we are humbly brought to our knees in confession of all our sins, and so constantly seek Divine guidance in our way. We need to seek and desire His preservation so that we may be faithful day by day.

Noting this example we are to learn "how subtle Satan is, to bring man to destruction, and to withdraw him from all salutary means of salvation." The sinister purpose of the wicked one is not always easily discernable because he so often appears as an angel of light. Under a guise of religious piosity and with a pretense of confessing the truth he leads men astray. "Guard then," warns our Form, "against the least beginnings of evil, 'and laying aside', according to the exhortation of the apostle, 'every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; be sober, watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Today, if you will hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your hearts, but work out your own salvation with fear and trembling'; and everyone repent of his sins, lest our God humble us again and that we be obliged to bewail some one of you; but that you may with one accord,

living in all godliness, be our crown and joy in the Lord."

These matters are always extremely serious. We are living in a religiously superficial era in which these spiritual matters are so easily slighted. The speed of living and the incessant clamour for pleasure and the material things of life tend more and more to obliterate these most serious considerations from our minds. Even apart from an actual case of excommunication, the beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord may well be reminded to give heed unto these things. Failure to do so is already giving ground to the devil. If we follow on the road of materialism, humanism, worldliness, etc. Satan will, by subtle devices, continue to lead us into catastrophic destruction. In the heeding of the warnings of God's Word there is great reward.

Finally, the Excommunication Form concludes with a prayer of the church accompanied with confession of sin. Concerning this prayer we may note, in the first place, that it, together with the preceeding exhortations, proceeds on the proper assumption that the excommunicated one is not finally and hopelessly lost. In the second place, the prayer itself may be divided into three main sections. The first of these is the address to God as "the righteous God and merciful Father." The second deals with the humble confession of sin by the church and then we have the body of petitions followed by a recital of the prayer which our Lord taught us to pray.

How appropriate it is that we address God here as the "righteous God and merciful Father." It is very conceivable that we could address Him with many of His other attributes as well. However, in this particular circumstance in which a member has been excommunicated from His church the righteousness and the mercy of God must stand out in the consciousness of the church. She prays in the awareness that all of the works of God are right, and that is especially applicable with a view to His work which even now He is performing through the church. It is a matter of righteousness that the impenitent be cut off from the body of Christ. The unrighteous cannot inherit the Kingdom. At the same time, however, we must never lose sight of God's mercy by which He saves us sinners. His mercy is never in conflict with His righteousness, for these are one. But mercy is the manifestation of that virtue in God according to which He delivers His people from the misery and bondage of sin in the right and just way, which means that He does this on the basis of the atonement of Christ, His Son. The church concedes the possibility and even expresses the hope that this mercy may yet be manifest to the member who is being excommunicated.

Note the cry of the church confessing her sin and acknowledging herself to be worthy of the same condemnation. "We bewail our sins before Thy high majesty, and acknowledge that we have deserved the grief and sorrow caused unto us by the cutting off of this our late fellow-member; yea, we all deserve, shouldst Thou enter into judgment with us, by reason

of our great transgressions, to be cut off and banished from Thy presence."

A confession such as this is born out of the sincere desire for reconciliation with God and so the prayer proceeds with a four-fold request or petition. First, the church asks for forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and that God will daily work in our hearts a greater measure of sorrow for them. This, together with the statement, "that we may, fearing Thy judgments which Thou executest against the stiff-necked, endeavor to please Thee," prescribes the true and only way of reconciliation with God. Forgiveness of sin can never be obtained by a lip-confession and a further continuance in the way of sin. To have forgiveness implies that there is a sincere remorse, a true sorrow for sin, together with a real desire and determination to walk in the ways of the Lord, to submit to His commandments and to obey His Word in all things, even and especially when that obedience involves us in the loss of worldly goods, name, honor, etc. Whole hearted obedience is the unmistakable earmark of forgiveness, for the grace of forgiveness is manifest in the grace of obedience unto God. Where the latter is lacking, the former cannot exist!

The second petition of the church is for grace that she may be kept from the pollution of the world and also from the sins of those who are cut off from the communion of the Church. This follows of necessity from her expressed desire to please God, which, of course, is impossible if she becomes partaker of these sins. The church must have grace to confess the truth, but also to live that confession, for without this the judgments of God will surely descend upon her. In this consciousness the saints, fearing these judgments, prays for the grace of sanctification.

The third request is made in behalf of both the church and the excommunicated member. The righteous God and merciful Father is asked "that he who is excommunicated may become ashamed of his sins; and since Thou desirest not the death of a sinner, but that he may repent and live, and the bosom of Thy Church is always open for those who turn away from their wickedness; we therefore humbly beseech thee, to kindle in our hearts a pious zeal, that we may labor, with good christian admonitions and examples, to bring again this excommunicated person on the right way, together with all those, who, through unbelief or dissoluteness of life, go astray."

The need of this for the church is indeed very great. It is so easy and even a natural tendency to forget one who has been severed from the church of Jesus Christ. We will then have nothing more to do with them. This is not the right and christian way. In our prayers we must remember them, and with our admonitions we must labor to bring them out of the captivity of sin. Not least of all must our entire life be an example of godliness in which the way of happiness and life is so clearly demonstrated that it may serve to bring shame upon the disobedient and turn the refractory unto the Lord God. Not only is this our duty, but to fulfill this obligation must be the desire of our hearts or else it is mockery to ask the Lord to

kindle that zeal in our hearts. And this involves labor, hard labor, labor of love that denies self and seeks the true well-being of the neighbor.

The final petition of this prayer is that God may "give Thy blessing to our admonitions, that we may have reason thereby to rejoice again in him, for whom we must now mourn, and that Thy holy name may be praised, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In this petition the consciousness is evident that

our efforts in themselves are always futile. Unless God works His redemptive work in us and through us there can be and is no salvation. Without His blessing upon us all of our endeavors are only vanity of vanities. How utterly dependent we are. How gloriously sovereign is He. And thus, when through the prayers and labors of the church, God brings one sinner to repentance, the angels in heaven rejoice with the church, and all glory and honor is ascribed to God alone, Who works all things according to the pleasure of His will.

IN HIS FEAR—

Honour To Whom Honour

by Rev. J. A. Heys

"They allow you five miles over the limit."

Whether they always do and who these "they" are is entirely beside the point. The point is whether the Judge will allow those five miles over the limit.

And we would like to point out, in case you missed that point, the word Judge begins with a capital letter and, therefore, refers to Him Who is the Judge of heaven and earth.

Really, it is not a question of what "they" say but what He says. His law is very definite and distinct. We are either right according to it, or we are wrong. Either we keep within its bounds, or we transgress and go over the line that He has clearly drawn. Either we obey and do what is pleasing in His sight, or we disobey and add to our debt and guilt. The argument that the traffic officer, highway patrol man, Safety Patrol, or whatever he is called in your area (who is the "they" mentioned above) must allow five miles above the posted speed limit, because all speedometers do not read exactly alike, and some room has to be left for these mechanical inaccuracies, falls away when we bear in mind that when you have gone faster even than those five miles above that speed limit, these five miles are added to the amount of miles held against you. If you have gone ten miles faster than the posted speed, you are not fined for five of them and forgiven the others because of mechanical inaccuracies in the speedometers in different makes and types of automobiles, but you are fined one dollar for *each* mile above the posted speed. Then the first five miles per hour over that limit are as evil as those above five miles, and they will cost you just as much. Then suddenly you have to go by the speedometer of the officer.

Then, too, there is the obligation of every driver to make sure that his automobile is with all its equip-

ment in good working order before he moves it. And that includes his speedometer. Besides, if one doubts the accuracy of his speedometer and equipment his calling is to stay a safe speed *under* rather over the posted speed.

Traffic laws are made to protect life and are designed for the well being of the neighbour, whose good we are obliged by the law of God to seek. And we ought therefore to give good heed to the efforts of those in authority over us to do unto others, in this instance also, as we would have them do unto us. Would we desire to be injured, have our children killed and crippled, have our property damaged? Of course not. We would live, enjoy life, be strong and well. Do then unto others so that we may further them in their pursuit of life and happiness. The sixth commandment as interpreted as by the Heidelberg Catechism means that we "prevent his (the neighbour's) hurt as much as in us lies; and that we do good, even to our enemies."

Our "hot-rodding" youth ought to take heed!

Speed kills! Recklessness is unconcern for the neighbour's wellbeing. The show-off shows off his hatred of the neighbour and not his love. And exceeding the posted limit with an eye on the rear view mirror for the officer's car is failing utterly to take into account the Judge above and to live according to His law of love to the neighbour. His judgment seat we shall never escape. We all have an appointment there. Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:10 that he expects to be there with the Corinthian church, for he says that "we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Young people, — and sad to say older people as well, — may make a joke of their arrests and brag of their escapes. But unconcern for the well being of others is no joke; and there will be no bragging when

the books are opened before the great white throne, and the sins we "got away with" in this life will be there to accuse us of the evil which we did.

Well, that is getting to be an introduction that is long enough for the subject. We are not at the moment concerning ourselves with the sixth commandment but rather with the fifth. Our driving habits, however, do show us how little we do render honour to whom honour is due. And it all begins at home in that we do not honour father and mother. Here in the basic unit of society we learn or we fail to learn to render honour to whom it is due.

The fifth commandment is different from the other nine in that it expresses the truth positively. It tells us what to do instead of what is forbidden us. And the law certainly condemns all this so-called child psychology that condemns all prohibitions and claims that you must only be positive in your approach to the child. Life is not that way, and Scripture teaches us clearly enough that we are always doing the forbidden by nature, because we are conceived and born in sin. And therefore, since we commit these evils, a word is in order to approach man with a "Thou shalt not!" In the denial of total depravity and taking the wicked position of the ungodly philosopher that a child comes into this world with a soul that is a "clean slate" and you and I can write what we will, your approach will indeed be the positive approach. You will suggest the "good," encourage in the "good" and seek to train the child in the "good." Why the quotation marks? Because the worldly philosopher does not know what good is. And many there will be, Jesus said, whose position today is, when they stand before His judgment seat and are told that they must depart from Him into everlasting torment, "But, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name: and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name have done many wonderful works?" But what actually is pleasing in His sight they never knew. They built their philosophical structures apart from the Word of God. They dare to deny the infallibility of His Word, and yet claim to have done many wonderful works for Him. Some are haughty enough even to say that He is dead and that His Word is not relevant for the day in which we live and still expect this "dead" God to bless them, and to boast before Him of what they did in His name. (I suppose that in His name they proclaimed the blasphemy that He is dead.) But take the position of that infallible Word of God, maintain its undeniable doctrine of total, complete, absolute depravity, and you can understand why God comes to us with a law that is, except for this fifth commandment, in the form of a "Thou shalt not!" There we are! God from on high looks down and sees the children of men. And what He sees is a people, a whole human race that has another and other gods besides Him, walking in idolatry, taking His name in vain and having utter disregard for His Sabbath. He sees a people that has no honour and respect for authority and goes about killing, committing adultery, stealing and bearing false witness and thoroughly covetous and greedy.

That He places the fifth commandment in the positive

form, however, is not due to the fact that at times the natural man is found honouring even father and mother. Certainly the day of revolt and riot, of revolution and rebellion in which we live is a clear denial of that position. And the world today is not any different from the world wherein man lived when God gave His law on Mt. Sinai, except perhaps in degree, for there is a steady and definite development of sin. Cain killed his brother, and Lamech dared to boast of killing more dreadfully and with more reason for punishment. And today men consider Cain and Lamech as mere beginners. They were so unskilled in their killing. They did not know the fine touch of today's murderers, nor the brassy boldness. There we saw the child of sin. Growing up rapidly before our eyes is the full-fledged, thoroughly trained and equipped man of sin. Too bad some people cannot see that and still want to talk about a restraint of sin in the heart of the unregenerated by the Spirit. "Common grace" must be a very inferior grace that fights such a losing, and such a glaringly losing battle against sin. The so-called Christian nations are outstripping the pagan world for sheer brutality, for bestiality, for immorality, murder, theft and crime of every sort. With every new law there arises another generation that sets its heart on trying to find out how to get around that law with impunity. Race riots and organized violence of union members are not only rampant. They are even defended and advocated.

And the beginning of so much of it is exactly in the home. Honour to father and mother is lacking. As the British educator remarked, when he came home from a visit to our country, "It is amazing how well the parents obey the children in the United States." Juvenile delinquency is burning like wild fire. On every side you see youth rebelling openly against all order and rule. And this is no doubt due in the first place to parental delinquency. But we must not talk such foolishness about a restraint of sin. Especially not lest we contradict Him Who declares that the measure of iniquity will be filled before the day of Christ dawns.

There is not even much external restraint of sin by those in authority today. We all have seen the picture of the policeman standing and watching, — perhaps in fear of consequences, if he interfered, but nevertheless standing and watching, — while goods are stolen from a store during a race riot. The criminal gets a "fairer" hearing and treatment than the victim of his brutality. Places of wickedness are not closed but allowed to remain open for the sake of the large amount of tax money they bring in, and then periodically raided as a veneer of indignation for the crimes committed. But why go on? From Adam's eating of one piece of fruit until the rains of the flood began to fall, there was no restraint of sin *in the heart* of unregenerated man *by the Spirit of Christ*. Genesis 6:3 does not say that the Spirit will not always strive in the heart of man; and verse 5 strongly emphasizes a total depravity that is absolute. For we read, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, that that *every* imagination of the thoughts of

his heart were *only* evil *continually*." How would you put it more strongly? And we repeat, that if verse 3 means that in a "common grace" God will by His Spirit restrain sin in the heart of the unregenerated, it surely was an inferior and proven-to-be-worthless grace. For after striving by His Spirit with man in that "common grace" things got worse instead of better. For verse five is the end result. What is more, God decides that this "common grace" is not going to be common anymore. He will destroy man, and surely not in any kind of grace that He has. In wrath, dealing with man according to his evil works, God will come with the destruction of the flood.

And from the exodus out of the ark through the sins of Noah and of Ham sin has again set out on a course of development that will bring the whole world to destruction in the day of Christ. Riot and revolution, revolt and rebellion are not anything strange today. Look for worse days ahead!

The tree of sin can bring forth more fruit, and the ungodly under the power of Satan are constantly striving to "improve" the strain. Without modern means of communication and transportation, with our electronic and mechanical marvels, — and how many are not yet in store for man as utterly apart from the fear of God, he digs into the bowels of the earth and reaches

up into the sky to press all into the service of his depraved flesh? — man does make much progress in the way of sin. He can "compare notes" and revise his approach. He can unite with others and combine ideas to produce fruit upon the tree of sin that the wicked world before the flood would have envied. We say, Look for worse days ahead. That is the Word of God. Paul's word to Timothy in II Timothy 3:1-5 was not that the Church is going to exercise some leavening influence upon the world and bring about some "civic righteousness." And dare we say that these days of which Paul speaks, these perilous times as he describes them are past already? And in II Timothy 3:13 he declares, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." The kingdom of the Antichrist will not be more Christ-like than the world has been in the past. It will be more Satanic. The cancer begun in man's soul in paradise makes steady progress, and no measures of man can stop its phenomenal growth.

In His fear there is hope. In His fear there is respect for those in authority, for in His fear we love God, The Authority, and desire to be pleasing in His sight. We would honour Him as the God that He is, and therefore we honour His servants.

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

Billy Graham's Answers

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

The constructive and warrantable critics of Billy Graham, the "one-world" evangelist, are on the increase as multitudes of people are being alerted both as to the wrong doctrine, as well as to the shockingly unscriptural methods of the man. It has been his policy in the past not to pay any attention to his critics, to ignore giving them any answer. He has announced over his radio broadcast that he can neither burden nor side-track himself with answers to critics. His own words were, "I never answer my critics."¹ Yet Dr. John R. Rice says that often Billy would call him long distance, or write a long letter beseeching Rice's aid to defend his campaign, though he himself, as he said, would not defend it.² Graham's staff in the Minneapolis office may undertake to defend him, his policies and doctrine. Or he has a foreign, at present, British apologist to defend his case. Or his father-in-law, Dr. L. Nelson Bell, executive editor of

Christianity Today, a neo-evangelical publication, takes his part. But he himself has not fought, and it would seem, cannot fight his own battles.

One of the stock answers Graham defenders make against the thrusts of critics is to insinuate that they are guilty of Phariseeism. Often this accusation is hurled in the face of any who dare to make the mildest criticism of Billy Graham, as from the barbed remarks of relatives this writer has experienced. The accusation has it that just as the Pharisees of Jesus' day objected to His keeping company with publicans and sinners, so Graham's critics are "typical of the Pharisees of our day" when they object to Graham's policies, methods and close connections with modernists and leftists. Graham critics are then guilty of modern Phariseeism and so of "legalism." They are legalists in that they forget the greatest of all Christian virtues, — love. Graham's critics are jealous

Pharisees and wilfully blind legalists. In this way they are supposed to be shamed into silence.

For this reason many have been hesitant to make any criticism of Graham. But the above argument is not as devastating as it seems. It has an inherent weakness, — a double weakness, — first, it cannot be made to stick, and second, it boomerangs on Graham's head. For the Pharisees complained of Jesus' having any association with publicans, harlots and sinners. They self-righteously condemned him for any such contacts. This argument is employed to defend Graham's visits to the Skid Rows, the Soho districts, the Skulley Squares of the cities of the world. Night clubs and honky-tonks exploit Billy Graham as a result of his visits to such places. They capitalize on his having been there. In connection with such visits, he has had to flee the clutches of strip-tease girls and belly-dancers in order to escape becoming too compromised by the trash of this world. Neither the man nor his supporters seem to know that this is casting pearls before swine and giving that which is holy to the dogs (Mt. 7:6).

Now, though Jesus did come into a limited social contact with publicans, harlots and sinners, he never allowed them to exploit or compromise him. The Pharisees admittedly condemned Him for such affiliation, but never for accompanying with Sadducees. For Jesus never associated with any Sadducees. He rather exoriated, exposed and reprobated them. But Billy Graham is in thickly with modern Sadducees, has them on his sponsoring committees, on the same platform with himself during his campaigns, and has them who are unitarian in belief and therefore adepts of another god to lead in "prayer" before his vast audiences. Graham is in the habit of welcoming Sadducees and Pharisees both into his sponsorship and to his support. Jesus neither claimed nor sought the sponsorship or the support of either Pharisees or Sadducees. Therefore we are not Pharisees because of criticisms we make of Billy Graham. We would be, if we joined in support of his campaigns. So the Pharisee - argument falls flat on its face.

Of late, the self-styled Graham-apologists are saying that Graham does answer questions. But this does not mean that he actually answers critics. It is further said that now he does answer questions that concern his policy and ministry in relation to notorious modernists, liberal organizations and the leftist National Council of Churches. But this does not mean that he answers on matters of doctrine. Graham, for example, has never answered the contention that he is thoroughly Arminian in doctrine. A very good sample of what he believes and preaches may be found in the contents of that document well known in the Reformed church world as "The Rejection of Errors." Certain very interesting questions this summer have been put to Graham from the church liberals, most of which he has answered in his usual slippery way.³ One question which he failed to answer was:

Q. Do you believe that we who teach that Christ is the word of God and that the Bible bears witness to God's revelation in him — but that the Bible is full of

parable, myth, allegory and is often quite unhistoric and inexact — are "false teachers"?

A. Unanswered.

This question should have been answered instantly, unhesitatingly, with a clear, unequivocal affirmative. What sort of testimony is it, to God, to His Christ, His truth, His Gospel and His Word, for a preacher to remain silent on such a basic issue? How can he save his hearers from confusion and make it clear to them as to where he stands? What possibly is to be gained by such silence? He may avoid offending the modernists and the liberals throughout the denominations in the world. That is his aim at the moment. This is to shelve principle for expediency. Graham occasionally talks about false teachers, but never attacks any, much less does he identify any. Some day they may sink him in an irrecoverable bog of embarrassment. Graham does not want to commit himself to the extent of going on record as saying these neo-modernists (neo-orthodox) are *not* false teachers. For though then he would conciliate them, he would almost irreparably estrange himself from the Bible believing world. The true church and the true preacher do not fail to instantly deny that the Bible is myth, allegory or "quite unhistoric," and to forthrightly affirm that the Bible is the verbally, infallibly inspired Word! But as shown in the previous installment, this is not the first time Graham has been lax on this vital point. It is no surprise, then that Graham followers can accept and live with the New Confession of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Both he and they hold the "theology" of the Rejection of Errors.

Through his syndicated column one asked Graham:

Q. What is predestination? Some say a person is predestined to heaven or hell at birth. I know that Jesus Christ is my Savior. In your opinion, was I predestined to accept Christ as my Savior?

W.P.

A. Unfortunately, God has no power over the will of man. That is to say, He cannot save a person against His will, but at the same time, He is not willing that any should perish. He has made it possible for all men to be saved. But the Bible indicates that salvation depends upon man's willingness to be saved. It would be a kind of tyranny if God saved people against their will. But his heart embraces all men, and in the word "whosoever will may come" is the universal invitation, with no one excluded. Were you predestinated to be saved? Since it is His will and desire that everyone be saved — in that sense you were of the elect. But this does not imply that if a person is lost, that God ordained it so. It is because that person was not willing to place himself within the scope of God's redemption by yielding his will. The Bible indicates that God will do everything short of coercion to redeem people. But even He cannot save them against their will.⁴

This answer is in almost every sentence completely erroneous. The initial remark, where Graham infelicitously confesses an unfortunate god, is flatly contradictory to Psalm 110:3, which see. His next statement being a half-truth is a whole error. The first work of grace in the order of salvation is re-

generation, and although that work is not wrought in the heart of man *against* his will, it certainly is accomplished *without* his will, according to John 1:12, 13, which see. Then when a wonderful text is taken from its context, we have Scripture conflicting with itself. For how does God "is not willing that any should perish" agree with "What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Romans 9:22)? If God is *not* willing that *any* one perish, but desires that *every* one be saved, then why is God *willing* to show His wrath and exert His power against certain ones fitted to destruction? That these who are fitted to destruction stand in contrast to others who were afore prepared unto glory is proof positive that God does not have it in mind "for all men to be saved." Graham's next

assertion that "salvation depends upon man's willingness" is a species of one of the worst errors traceable down to Arminianism to Pelagianism to humanism. Where Scripture insists, "So then it is *not* of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth (i.e., places *himself* within the scope of God's redemption), but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16), Graham nevertheless flies in the face of Holy Writ, teaching that it *is* of him that willeth! That God does not ordain that a sinner be destroyed, condemned or lost is contrary to this Pauline passage and also contrary to Jude 4, which see. Graham's "gospel" then *is* identical with the philosophy expressed in that part of the Canons of Dort known as the Rejection of Errors. His oral and literary productions have the effect of entirely cancelling Bev Shea's much better message, "*How Great Thou Art!*"

1 *Billy Graham — The Pastor's Dilemma*, E. Hulse, p. 52, M. Allan Publr's, Ltd., Middlesex, Eng. Order: Reiner Pub., Swengel, Pa., 17880, 75¢.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 52-3.

3 *Christian Beacon*, Aug. 18, 1966, p. 2.

4 Quoted in the Baptist Examiner, July 30, 1966, p. 1.

ALL AROUND US—

Death of the Prayer Amendment World Congress on Evangelism Nature Still Boss

by Prof. H. Hanko

DEATH OF THE PRAYER AMENDMENT

Minority Leader Everett M. Dirksen (Republican Senator from Illinois) had worked hard to get his amendment through the senate. Since the time when the Supreme Court outlawed prayers in the public schools, many people have warned that our country was drifting more rapidly in the direction of atheism now that the highest judicial body in the land erased all vestiges of religion from the nation's schools. Senator Dirksen determined to do something about it. He introduced in the Senate a proposed amendment which reads:

Nothing contained in this Constitution shall prohibit the authority administering any school, school system, educational institution or other public building supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds from providing for or permitting the voluntary participation by students or others in prayer. Nothing contained in this article shall authorize any such authority to prescribe the form or content of any prayer.

It appeared as if the larger majority of people in this country were in favor of the amendment, while the organized religious bodies, through their leaders, opposed it. Those organizations with lobbies in Washington and those called to testify while the amendment was being considered in committee were, on the whole, opposed to any efforts even to modify the Supreme Court decisions. Some of these organizations were the National Council of Churches,

Americans United For Separation of Church and State, and the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Some predicted that the amendment would never come out of committee to the floor for debate and voting.

Nevertheless it did. It failed also. But the final vote was something of a surprise, for it was only nine votes short of the two-thirds vote needed for passage. Of course, even if it had passed the Senate, it would still have needed the approval of the House of Representatives and of three-fourths of the state legislatures.

Senator Dirksen promised to renew the campaign to gain passage for his amendment in the Ninetieth Congress next year

We have written before that we are not very much interested in whether or not prayer is permitted in the public schools. The fact of the matter is that the question is the wrong kind of question. We ought not to be asking the question of whether or not prayer should be permitted in the public schools; we ought rather to be asking the question whether the state has any business at all in the work of education when the responsibility is parental. And the fact that the government nevertheless assumes responsibility for this only hangs the state on the horns of a dilemma. The state is supposed to remain neutral in matters of religion. But neutrality is, in the nature of the case, atheism. That atheism has taken over the schools is also apparent in every subject which is

taught — especially those subjects which are to be found under the natural sciences.

A few prayers introduced into the schools are not going to change all this. In the nature of the case, they cannot.

WORLD CONGRESS ON EVANGELISM

Sponsored by *Christianity Today* as a Tenth Anniversary project, the World Congress On Evangelism will meet October 26 through November 4 in Kongresshalle, Berlin. Delegates have been invited from all over the world to "plan for the global fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission in this last third of the twentieth century." — in the words of a recent editorial in *Christianity Today*. Billy Graham has been appointed honorary chairman and will probably lead several of the meetings. The purposes of calling such a meeting are:

(1) to define biblical evangelism, (2) to show the modern world the relevance of Christ's mission, (3) to stress the urgency of evangelistic proclamation throughout the world in this generation, (4) to discover new methods of relating biblical evangelism to our times, (5) to study the obstacles to biblical evangelism and to propose the means of overcoming them, (6) to consider the types of evangelistic endeavor currently employed in various lands, and (7) to summon the Church to recognize the priority of its evangelistic task.

A "prayer-News Bulletin" is sent out periodically to rally support for this meeting and to provide information concerning the progress of plans. In a recent issue, C. E. Aubrey writes on the subject of "Congress and Pentecost Similar." A few quotes from this article will show the areas in which the author believes there are comparisons to be made.

There is striking similarity between the needs which preceded Pentecost and the needs which precede the World Congress on Evangelism. The world needs today the same spiritual effects that came from Pentecost. Spiritual religion was in a state of decline. . . .

. . . The philosophy, methods, message and spiritual concepts which are prevalent now are inadequate for our day. The philosophical and theological mentality which prevails now is not, for the most part, conducive to New Testament evangelism. A realization of this makes the World Congress on Evangelism an imperative.

There is another similarity relative to the personnel at Pentecost and those who are to attend the World Congress. At Pentecost, "devout men out of every nation under heaven..." were gathered for a religious festival.... In Berlin it is hoped that every evangelical body will be represented....

There is an even more striking similarity in the objective of Pentecost and the World Congress on Evangelism to be held in Berlin. At Pentecost they came with a great sense of spiritual need and purpose. . . .

The objective of Pentecost was to receive spiritual power to do what Jesus had already commissioned them to do.

Devout men from every evangelical group in the world will come to the World Congress to receive spiritual dynamics. . . .

The early disciples went away from Pentecost to change the world.... All evangelicals must join hands in evangelism to see revival of spiritual religion in our time. . . .

. . . Let every evangelical body call its people to prayer. Pray that all who attend will see visions and be so imbued with the Spirit of Jesus that they will be able to carry back to every section of the world spiritual qualities and insights that God can use to give rise to a spiritual upsurge unprecedented in the history of Christianity.

As if this comparison is not enough, the same editorial quoted above says: "The congress recalls the Jerusalem Council about A.D. 50, which supported the extension of evangelism to the Gentile as well as the Jewish world, and will include delegates from some of the oldest as well as the youngest churches in Christendom."

We consider such comparisons highly presumptuous. And inaccurate. The Jerusalem Council was under the direction of the apostles who occupied a unique place in the church; and it was called together to interpret for the church the implications and significance of Pentecost. Pentecost itself was a unique event in the history of the church. For through the outpouring of the Spirit of the resurrected and ascended Lord, the church was brought out of the gloomy dispensation of types and shadows into the dispensation of the reality of the fulfillment of God's promise. This same Spirit given by Christ has dwelt in the church since that time and dwells in her today. Pentecost was not revival time. There never will be any event similar to it. Nor need there be.

The purposes of this congress include among them this one purpose: "to define biblical evangelism." We sincerely hope that this purpose will be accomplished. We hope that most strenuous efforts will be put forth to change the entire concept of missions in vogue today to fit once again the data of the Scriptures. The church has strayed far from this, ignoring the Scriptures on this important point. A total revision is necessary. It is necessary to define the work of missions as the official preaching of the gospel. It is necessary to put missions once again into the perspective of the great truths of Scripture: total depravity, limited atonement, election, the covenant. It is necessary to consider missions in the light of the preaching of the gospel as a sign of the return of Christ. If the congress would undertake this task, we could hope for a profitable session.

NATURE STILL BOSS

In a candid article which recently appeared in the Grand Rapids *Press* a noted scientist took a long, hard look at man's efforts and claims to control his environment. He was not impressed. "For all his trying, man has controlled virtually nothing," is his opinion.

But the interesting comments he had to make had to do with the fact that, in his opinion, man's efforts to control "nature" have most generally backfired. He refers to the pumping of ground water in the central valley in California which caused the earth to slump and ruined costly canal systems, highway grades and building foundations as an example of this. Another example is to be found in the matter of weather control. In his opinion, weather control has not only been a failure, but if further efforts are made, the results of such efforts could very well be disastrous. He imagines that hurricane control could result in massive droughts so that by avoiding one disaster, man creates a far worse one. "Man acts for his own purposes, and nature reacts according to her own immutable laws. Nature is neither friendly nor inimical. She is merely implacable. We had best come to terms with her," is his concluding comment.

Of course, this scientist speaks from the viewpoint of an unbeliever. We cannot accept his positing of nature as a force to be reckoned with apart from God. But what does strike us very forcibly is that even sinful man can see that his efforts to subdue the earth have, for the most part, ended in creating new and more dreadful problems. This is the truth of the matter across the whole range of scientific advance. This is to be understood. It cannot really

be any different. For one thing, man does not rule in the creation any more as God's friend-servant — as a benevolent and loving king who labors in the service of God. Rather, he is a cruel and heartless tyrant who abuses the creation, twisting it and wrestling with it in order to force it to serve his own lusts. He is cruel, high-handed, rebellious against God. The creation must serve his own evil purposes. Because it is God's world, man cannot expect to get away with this sort of thing. But, for another thing, the creation itself is under the curse. Not immutable laws of nature operate, but the frightening reality of the curse. It is this curse of God which makes men's efforts futile and which results in the creation turning upon man to destroy him. God's wrath cannot be overcome with the greatest skills of science and by the most astonishing accomplishments of wicked men. Creation remains man's implacable enemy, seeking ever to devour him. The result is inevitably death and destruction.

And, the more men insist on tampering with creation, bending the world to serve their sinful goals, the more the creation will turn against him to destroy him. Wicked men could well take warning from this man of their own ranks. Especially as they seek now to tamper with the processes of life itself, they would do well to pause and listen. God will not be mocked.

... Even though it pleases Him to call men out of darkness into His light *through the preaching* by men, it is still He that calls. He opens the eyes of the blind so that they see; He gives the hearing ear to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd; He enlightens the mind so that we may understand the things of the kingdom of God; He inclines the will and the heart to give heed to the Word of truth. The calling is a work of God through Christ.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS—

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The teaching staff of the Sunday School of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville expresses its deepest sympathy to Mrs. Perlin Schut in the death of her brother,

MR. GISE VAN BAREN

May our covenant God comfort the sister and her family.

Donald Dykstra, Supt.
Betty Haveman, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Auxiliary of the Protestant Reformed Christian School of South Holland, Ill. extend their utmost sympathy to our fellow members, Mrs. G. A. Van Baren and Mrs. J. Heys in the death of their husband and brother,

MR. GYSBERT A. VAN BAREN

on September 28, 1966 at the age of 43 years.

Psalm 91:1, 2: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust."

Mrs. G. Vroom, President
Mrs. R. Van Baren, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Association of Protestant Reformed Education wishes to express our sympathy to our fellow member Mr. L. Eugene Kuiper, in the death of his father

MR. LAMBERT KUIPER

May the God of Grace comfort His sheep.

P. S. Poortinga, President
Gise Van Baren, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mission Board of the Prot. Ref. Churches here-with expresses its Christian sympathy to the Rever-ends G. C. Lubbers and Herman Veldman in the re-cent passing of their respective fathers

CORNELIUS LUBBERS and JAMES VELDMAN

May the Lord extend to both the blessed comfort of His Word.

The Mission Board

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and Congregation of Southwest Prot. Ref. Church express their sincere sympathy to their Pastor, Rev. G. Lubbers, Mrs. Lubbers, and Miss Agatha Lubbers in the recent loss of a father and Grandfather

CORNELIUS LUBBERS

who was taken home to be with the Lord.

May the Lord comfort the hearts of the bereaved. Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

A. Talsma, Vice Pres.
H. Kuiper, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the South Holland Prot. Ref. Church wishes to express its sympathy to Mr. Tunis Van Baren, Rev. J. A. Heys, Mr. John Haak, Jr., Mr. Barney Haak, in the death of their brother and brother-in-law

MR. GYSBERT A. VAN BAREN

"But the God of our grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, made you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be the Glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen." I Peter 5:10, 11.

Jack Lenting, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Association of Protestant Reformed Education wishes to express our sympathy to the family of the late

MR. GYSBERT VAN BAREN

who was a faithful member, served on our board, and in the past was our president. We thank God for the years of service rendered by this servant.

P. S. Poortinga, President
Gise Van Baren, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express their sympathy to three of its members, Mrs. G. A. Van Baren, Mrs. J. Heys, and Mrs. Tunis Van Baren, in the loss of their husband, brother and brother-in-law

MR. GYSBERT A. VAN BAREN

May our God comfort the bereaved family and give them peace.

Rev. J. A. Heys, Pres.
Mrs. R. Poortinga, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society, Ladies Society, and Mr. and Mrs. Society express their heartfelt sympathy to Rev. and Mrs. G. Lubbers and family in the recent passing of his father and Grandfather

MR. CORNELIUS LUBBERS

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them." Rev. 14:13.

Mr. Henry Brands, Sec'y.
Mrs. Don Lotterman, Vice Sec'y.
Mrs. Alvin De Young, Sec'y.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

Oct. 15, 1966

The congregation at Randolph, Wis. has named a trio consisting of the Revs. C. Hanco, J. A. Heys and J. Kortering.

Rev. R. C. Harbach, of Kalamazoo, Mich., has declined the call to be the Home Missionary of our churches.

Rev. J. Kortering, of Hull, Iowa, has accepted the call which he had from Hope Church in Grand Rapids.

**REPORT OF CLASSIS WEST
CONVENED ON SEPTEMBER 21, 1966
AT EDGERTON, MINN**

With Rev. J. Kortering presiding and Rev. J. A. Heys serving as clerk, Classis West finished its work in one day.

On the agenda of every meeting of Classis West is the matter of the vacant churches within its sphere.

At present, there are five vacant churches in Classis West. Classis West's treatment of this matter, at this session, included:

- 1) requesting each minister in Classis West to prepare two reading sermons in the next six months.
- 2) requesting the consistory of South Holland to look into the possibility of Classis West's setting up a library of taped sermons.
- 3) requesting Classis East to help out in the vacant churches of the West by supplying Randolph entirely in the next six months, by granting one three-week appointment to Isabel & Forbes and by supplying Edgerton for four Sundays.
- 4) drawing up and adopting a schedule of classical appointments for the ministers in the West. The adopted schedule for classical appointments follows:
 EDGERTON - Oct. 23, 30 - J. Heys; Nov. 13, 20 - G. Vanden Berg; Dec. 4, 11 - Classis East (tentative); Jan. 8, 15 - D. Engelsma; Feb. 12, 19 - J. Kortering; Mar. 12, 19 - Classis East (tentative). ISABEL & FORBES - Oct. 9, 16, 23 - R. Decker; Nov. 6, 13, 20 - D. Engelsma; Dec. 4, 11, 18 - J. Kortering; Jan. 8, 15, 22 - Classis East (tentative); Feb. 5, 12, 19 - J. Heys; Mar. 5, 12, 19 - B. Woudenberg. PELLA - Oct. - G. Vanden Berg; Nov. - R. Decker; Dec. - G. Vanden Berg; Jan. - R. Decker; Feb. - G. Vanden Berg; Mar. - C. Hanko.

The Stated Clerk reported that the Litigation Committee of Synod had given him the archives of Classis West, through 1953, which had been received from the Christian Reformed Church.

A committee appointed by Classis West in September of 1965 gave its report at this session of Classis. This committee was mandated to study several appeals that were brought to Classis by bodies and individuals in the Illinois churches and to work with the parties involved. The committee reported that God had effected a full reconciliation among the contending brothers and that, in March of 1966, all of the parties decided to withdraw permanently their appeals from the Classis. The committee took note of the fact that new trouble had arisen after March, 1966, but requested to be dismissed, since the committee had finished the work assigned to it and the appeals had been withdrawn. Classis approved the report of the committee and dismissed it.

In accordance with a decision of Synod (*Acts of Synod, 1966*, Articles 147-149), Classis authorized the Classical Committee of Classis West to act upon financial requests from individual churches which are of an emergency nature.

Edgerton requested permission to call ministers again whom they called within the past year. Classis granted the request.

After discussing the church political aspects of the matter, Classis voted down a motion which would have included on the agenda an appeal that was not given to the Stated Clerk thirty days before the convening of Classis.

About 4:00, Wednesday afternoon, Classis adjourned. Rev. Kortering thanked the delegates for their co-operation. Rev. C. Hanko closed with prayer.

Classis West meets next, Lord willing, in South Holland, Illinois.

Rev. D. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

* * *

Bulletin quote (Kalamazoo):

"The slanderer wounds three at once: he wounds him that is slandered; he wounds him to whom he reports the slander, by causing uncharitable thoughts to arise up in his mind against the party slandered; and he wounds his own soul, by reporting of another what is false."

Thos. Watson

* * *

Our Theological School Committee, in an October meeting, pre-enrolled a student who is at present a sophomore in college. Needless to say, this was a very joyous event for the committee, for in this they received an answer to prayer that has been sent up to the King of His Church to move young men to seek the office of minister in our churches.

* * *

Prof. H. Hanko addressed an Office Bearer's Conference on Tuesday, Oct. 4. His talk was on "Partaking of the Means of Grace in Other Denominations." After recess the speaker answered sundry questions from the audience regarding the conclusions of the subject matter. These evening-before-Classis meetings prove to be very beneficial to the office bearers in the Michigan churches in their quest to "rule well" in their office.

* * *

Coincidentally, two days before the above mentioned event, the Young People's Society of Hull discussed a related subject under the title, "Participating in Religious Activities of other Churches."

* * *

Doon's pastor gave a "homework" assignment to one of his catechism classes taken from the editorial page of the Sept. 15th issue of the *Standard Bearer*. The article was by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema entitled, "Toward Better Catechetical Instruction." The assignment excused no one, not even the non-subscribers, for Rev. Decker offered his personal copy for their use, if necessary. Rev. Kortering, of Hull, also called his people's attention to that editorial and asked them to be sure to read it. And we might add: If you missed it, look it up and read it to your own catechumens that sit around your table.

. . . . see you in church

J.M.F.