The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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MEDITATION–

Gone To Prepare A Place

by Rev. J. Kortering

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." *John 14:2, 3*

Saying good-bye is always hard.

That's especially true for those who love each other.

It's part of dying, it's separation.

The bleakness of such a moment is felt when you leave loved ones behind and move away. A congregation and minister encounter that pain when it's time for farewell. Parents stand helplessly silent as their son boards the plane for battle. The tension is most acute at the bedside of our dying loved ones.

It's hard to say good-bye. We desire the presence of the person whom we love. We're afraid that we may never see them on earth again.

Our text could be called a Lover's farewell.

Jesus was saying good-bye to His Bride. That little band of eleven represented His Church. Since He knew the pains of farewell, Jesus also knew that only one promise would console Her, "I go . . . I will come

again." To make certain that She understood, He sent angels at the triumphant moment of His ascension to re-affirm His promise, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

The Bridegroom was saying good-bye to His Bride.

He was about to leave Her to get everything ready for the wedding.

According to Jewish custom, the husband-to-be was responsible for providing a place to live with His bride. When everything was ready, his fellows would gather around him and they would parade down the darkened street, his companions bearing the torches, to the place where his bride lived. With jovial song they would troop to the house where his bride was waiting, take her and her companions along, and together make their way to the house he had prepared, the house that was to become their home. There they would feast and there he would take his bride unto himself.

As the Bridegroom, Jesus now said unto His Bride, "I go to prepare a place for you". That place is described as, "Father's house of many mansions".

Scripture uses many phrases to describe heaven. It is called Revelation the New Heaven and New Earth. In harmony with the Old Testament it is called the Heavenly Canaan, or a country which is Heavenly. The Bible speaks of it as the New Jerusalem, the City four-square. But, Jesus here speaks of it as a *house*. That is quite in harmony with His farewell. We, as the Bride of Christ, are not first interested in the earth as such, nor the country, nor the city, but the *house!* The house is the place of the most intimate life for a new bride. It is there that the Bridegroom takes Her unto Himself.

That house is very beautiful. It has many rooms, places for each one to dwell. It is located in Jerusalem, glorified with golden streets and pearly gates. The city itself will be refreshed with the water that flows from the Throne of God, graced on either side with the Tree of Life. There will be no sounds of wailing in her streets, for tears shall be wiped from our eyes and our hearts shall sing forever. A house in that city is indeed most blessed. Most of all however, because that house will be home! Jesus our Bridegroom will not take us unto His *house*, He will take us unto *Himself* within that house. Still more, it will be unto the glory of our Father! That house is Father's. He planned it, He designed it, He provided for His Son a Bride, He sent His Son to prepare it, and He will finally give His Son in marriage so they can live in it. It belongs to Father, and the glory of the marriage will be forever unto Him.

Jesus must needs say good-bye to the earthly manifestation of His Bride, in order that He may come as the Bridegroom and take His Bride in marriage. You understand that when Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you", He does not simply mean that house as such will be prepared, but, "I go to prepare everything for our wedding".

Jesus was "betrothed" to His Bride, or as we speak in our day, was engaged to Her. His Father had publically announced it in the splendor of His heavenly throne. By His decree of election, Father had officially announced that Christ would become married to His Bride, the Church. Father had acquainted Him with all the names of "His own" who together would be His Bride. For us, the joy of election is that we know that we are betrothed to Christ; we are destined to marry Him.

Marriage is legal. To become married one must have a marriage license. Before God there is no "common-law" marriage; a man may not simply live with a woman as husband and wife. The law must be satisfied, a license must be secured. This was supremely true for the Only Begotten Son. Christ Jesus was about to purchase that license.

Our text sets the scene. Jesus was in the Upper-room with His disciples. His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. He had assured His Bride that He must needs go away! He had come to her only for a little while, to speak to Her, but especially to secure the license, the right to marry His Bride according to the law of God. He had to go away from His Bride, it was part of the price. He had to sign that marriage license in His Own blood. That was the only way. "I go away".

It is this truth that humbles us to the dust. As the Bride of Christ we are not arrayed in "white apparel". We are guilty of spiritual whoredom. The wonder of the love of Christ and the love of Father to give Christ in marriage to us is this, Father and Son loved spiritual whores! Blush if you will, but that is true. Did not the prophets of the Old Testament cry out, "How long go ye a whoring after other Gods, oh Israel?" We are sinners! The righteous God has set a price on the marriage license of His Own Son; He must pay for our spiritual whoredom! He must endure the affliction by bearing the sins of many. He loved His Bride even unto death. In Gethsemane He prostrated Himself upon the earth and cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt". The answer came clear and strong, "The right to marry Thy Bride can be secured only through the dark caverns of hell; My righteousness must needs be fulfilled!" In humble obedience, Jesus went the way of the cross; He went through the darkness of the wrath of God, and signed the marriage license with the drops of blood that flowed from Calvary's skull.

Father looked upon His obedient Son and beheld His perfect work. He marked how He loved Him and loved His Bride even unto death. Father was pleased and raised Him from the dead, thereby sealing the marriage license with the official stamp of His divine approval. When Jesus arose from the dead, He arose in a heavenly body, fit for the dwelling place whence He would take His Bride unto Himself.

"I go to prepare a place for you."

There is more. Having triumphed over sin and death, yea even the grave, Jesus spent a few more days with His Bride on earth. Even then, He constantly reminded her, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended unto my Father in heaven." No, He did not

arise from the dead to dwell on earth, His place was not here, as some vainly dream; His place was "up there". After instructing His Bride concerning things that would yet take place, Jesus once again bade farewell to His Bride. At the foot of Olivet, He gradually ascended before their eyes. Again the voice of Jesus floated over the hills, "I go."

So it must needs be. All things must be made ready for the wedding. More is necessary than to be engaged. More is required than a license. The Bride must be prepared! She must be purified, so that her dress may be white!

Jesus paid for the guilt of the spiritual whoredom of His Bride on the cross. All Her transgressions are forgiven. Now, Jesus looked at His Bride and saw that her former life would still be a temptation to her. Not only was it necessary for the Bride to be liberated from the guilt of her sins, she must also be liberated from the power of those sins in her life. She must cease to be a whore! Surely Jesus Himself must do something about that, for the Bride Herself is helpless. We know that, don't we. There are round about us all the temptations of the world, the pleasures and treasures of this world, for the prince of the world goeth about seeking to allure us into our former whoredom. Our enemies flirt for our affection, telling us that we are foolish waiting for our Bridegroom, we might just as well live it up a bit. They love to cast our way, "Where is the promise of His coming?" We are tempted, we need divine assistance.

Jesus knew this; He said, "I will come again to receive you unto myself." As soon as He left this earth and the cloud took Him out of our sight, He went to Father's right hand. Immediately He prayed for His Bride, that He might receive the Holy Spirit from the Father and send Him to Her to comfort Her and enable Her to be faithful while waiting for His return. On Pentecost morning, Jesus returned in the Spirit to His Bride. No, He does not dwell personally with His Bride now, rather He sent His Helper that He might dwell with His Bride to give Her strength and wisdom to continue in Her calling on earth. By that Spirit, Christ fulfills His promise to His Bride, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Our Lord Jesus Christ is preparing our place for us now. Being exalted in the heavens, He has received all power in heaven and earth. By the power of His ruling arm He controls all things on the earth, all people, all nations, all events in nature, yea everything in order that it may serve His Bride. He dwells by His grace and Spirit in the midst of His Church, blessing the preaching of the gospel both within the organic church and through Her mission labors, using it as the means to call out of whoredom His Bride and bring her within the pure and holy environment of the living Church.

He comes to each one of us when our purpose on earth is finished. Our Bridegroom said, "I will come again to receive you unto myself." This is the reality of death for the Bride of Christ. Yes, we pass through the grave, but that is not separation from our Bride; it is a transformation by which our souls are cleansed from all filth and our bodies await the resurrection, when they, too, shall be like unto His most glorious body. Transcending the lofty skies, we go to Him to dwell with Him in all perfection. He comes in death to claim His Bride.

The most significant moment will be the wedding. The saints on earth are waiting, the saints in heaven are waiting. As soon as our Bridegroom has "the place, Father's house of many mansions" ready, He will personally come upon the clouds of heaven to take His whole Bride unto Himself to dwell in heavenly perfection forever. Both according to body and soul, we will be ready for the wedding. Having been judged righteous, we will be clothed with the wedding dress our Bridegroom has purchased for us; we will feel perfectly at home with Him. We will sing praises to our Father forever.

Our Bridegroom is away from us. He has sent us His letter of love. Everytime we open the Bible, everytime we gather in church, we listen to our Bridegroom speak to us, either through letter or messenger. That thrills us, for then He is near to us!

What a day it will be when we will be married to Him! He will take us unto Himself; we will personally dwell with Him. We will have fellowship with Him face to face in Father's House.

May the Spirit of Christ dwell in us to keep us faithful, ever looking for the return of our Bridegroom.

Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 4, 1966, our dear parents,

MR. AND MRS. RALPH VAN SPYKER

commemorated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. We give thanks to our covenant God for sparing them for each other and for us. May the God of all grace be their source of joy and comfort in their declining years. This is the prayer and wish of their grateful children.

Evelyn Van Spyker
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Vander Kolk
Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Van Spyker
Mrs. Alvin Schreur
ten grandchildren

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory of the Doon Prot. Ref. Church expresses its sincere sympathy to Deacon John Van Den Top in the death of his father

MR. JACOB VAN DEN TOP

at the age of 70 years, on April 16, 1966. For many years Brother Van Den Top was a faithful member and officebearer of the Doon Congregation. May the family be comforted by the confession of the Psalmist: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory". Ps. 73:24.

Rev. Robert Decker, Pres.
Mr. Edw. Van Egdom, Clerk

EDITORIAL—

Reason For Alarm!

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Now and then rumblings of dissatisfaction about Calvin College make themselves heard either in conversation or in public print. Sometimes the fears seem to be chiefly about an alleged socialistic tendency manifesting itself. At other times fears have been expressed about the orthodoxy of the instruction or about the Christian character of some of the student activities.

In response to these expressions of concern there seems to be an occasional flurry of excitement. Once in a while voices calling for investigation are heard. Then an article or two is written which aims to reassure the Christian Reformed constituency that basically nothing is wrong and that really Calvin College is striving to be Calvinistic. The excitement seems to die down; and all things continue as they were before.

Usually I do not concern myself much with these affairs. I do not have any direct contact with Calvin College, for one thing. Besides, although I am an alumnus of Calvin, it is not my college: I am, after all, an "outsider" who has no voice in the affairs of the Christian Reformed Church's denominational school. Moreover, from what I hear and observe I gain the impression that a "clean-up" of the college would indeed be a herculean task.

Recently, however, one of our students called my attention to the April 2 issue of the "Calvin College Chimes," a paper "published weekly by the students of Calvin College by authority of the Student Council."

When I perused this paper, I stood aghast!

I came to the conclusion that there is not only reason for concern, but more than that, reason for alarm!

This I write not only for Protestant Reformed parents who send their sons and daughters to college at Calvin, but also for the Christian Reformed constituency, who may or may not know what is going on at Calvin, but who are responsible for and who are called upon to support this denominational institution. Our Protestant Reformed parents and young people should be alert to the fact that, to put it mildly, there is much at Calvin College with which they cannot go along and much which they must not imbibe. They must be alert to the fact that our young people should attend Calvin College with an extremely critical attitude, to say the least. And the Christian Reformed constituency should be alarmed to the point that they insist upon a thorough investigation and clean-up. They should insist upon this ecclesiastically and by way of protest.

For I assure you that there is "something rotten in Denmark."

It may be objected that the "Chimes" is a student paper and that the college cannot be judged on the basis of, nor held responsible for, what the students write. To this I answer as follows: 1) Unless there is complete anarchy at Calvin, there is, or ought to be, faculty supervision of and a faculty advisor for the Student Council and the "Chimes." 2) It cannot be denied that "Chimes" projects the image of Calvin College. It is Calvin students who publish it. And it is under Calvin College's name that this publication goes forth. If the College will not be responsible for "Chimes," then it should not allow its name to be used by "Chimes." Besides, unless regulations have changed radically since I attended Calvin, the faculty has ample power to regulate student activities and publications if it only chooses to use this power. 3) The "Chimes" reports numerous activities of a Fine Arts Festival in this issue which are evidently carried on with faculty advice and approval.

No one who reads "Chimes" can fail to associate what is written and reported with Calvin College, therefore. And anyone who reads "Chimes" will automatically say, "This is what Calvin College produces."

What is so rotten, you ask?

My answer is that there is absolutely nothing distinctive in the entire paper. You could substitute the name of almost any liberal private or church-controlled college for the name of Calvin College in this issue of "Chimes," and one would never guess that this was supposed to be the publication of a truly Calvinistic, Reformed, orthodox institution.

Here is the evidence.

"THE GREAT GAP"

This is the title of an editorial by "jl" that is not only un-Reformed, but downright modernistic, liberal, and anti-Reformed. This editorial is evidently a reaction to some of Carl McIntire's propaganda against Calvin College and against "Chimes." But this does not change the shocking character of the statements made. I will quote at length and without comment from this editorial. Its thoroughly and radically modernistic note is so horrifying and so obvious that no comment is necessary.

> McIntire was right, of course: there is a great gap. In fact, it was the point of the article that the gap should be widened. The faith of our fathers —

whatever McIntire may think of it – is plainly out of date. If archaic theological methods still dominate the Seminary, that is too bad – too bad for the Seminary and too bad for the denomination.

Perhaps systematic theology was meaningful once; and perhaps it will be meaningful again some day. But now it is harmful. We Christian Reformed people are so used to thinking in terms of election and reprobation, predestination and free will, redemption, justification, providence, and all the rest that our religion has been reduced to theological fence-tending. With our thought gone sterile, strait-jacketed by remote abstractions, each with its own parcel of proof texts, our moral behavior has become legalistic and fundamentalistic. In short, to paraphrase a famous Catholic, "We've got to get this denomination moving again."

But how? To begin with, chuck every theological abstraction – the entire symmetrical system – and start theologizing all over again. Biblical theology might even make religion exciting and open-ended again.

Second, learn to read Scripture like any other book. Inspired it is. But might it not be only false piety that has led us to think that its language is perfectly chosen, and its concepts unchanging? If the Old Testament picture of God shows a marked change from Genesis to Psalms to Malachi, we ought to admit that rather than trying to reconcile the variant concepts. The Bible, like any other book, not only must be, but deserves to be treated with the best historical and literary tools available. We need not be dishonest scholars in order to believe in Christ.

Third, stop heresy-hunting and jump aboard the ecumenical bandwagon. While the church dwindles and its influence declines, we go on preserving our "orthodoxy" as if it were spiritual virginity. So Joe Roznowski thinks that he is really eating Christ when he takes Communion, does that mean we must exclude him from our Supper? So Ernst Stein thinks man has free will to choose for Christ, does that mean he may not teach in our college? Diversity does not entail incompatibility. There is no such thing as heresy. There are only Christians and non-Christians. Christians should forget antique quarrels and join the gay business of redoing theology and evangelizing the world.

Fourth, send Legalism to the hanging tree. As McIntire has himself seen, freedom is a key Biblical concept. His perverse use of freedom does not make it any less crucial, any more than all the peasant debauches in Luther's Germany could undo the revolutionary good done by the reformer's rediscovery that Christians can "love God and do as they please." When one sees how Christian Reformed people multiply the Ten Commandments into thousands, proscribing everything from a glass of whiskey to a Sabbath swim, one wonders what has become of the truth that was to have made us free.

Fifth, resurrect the supernatural (or if that term is odious, the spiritual). We believe in miracles, we say, but only those that Christ and the prophets did. We say we believe in the power of love, but we tote guns from Domingo to Danang just in case love doesn't work. Or do we, like McIntire does so often, render unto Caesar what is God's in our violent defense of "God, home, and country?" We say we believe the Spirit is in us, but we close the canon with Paul. Did the outpouring of God's grace end with Paul, or are we afraid of what the Spirit might say in the twentieth century?

The gospel, when not shrunk to fit a theological strait-jacket, is as gigantic a revolutionary force as ever: its ethic of love clears away the cultural rubble of do's and don't's, spoofs fear, brings peace. Christ died to free all men, Christian Reformed folk have forgotten. McIntire is indeed right, the gap is great. But not nearly as great as it should be.

I repeat: this is modernism. It is totally anti-Reformed. It is open rebellion against all that the Christian Reformed Church officially stands for. And it emanates from the very college which the Christian Reformed Church maintains. If the faculty does not approve this stuff, let them openly and publicly repudiate it. If the college authorities do not approve this, let them demand public apology, and let them suspend "Chimes." But let the church investigate whether this young man, who speaks for the Student Council in its publication, is also perhaps giving utterance to what he is being taught in the class-room. And let the church investigate how, in the first place, this kind of rot can ever come into print in the college's name! For the impression can never be avoided that Calvin College is judged by its students and by its student publications.

THE FINE ARTS FESTIVAL IMPORTS THE WORLD

The above editorial is not the only evidence. "Chimes" is replete with items about a coming Fine Arts Festival at the college. And outstanding among these items is the number of items which speak of various theatrical productions, theater personalities, and other worldly imports which will have a place in this Fine Arts Festival, all evidently with faculty approval and faculty advice and recommendation.

Let me briefly itemize some examples:

1) On page 1 is an article introduced as follows:

> The film, *The Three Faces of Eve,* will be shown in the Franklin Auditorium tomorrow night at 7:30 pm, under the sponsorship of the Psychology Club.
>
> Directed by Nunnally Johnson and released in 1957, *Faces of Eve* is the reinactment of a case study made by two University of Georgia psychiatrists of a multiple personality case. . . . . .
>
> Mr. Roel Bijkerk of the Psychology Department said, "*Faces of Eve* is very well done." He added, "It is very good documentary of a very spectacular case, in which we all should be interested."

2) Page 4 contains an item about a two-act drama written by a Calvin student and produced by the students. Apart now from the whole drama-question, which is not a question at all in Calvin, here is the theme of the play (Christian indeed!): "The point of the play is that essentially reality is unknowable, and that if we are correct in some of our guesses as to what reality is, then this is mere coincidence."

3) Page 5 contains a detailed article, with pictures, about an Academy Award winning film to be shown, entitled, "Through a Glass Darkly." This is nothing but a full-blown, worldly theatrical produc-

tion, imported to the campus of a Reformed and Christian college.

4) On the same page is an article about a Rhythmic Choir offering a religious dance lecture. This is being imported from East Congregational Church of Grand Rapids. It will be "a lecture-demonstration of the dance as an art form." The lecturer (whose recommendation is that she has taught modern dance at two worldly universities) will speak about "the fundamentals of art as they are exemplified in dance movements" and will "discuss the nature of expressive movement as it can be used in worship services."

5) Page 7 speaks of a filmstrip, "Modern Art and the Gospel" which will be shown twice during this festival. This film, commented on by a member of the college art department, comes recommended as follows: ". . . .reveals the conflicts and tensions of the twentieth century, not in a narrowly theological but in a broadly Christian context. . . . . .The Christian viewer can learn from this painting (one shown in the film, H.C.H.) not only that the Christian theme of peace is relevant to the twentieth century, but also that non-Christians are sensitive to the spiritual temper of the age and have much to teach Christians. The film 'interprets the religious in us in a broadly human way,' Mr. Boeve said, 'without moralizing in a maudlin way.'"

6) Finally, the Fine Arts Festival imported "Mr. Arnold Moss, noted Shakespearean actor and Hollywood performer" for the instruction, I take it, of Christian students. Here is really an accomplished actor, whose recommendations in the way of theatrical accomplishments occupy several paragraphs of an article. Of course, there is not a word about his Christian character or Christian faith to recommend him. And the following tells us what sort of stuff he will feed the sons and daughters of Christian Reformed parents:

> Mr. Moss' program will be entitled "An Evening with Arnold Moss." Featured in this program will be a reading which Moss calls "The Seven Ages of Man." In this reading he re-enacts scenes, stories and poems that trace man's growth from "the infant mewling and puking in his nurse's arms," through young manhood and maturity down to the "last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history." The readings which range from passages of tragic grandeur to romping comedy and pure nonsense, include the writings of Shakespeare, Whitman, Lewis Carroll, Dickens, and Ring Lardner.

A word in conclusion. I do not write this because of any vindictive delight in criticizing Calvin College or the Christian Reformed Church. On the contrary, my heart bleeds when I observe things of this nature being promulgated in the name of Christianity, let alone Calvinism. It is dreadful. And I repeat: parents and young people who are directly involved in education at Calvin College, as well as the entire Christian Reformed constituency which is responsible for the college, which supports it, and which is presently in the process of financing the huge expansion program at Knollcrest, -- they all have reason for alarm!

And when an alarm sounds, there should be resolute action!

EDITORIAL—

"The Bases of Unity"

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In his prognostications as to issues to be treated by the *Reformed Journal* in the future Dr. Henry Stob first mentions three issues which he groups under the title which heads this editorial.

The first of these issues Dr. Stob states as follows:

> There was a flurry of discussion among us a few years ago about the nature, inspiration, and authority of the Bible. Contrary to the advice of some who believed that the discussion could be profitably continued in the semi-public forum of theology, Synod adopted a report referred to its constituent churches by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and later adopted a report of its own committee which, though excellent in many respects, left important areas of theological concern untouched. The effect of these synodical decisions has been to silence the question of the nature of Biblical inspiration and authority. Whether this effect was intended or not is for the moment irrelevant, and unimportant. What is important is that among serious and inquiring people the question is rising again, and that a calm and considered address to it, conducted with due responsibility and patience, is what is required. The inquiry and discussion would get off to a good start if it were acknowledged at the outset that while the Scriptures are the ultimate source, and provide the ultimate norm for Christian teaching, the *doctrine* of Scripture that prevails at any time is as subject to amendment in the light of Scripture as any other doctrine.

COMMENT

The reference here is to the discussion (and controversy) which came to a head at the Christian Reformed Synod of 1961, in which Dr. M. Wyngaarden challenged the orthodoxy of Dr. John Kromminga, president of Calvin Seminary. This discussion ended

with Synod declaring the charges against Dr. Kromminga to be "unsubstantiated" and with Synod commending a lengthy report on infallibility, drawn up by a study committee, to the church. It is certainly true that since that time there has been virtually no further discussion of the matter. The *Journal* carried an article by M. Hoogland which claimed that the Report on Infallibility still allowed room for maintaining that there are inaccuracies in Scripture. But this article brought no reaction; and the *Journal* itself for some inexplicable reason did not offer further discussion. As to what Dr. Stob here writes, I have the following comments:

1) In the Christian Reformed context, there is no reason why there should not be further discussion. In the first place, it is not correct that the Synod of 1961 "adopted" the study committee's report. On p. 78 of the Acts of 1961 the report is *commended* to the church; but nowhere is it decided to adopt the report *in toto.* Moreover, one of the grounds for commending it to the church was that "This report is a framework for further study of the nature of the relationship between inspiration and infallibility." Hence, the door is open for further discussion.

2) Dr. Kromminga was cleared and justified over against Dr. Wyngaarden's charges without making any substantial change in his position, but merely on the basis of what was really no more than a statement about his intentions in the use of the term "periphery." In this regard also, the way is open for discussion.

3) In my opinion, the report of the study committee failed to settle the most crucial issue in the discussion, that of the possibility of historical inaccuracies in Scripture. I believe that the report was basically a compromise, designed to quiet the fears and silence the discussion. Apparently, at least, it succeeded until now in silencing the discussion. But I say again: there is no essential reason, either in the report or in the decisions of Synod, why the *Journal* should not break this silence.

4) If, however, as seems likely, Dr. Stob has in mind an amendment or revision of the confessional position of the Reformed churches on the *doctrine* of Scripture, then the proper method is not public inquiry into the subject in theological journals and patient discussion of the issues. For while it is certainly true that "the *doctrine* of Scripture that prevails at any time is as subject to amendment in the light of Scripture as any other doctrine," it must be remembered that the proper way of amendment is not that of unofficial discussion and propaganda in the churches, but the ecclesiastically orderly way of a well-grounded gravamen against any article of the Confession which is erroneous or inadequate. Unless and until that course is followed, any discussion must be conducted within the confines of "the *doctrine* of Scripture that prevails," that is, the official doctrine of our confessions, and, of course, any interpretive decisions which have been made in the past.

The second basic issue mentioned by Dr. Stob is what he calls the "hermeneutical problem." He presents it as follows:

> Closely related to the previous question, and possibly reducible to it, is the hermeneutical problem. The question is, how is the Bible to be understood, how is it to be interpreted, how does one find one's way into its meaning? Although there is no disposition among Reformed scholars to adopt the demythologizing procedures of Rudolf Bultmann, or to endorse the allegorical methods of the contemporary radicals, questions have arisen in orthodox circles as to how accounts such as those provided by the early chapters of Genesis are to be understood. There is evidence that responsible Reformed theologians in the Netherlands have moved beyond Assen, and it is difficult to see how we in this community can avoid getting involved, or would want to avoid involvement, in the current inquiry.

COMMENT

Dr. Stob is indeed correct when he suggests that this problem of method of interpretation is "possibly reducible" to the issue of the nature, inspiration, and authority of the Bible. The latter certainly makes all the difference, fundamentally, as far as interpretation is concerned. Hence, I would surely remove the modifier "possibly," and maintain that interpretation and method of interpretation are inextricably bound up in the nature, inspiration, and authority of Scripture. And I would add that the *perspicuity,* or clarity, of Scripture is also a factor here that must be reckoned with. However, I have some questions in this regard:

1) Does Dr. Stob indeed mean to say that it is a question with him, with Calvin Seminary (in part), and with the *Journal,* as to how the Bible is to be understood, how it is to be interpreted, how one finds one's way into its meaning? I can hardly believe this statement as it stands. If this is true, then everything exegetical and theological is at loose ends; there is nothing settled and fixed. For how can any truth, any doctrine, any dogma be construed as long as it is still a *question* how one finds one's way into the meaning of the Bible, "the ultimate norm for Christian teaching." Then there are no "bases of unity."

2) While Bultmann's demythologizing procedures are rejected, nothing is said about that other not-to-be-ignored theologian, Karl Barth. How would the *Journal* judge Barth's approach to Scripture? Would it concede a sphere of positive influence to Barth in regard to this hermeneutical problem and particularly in regard to the early chapters of Genesis?

3) What does Dr. Stob mean by responsible Reformed theologians moving "beyond Assen?" Does he mean that they accept Assen and then advance from that point? Or does he perhaps mean that they are in radical disagreement with Assen, having already departed from the position of Assen and its literalism, and want to legalize their refusal to be bound by Assen's decisions?

Finally, it seems to me that this whole issue is also inextricably bound up in the current discussions concerning evolutionism and theistic evolutionism, and that, in fact, the desire to maintain a brand of

evolutionism has led to the desire to revise and liberalize the interpretation of Genesis, and that this in turn has led inevitably to the necessity of a revision of hermeneutics, -- a revision which is a departure from sound principles of hermeneutics. I would caution again, however, that any discussion (or debate, which would be healthier; I find all this discussion, or dialogue, as it is called, rather sickening), -- any discussion of these matters must again take place within the limits of Scripture and the confessions.

The third issue mentioned by Dr. Stob indeed concerns "the bases of unity." He presents it as follows:

> The question of the Creeds, the nature of Confession, the meaning of Subscription, and the necessity of periodical creedal revision is again in the air. Some attention has recently been paid to these matters by writers appearing in this *Journal*. It seems evident that the discussion must continue. There are issues here that must be brought out into the open, carefully and critically scrutinized, and then patiently resolved.

COMMENT

Here, I feel, Dr. Stob arrives at a most crucial issue. It seems evident that to some in the Christian Reformed Church the Formula of Subscription is too much of a straitjacket. The only real reason, however, why that Subscription is a straitjacket to some lies not in that Subscription, but in their own disagreement with the confessions to which they must subscribe. One who is in full and voluntary agreement with the confessions does not feel himself bound by the confessions as by a straitjacket. But one who finds himself in disagreement must do one or both of the following: either relax the strict requirements of the Formula of Subscription, or get the confessions themselves revised. I submit, however:

1) That it is totally improper to propagandize the churches on these matters without making, and rather than making, these matters an ecclesiastical issue.

2) That if Dr. Stob and others think that the confessions or the Formula of Subscription are in need of revision, or if they even think that such need of revision should be considered, they should bring this to the attention of the Christian Reformed Synod in the orderly way. Then, when there is a concrete ecclesiastical issue before the churches and under study by the churches, there is ample room for discussion. But until a man is willing to follow this course, he should not disturb nor propagandize the churches with discussion of the very bases of unity.

In conclusion, therefore, I would sound a warning, as follows:

1) The *Reformed Journal* is indeed raising issues here which concern the very bases of unity. They are open about this. But let all be alert to the fact.

2) Let the Christian Reformed Church be on the alert for the promised future discussion by the *Journal*. And let those who are concerned about the preservation of our Reformed heritage be prepared to take prompt and resolute action if this proves necessary. Let none be deceived into thinking that our heritage can be preserved by mere journalistic debate, or dialogue. If such complete freedom of discussion is allowed, as seems to be the fashion of the day, then finally the church will be deprived of its heritage.

3) The ~~Standard~~ Bearer will be watching, and will not hesitate to join the fray.

Editorial Notes

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Our readers probably noticed the omission in the May 1 issue of the Rev. B. Woudenberg's department, *A Cloud of Witnesses*. This was not an intentional omission by your editor, but was due to a mistake on the part of the firm which is responsible for our composition-work.

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An apology is also in order for the tardiness of the May 1 issue. This also was not the fault of the editorial department. Fact is that most of the copy for that issue was in well in advance of the deadline. Our aim is to get the *Standard Bearer* out promptly on the first and the fifteenth of the month. But our composition-man failed us also in this regard, so that the May 1 issue did not actually go to press until April 29. We have a promise that this will not happen again.

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Occasionally we hear comments about the critical and defensive approach of the *Standard Bearer*, particularly in the editorial department and in *All Around Us*. Let it be known hereby that this is not unintentional, but very purposeful and highly necessary. The ecclesiastical scene today is a sad and alarming one. This is true both of the general picture of the church and of the more limited picture of the Reformed community. Everywhere today there is ecclesiastical ferment and turmoil. Ecumenicism, compromise, doctrinal freedom, and revisionism, on the one hand, and a floundering, hopeless attitude, on the other hand, are everywhere evinced. One is inclined to ask with the psalmist, "If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" For there is indeed reason for alarm. And in this situation our *Standard Bearer* finds it necessary to repeat and repeat and repeat the old (but ever new and rich) truths of our Reformed heritage, and to call upon all those who still love that

heritage to stand fast. This repetition is highly necessary in such an age as this for us Protestant Reformed people and our children; and it is also our hope to reach and to encourage others to take a firm stand.

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The 1966 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches will soon meet, D.V., in Doon, Iowa, -- a salutary change after several successive years of meeting in the Grand Rapids area. Judging from the Agenda, this Synod will be largely positive, and will probably spend most of its time on matters pertaining to our seminary and our mission work. It is rather striking that both major standing committees, the Theological School Committee and the Mission Board, are asking for enlargement, due to the amount of work they must accomplish. Perhaps this would be an opportune time for Synod to consider making these committees more representative of the denomination also, instead of limiting their personnel to the Grand Rapids area. Or, if that change cannot be accomplished on such short notice, let Synod initiate a study to that end. I believe there are many good reasons for such a change and that these reasons outweigh any inconveniences which the change might produce. May the Lord bless our Synod in its labors.

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It may be reported that my recent series of three lectures will appear in booklet form in the very near future. A sub-committee of the Mission Board has completed arrangements for publication, and the printing is already under way. Watch for further announcement.

H.C.H.

FROM HOLY WRIT–

The Good Shepherd Of Israel

by Rev. G. Lubbers

CHRIST, THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP (John 10:7-10)

There seems to be something incongruous in Christ calling himself "the door", in view of the fact that in the parable of verses 1-6 he speaks of the shepherd entering into the sheepfold by the door. Here Christ does not enter through the door unto his sheep, but he is the "door" by which the sheep enter, are saved, and go in and go out and find pasture. However, this difficulty disappears when we remember that in the parable Jesus is portraying the different attitudes of the false shepherds (thieves) and of the true shepherds, whereas here the Lord is teaching the truth concerning his relationship to the sheep on a higher plane. Here the Savior teaches the uniqueness of his being the Shepherd of the sheep. By His death and resurrection and ascension he is the "door" of the sheep, who were given to him by the Father. Jesus shows us here the hidden meaning of the proverb, the suggested implications of the same!

Christ is the door. He is emphatically *the* door! There is no other door to life and blessing. He says very emphatically "I, I am the door". No one else is the door. He is the *personal* door. By entering through Him we enter into life. He is the Mediator of God and man. He gives life and that more abundantly; he gives overflowing life. It is eternal life.

This is all given us in the metaphor of a door!

We should not fail to see the meaning either of the *"I am* the door". Repeatedly John speaks of Christ as saying "I Am. . ." Here we have the great self-assertion of Christ. Once Christ simply said "I Am" and the soldiers and the band fell backwards to the ground. That was when Christ was in the garden of Gethsemane where Judas Iscariot and the band would take him. This incident and the constant usage of the words "I Am" show that we have here to do with something unique in the mouth of Jesus. This could only come from his lips. He is greater than Solomon, and greater than all the prophets. He is the great Shepherd of Israel. He is the great I-AM-THAT-I-AM, the Covenant Jehovah in the flesh. In Him the Lord has visited His people. His is a glory full of grace and truth. He is in the bosom of the Father; He is the only-begotten God, very God of God in our flesh. God is manifested in Him in the flesh. In these last days God has spoken unto us through His Son!

This Deity of the eternal Son is reflected in and basic to all such expressions as, "I am the door" (vs 9), "I am the door of the sheep" (vs. 7) "I am the good shepherd" (Vss. 11,14) "I and the Father are one" (Vs. 30). In the foregoing quotations the uniqueness of Christ is indicated in unmistakable language. And we must not overlook the fact that it was thus understood also by the Jewish antagonists of Christ when they say, "Not concerning a good work do we stone thee, but concerning blasphemy, and that thou, being a man, makest thyself God!" Jesus does not deny that such is his meaning with the "I am the door of the sheep, etc." but defends his right to use this language by showing that in the Scriptures those, who

were not God but merely men, are "called gods", as it is written in Psalm 82:6 "I say ye are gods". Nay, Christ's works demonstrate that He and the Father are indeed one! The Jews would possibly say that God was *with* him; he says I and God are equal!

This makes the "I am the door of the sheep" to stand in a new dimension. He is the "door" which is a sheep-door. Only the sheep can use this door and enter in. The door here is the way to the Father, the covenant fellowship with God. It is the opening of all the treasures of salvation and our entrance into it. This salvation is all cast in metaphorical language here:

1. It is an entering in through Christ. By his death and resurrection and ascension and by the operation of His Spirit.

2. There is the constant fellowship alluded to in "and shall go in and go out and find pasture". This refers to the joy of salvation ever afterwards! It makes one think of Psalm 23:6 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever"!

CHRIST, THE GOOD SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP
(John 10:11-13)

The Lord now expands the idea of the "door" by calling attention to the fact that he is "the good shepherd". He is both the door of the sheep and the shepherd of the sheep. Obviously this would not make too good a sense if it were to be taken in the literal sense without a higher and deeper meaning of the mysteries of the kingdom. For how can any creaturely entity be both a door of a building and a shepherd of the sheep! Evidently such is not the meaning here of Jesus' words.

We must look here for an expansion of the metaphor "door". Christ is the door *as* the good shepherd. Were He not the good shepherd He could never be the *door*. For Christ is an entirely different kind of shepherd than other shepherds. He is the *good* shepherd. He is good in the sense of being an altogether lovely and beautiful Shepherd. He is the Son of God in our flesh, who came to suffer and to die in our behalf. He is God in the flesh, God-with-us, Immanuel! He is the appointed Shepherd of God to rule over all God's sheep with His rod and staff forever. Even in heaven's glory in the ages to come Christ will be the Shepherd of the one great flock! He will be God revealed in the Shekinah, above the mercy-seat, in the temple of God. He is good and beautiful as God is beautiful. Holy, harmless, undefiled and separated from sinners is He, and, therefore, He is made higher than the heavens. He is the holy One of God!

He is the door because He is the good shepherd. He is the only one who was appointed to meet the awful foe called the Devil, and to enter into the very anguish and sufferings of hell to bear the wrath of God against the sins of all His people, of all the sheep. He is the only one who truly labors for the well-being of the sheep. Herein is love, not that any man could love the sheep, but that God did send his Shepherd to give His life a ransom for the many, many sheep. All these sheep were given to the Shepherd by the Father. And for these sheep and for these only the Shepherd will give His life. He is not simply a door where anyone may enter, a door for man with his free-will to enter, but He is very particularly the door *of the sheep!* He is the door of the sheep which He knows by name! He claims all the sheep as His own peculiar possession. He calls them mine own. The Greek text points this out very strongly: the mine!

Only of these sheep is He the shepherd! In the most absolute sense all and every one that came before him were thieves and robbers. None really cared for the Sheep but He! That will be shown presently. He stands here in the Old Testament Israel, in the midst of the temple and the shadows and He claims it all as His own things. (John 1:11) He stands in the midst of Israel of the Old Testament, (be it then on the door-step of the New Testament in His blood) and seeks all the lost sheep of the house of Israel. These are all in one stall. Then His eyes look across the New Testament Dispensation, and He sees multitudes, multitudes of sheep among the nations, and those He must also save as His own. And in saving them He will make them one flock, under one Shepherd. And thus, too, he will indeed separate the sheep from the goats, the seed of the woman from the seed of the serpent.

How beautiful is the language of the sovereign love of God as portrayed in Ezekiel 34:11-16 "For thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out, as a shepherd searches out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick. . . ."

And how strong is God's sovereignty expressed in this same chapter of Ezekiel, where we read "therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey: and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; He shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd. And, I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it." (Vss. 22-24)

This is all very beautiful and comforting.

However, in John 10 we have this shepherd in the flesh. He is the one of Whom the Spirit of Christ spoke in Ezekiel. He says: I am the good Shepherd! Christ here identifies himself with that Shepherd of the prophecy, and with their knowledge of that Shepherd

from the Word of God. Therefore He can call Himself "the" Shepherd. Amongst all the children of men He alone is the Shepherd. He is God's servant David. Is He not the Lion out of Judah's tribe, the Root of David? He alone is worthy to take the book of the prophecy and apply this Word to Himself. In the volume of the Scroll it is written of Him!

Yes, His are all the sheep; all the sheep of all ages. Here we sing in the "Old Hundredth Psalm",

Know that the Lord is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His flock, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.

O enter then His gates with joy,
Within His courts His praise proclaim;
Let thankful songs your tongues employ,
O bless and magnify His Name.

Jesus is that good Shepherd. He is God in the flesh, Jehovah, the God of the burning bush. He is yesterday, today and forever the same. He is the Lord God omnipotent. He has power to lay down His life and has power to take it again. He is the beloved of the Father forever!

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

The Post-Communion

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

Following the ceremony in which the broken bread and the poured out wine is received by the communicants, there are yet two things in which the church must take an active and conscious part before the commemoration of the death of the Lord is complete. The importance of this post-communion service must not be minimized, nor should it be omitted as though it were non-essential in instances where the Lord's Supper is celebrated in both the worship services of a given Lord's Day. The second celebration, in such cases, is frequently abbreviated as much as possible, with the result that essential parts of the celebration are sometimes omitted. This is not proper. The post-communion part of the service should be observed after every celebration of the Lord's death, because the things contained therein are both beautiful and essential.

In the first place then, the congregation unitedly gives expression to a doxology of praise to God. This is introduced by the words, "Since the Lord hath now fed our souls at this table, let us therefore jointly praise His holy name with thanksgiving, and every one say in his heart thus:"

Emphatically this expression of praise is not to proceed from the lips only, but it must be resident in the heart. The heart is the center of one's life from a spiritual point of view, and out of that heart therefore all the issues of life proceed. Hence, the joint expression of praise and thanksgiving is not something that is to be momentarily rendered at the communion table, but it must be carried *in the heart* and expressed continuously through all the issues of our life. Our life must be a manifestation of the life of Christ in the midst of the present world. It is this life that has been fed and nourished at the table of the Lord, and in the strength of that nourishment we must go forth in His service, strong in His might to conquer all evil and stand for the right. In that way His holy Name is praised!

The content of this expression of praise is taken from the 103rd Psalm and the 5th chapter of the Epistle of the Romans. The former is a Psalm of praise in which the Lord is extolled for His glorious work of redemption. Our souls are enjoined to bless Him. Yea, all that is within us is called to break forth in blessing His Holy Name. We are to remember all His benefits to us. That the Psalm here speaks negatively, "forget not all His benefits", does not imply justification in forgetting "some" of them. The negative form only emphasizes the imperative necessity of *remembering all of them*. Our heart and mind and soul must be constantly overwhelmed with the spiritual consciousness of the riches of grace that God has given to us in Christ. Only then can we live in communion with Him, and only then will we show forth His praise in all that we are and in all that we do.

This injunction is followed in the Psalm by an enumeration of the benefits God has bestowed upon His people. Quite impossible it would be to mention everything that God has done in one Psalm. A life time is of too short duration to tell this. Neither does the Psalm purpose to do that, but it contains a summary description of the work of God set forth in the Supper that has been celebrated. The emphasis lies upon the mercifulness and graciousness of our God as these virtues are manifest in our Lord Jesus Christ. The mercy and grace of God are without measure. "As the heaven is high above the earth, so

great is His mercy towards them that fear Him. As far as the East is from the West, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." This mercy of God to us is experienced in the forgiveness of all our iniquities and in the healing of all our diseases; in the redeeming of our life from destruction. God has not dealt with us as we deserve, but He has crowned us with His loving kindness and tender mercy. O God, how good Thou art. Shall we not, in the realization of this unfathomable goodness of our God, bless Him and praise His Name unto all eternity!

The second part of this doxology is taken out of Romans 5. The emphasis here is upon the merciful act of God in which He gave His Son, Christ Jesus, that we might be justified in Him, reconciled to God and saved through His life. Because of this the believer vows: "Therefore shall my mouth and heart show forth the praise of the Lord from this time forth forever more." These words of Romans 5 are so rich and beautiful that we should pause in our reading, meditate on them and, if you haven't already done so, take the time now to commit them to memory. We quote them here:

Who hath not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, and given us all things with Him. "Therefore God commendeth therewith His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; much more then, being now justified in His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him: for, if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:8-10)

More need not be said. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. His greatness is unsearchable. Let us, the recipients of His wonderful salvation, humbly adore and praise Him forevermore.

Following this the church unites in a concluding prayer of thanksgiving, which is climaxed and ended with the perfect prayer our Lord taught us to pray and commonly denoted as "The Lord's Prayer". A few comments on this prayer will conclude our discussion of this beautiful Lord's Supper form.

The prayer is addressed to our "Almighty, merciful God and Father". It is not "Almighty God" and "Merciful Father" although this would also be quite possible. But the two adjectives modify both God and Father. God is viewed in the prayer as our Father in heaven; our Father in Christ Jesus. It is as our Father that He has manifest both His power and mercy in the work of redemption which we have celebrated in the Lord's Supper. Sovereign power of God was required to establish the basis and foundation of our salvation, and that power, wrought by Christ, the Son of God, was displayed as the manifestation of His mercy; His desire to deliver us from our misery and make us partakers of the joy and blessedness of His own life. To this omnipotent and compassionate God we render our thanks.

The prayer itself may be divided into two main parts. The first part contains a threefold expression of thanks and the second part contains a double petition. In the thanksgiving our gratitude is expressed for the gift of God's Son, the gift of faith and the gift of the Lord's Supper. The Son of God is given "for a Mediator and a sacrifice for our sins, and to be our meat and drink unto life eternal." This is a concise expression of the truth that all of our eternal needs are satisfied in Christ. He is our life and in Him there is no lack or want. He is the Shepherd of our souls. He feeds us in green pastures. He restores our souls. He makes us to lie down beside still waters. He is our Advocate with the Father Who does all that is necessary to bring us into the fellowship of the covenant of grace. For all that God has given us in Him we humbly give thanks first of all.

To be the benefactors of this redemptive work of Christ, however, necessitates faith. Without some bond or channel uniting us to Christ we are out of connection with the store of all blessings. We have no strength, ability or means in ourselves to procure these things that are essential unto life eternal. Realizing this we are then also conscious that the means of procuring these things is also a gift of God and therefore we also give thanks for the gift of "lively (living) faith". As we pray this the words of the apostle Paul resound in our soul: "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God". (Ephesians 2:8) And we confess: "Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure; but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him; or even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will, consent to the terms of salvation, and actually believe in Christ; but because he who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe, and the act of believing also." (Canons III-IV, Art. 14)

Finally, we give thanks for that Divine pleasure that motivated our Lord Jesus Christ to institute the Holy Supper as the means of grace through which faith and the living assurance of all the blessings of salvation is confirmed in us. Let us ever appreciate and therefore also use with diligence the same means which God has appointed unto this end.

The prayer of thanksgiving concludes with a petition that our faithful God and Father will grant that through the operation of the Holy Spirit the commemoration of the Lord's death may tend to the daily increase of our faith, as well as the increase of saving fellowship with Him. When we pray this we are consciously aware of the truth emphasized so strongly by the apostle James, who taught us that a dead faith is no faith at all but that faith, saving faith in Jesus Christ, is an active, living, working thing. Faith may not lie dormant, for its very nature is that it grows and developes and this development we experience by the working of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace. And as faith grows in us we become more and more

conscious of our fellowship with Christ. Then we walk in the ways of His covenant and enjoy all the blessings of that covenant. It is, therefore, through the means of the Lord's Supper that the riches and glories of the covenant of grace are made our personal possession, and for all of these we cannot cease to give thanks. With Paul we would cry out, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift." (II Cor. 9:15)

Can we pray this prayer of communion?

This question we would ask in conclusion, because the answer to it unavoidably reflects upon our entire observance of the sacrament from the preparatory to the actual reception of its benefits. In answering the question then we must be aware that "saving fellowship with Christ" necessitates conflict with the world of darkness, with our own flesh and with the devil and his whole dominion. We cannot walk in fellowship with darkness and still be partakers of the benefits of the Kingdom of light. There is an antithesis here that cannot be bridged. When we walk in fellowship with Christ we must expect and we will unavoidably experience the wrath and opposition of all that is not of Christ in this world. The servant is not greater than the Master and therefore, what they did to Him we may expect they will do to us. To His disciples the Lord said, "Take up your cross and follow me". To that cross belongs all the tribulations that the church must suffer for Christ's sake.

Are we thankful also for these?

Can we rejoice with Peter and John that we have been counted worthy to suffer for the Kingdom of Heaven?

If so, we may indeed pray that God will work by His Spirit in us to increase more and more that blessed fellowship with Christ; that it may not diminish, but that even as the day of His coming approaches and the powers of evil wax stronger, we may grow in grace to be faithful unto death, that no one take our crown.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD—

The Efficacious Calling

by Rev. C. Hanko

Our God is the living God.

Before Him the angels hide their faces in holy adoration, the saints in heaven bow in humble worship, the devils and the wicked tremble, and the church on earth rejoices to behold His salvation.

The living God is the calling God, Who calls the things that are not as though they were. For He needs but to speak and it is; He commands and it stands forth. He quickens the dead. He makes Himself a peculiar people that can declare His praises forever. He makes all things new. He reveals His glory in all the works of His hands, that in adoration we may declare: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth!"

The living God, the Creator, calls.

In the beginning God created, called into being this present universe by the word of His power. The Almighty said, "Let there be light," and there was light. By His powerful word He spread out the broad expanse of the heavens, He called forth the dry land out of the water, He produced grass and herbs and trees as food for man and beast. God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night," and the sun appeared, the moon took form, and all the stars of the heavens stood in their places. That same word called forth the birds and the fishes, and animals of every sort. And by that word man came into being in God's own image and likeness to have dominion over all the earthly creation as God's friend-servant. The Psalmist can truthfully say, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . .For he spake, and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast." Psalm 33:6, 9.

Unbelief can never understand this. The unbeliever likes to convince himself that things simply evolve out of themselves. The wonder of the universe is that mere things come into existence and develop, reproduce and bring forth still more wonderful things by mere chance and circumstance. But the believer looks to God Who needs but to speak and it is, and confesses that this whole creation is a wonder of our God, an amazing wonder of His power and greatness, brought forth in a mere six days. As Scripture itself expresses it, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Heb. 11:3.

This becomes even more significant to us when we realize that *Christ* is that Word of power whereby God created all things in the beginning. John opens his gospel account with the remarkable statement, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." John 1:1-3. This shows us that the triune God made the heavens and the earth. The Father sent forth the Word, the Son, and the Son worked mightily through the Holy Spirit Who moved upon the earth. See Gen. 1:1-3. But this also informs us that Christ already then stood before God as the Firstborn, the Head of His church, by Whom and unto Whom all things were made. Col. 1:15-19. This present creation is a most perfect picture of the creation to come, and even serves to bring forth the day when all things shall be made new. God knows the end from the beginning; His counsel stands, and He does all His good pleasure in almighty power and infinite wisdom. He is the calling God.

But we should also consider in passing that even in creation the living God continues to carry out that which His hand has begun. Even the continued existence and life of the creatures is from God.

There is a calling of God in the sphere of God's providence, in nature and in history. Providence is that almighty and omnipresent power of God whereby He continually speaks and it is, He commands and it stands forth. He waters the hills from His chambers; He causes the grass to grow, so that the earth brings forth abundantly. He crowns the year with His goodness, His paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. He clothes the pastures with flocks, the valleys with corn: they shout for joy, they even sing. Psalm 104 and Psalm 65.

Scripture even informs us that God carries out His providence through rational, moral creatures, men and angels alike. God calls each creature to occupy his own place in the course of history, each to serve his own appointed purpose in the realization of the eternal glory of God's Name. The angels are so many ministering spirits, who eagerly wait upon God's bidding and are always carrying out the work that is entrusted to them. We may often wonder how those many millions of angels are all daily occupied, each according to his ability and position, to help toward the salvation of the church and the coming of the Lord. Yet we know that they are just as eager for the coming of the kingdom as we are; and possibly more so. They are always busy consciously and willingly performing the duties which they alone can perform. Even the devils in hell, in spite of themselves, are called to serve that God's name may be glorified. Although Satan is always plotting and scheming as the great antagonist of God, employing all his demons to destroy God's Name and to wipe out His cause from the earth, he not only fails miserably, but even serves God's purpose toward the coming of the day of the Lord. We have a clear example of that in the cross. The devil united all his forces to destroy the Christ, the Anointed of God. He aroused the whole world against the Christ, so that they stood as one man in a united effort to kill Him and silence His witness forever. And yet "of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, *for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*" Acts 4:27, 28. We know that God raised Pharaoh to the exalted position as king of Egypt to oppress the people of God for the very purpose that God might show His power through him, and that God's Name might be declared throughout all the earth. Rom. 9:17. Also Cyrus, king of Persia, was but a tool in the hand of the Almighty to subdue nations before Him. He is called God's servant, whose right hand God holds. The living God declares: "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me."

Since this earthly creation is given to us as a picture of the spiritual and heavenly, all these examples of the powerful, efficacious calling of God in creation and history are so many pictures of the spiritual and abiding calling. Things happen in parables, that those who have eyes may see, behold, and wonder in holy adoration at the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. That which no eye hath seen, no ear hath heard, and never entered into the heart of man is revealed to us by God Himself that we may know and confess Him as God alone, Whose is the praise and the glory forever.

The living God, the Recreator, also calls.

There is an efficacious calling that raises the dead sinner out of death into life. Abraham was given a very concrete demonstration of this powerful calling in the birth of Isaac, the promised seed. Although Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, so that they were beyond the age of producing an offspring, God brought life out of death by giving them the wonder child Isaac in their old age. God performed this wonder even as he had promised, because in the loins of Abraham was the Wonder child, Jesus, Who should be born of the virgin. And Romans 4:17 tells us that in saving faith Abraham believed God. He believed God "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."

God performs this same wonder of His calling every time an elect sinner is regenerated. And I am referring now to the calling that even precedes the call of the gospel. It is the same powerful voice that was so graphically portrayed to us by the Lord Himself when He stood at the grave of Lazarus and caused His life-giving power to enter into the corpse of His departed friend, to arouse him to hear, to respond, to open his eyes, to stand on his feet, and to come forth from the grave still wrapped in the linens of his burial. Even by that same power God raises the dead sinner from spiritual death into spiritual life. For the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and live. Christ arouses the sinner out of his spiritual death-sleep,

even before he can hear the gospel, saying, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." The result is a new birth, a recreation.

To use another figure, Scripture explains to us that God implants the seed of life in our hearts while we are still dead in trespasses and sins. We are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, which abides forever. We become new creatures in Christ with a new, heavenly life within us. And this is the work solely of God, through Christ, the Word of God, Who lives and abides forever. I Peter 1:25.

But there is still another calling of God, which is far more familiar to us and which takes place through the preaching of the Word. This calling comes to us as the outward call of the gospel, which is applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us. The Spirit uses the Word to enlighten our understanding, to turn our will, and to translate us from darkness into God's marvellous light. As the result of this calling we are brought to conversion and to conscious faith in God and in Christ.

Concerning this calling Paul writes in Romans 8:29, 30, "For whom he (God) did foreknow, he also did predestinate. . . . Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called." And the apostle Peter assures us that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, for the very purpose that we should "shew forth the praises of him *who hath called you* out of darkness into his marvellous light." And the prophet Isaiah comforts the saints in the midst of severest trials and sufferings with the assurance, "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, *I have called thee by thy name;* thou art mine!"

This calling is always powerful. The Word of the living God never returns void. His Word is a power unto salvation to all who believe, and that same Word works condemnation for those who reject it in unbelief.

This calling is, therefore, also efficacious. A human word is spoken and soon forgotten. A mere offer depends upon the recipient to accept or reject it. An assurance from the lips of the preacher that God loves you and that Christ died for you means nothing to the sinner who hates God and cherishes his sins. A mere assurance of man means nothing even to the regenerated sinner who is burdened with the load of sin and guilt. How can God love such a sinner as I am? How can I ever accept the assurance that Christ died for such a miserable wretch as I am? But God's Word is powerful. He awakens in us the consciousness of sin and guilt, because He first implants His love in our hearts. And He Who arouses us to a consciousness of our own wretchedness also assures us that our sins, be they ever so many, are forgiven. Just as Jesus called the sin-burdened sinner to Him while He was still on earth, He now calls through His Word and by His Spirit in our hearts: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Thus God's calling is always sovereign. He is not dependent upon the persuasive powers of a preacher, nor upon the will of those who hear the Word. He Who causes His Word to be preached also declares by His Spirit in the heart of His elect, regenerated child all the words of eternal life. He causes the Word to bring forth fruit unto repentance and salvation. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

IN HIS FEAR—

Trusting In A Human god

by Rev. J. A. Heys

Although our title above is in error as far as the rules for capitalization are concerned, this title nevertheless is doctrinally, theologically and Scripturally correct. The rule for capitalization is that "all words in titles of books, periodicals, essays and the like, except particles of three letters or less; academic degrees and their abbreviations shall be capitalized." And again, "Proper nouns, words used as proper nouns, and (generally) their derivatives used in the primary sense shall be capitalized."

It is a rather tragic situation and pathetic as well that one has to be in error in order to be right. We have come to a strange situation when one must break a rule of writing in order to write correctly. This bit of contradiction and inconsistency is in the world because sin is in the world. Before the entrance of sin

into the world man would never have spoken of a god or ever conceived of using the word with a lower case letter at the beginning. Adam said, "God", and to him a god was the nonentity that it is. A god simply is nothing and does not exist, as Paul also points out in I Corinthians 8:4. Writes he, "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one." He continues in the next verses, "For though there be that are called gods (note the lower case letter wherewith the word begins) whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him." How then can we and shall we speak of trusting in a human God? There is no such thing! And even though we do use capital letters to designate men and objects which do not exist, such as Uncle Sam and Santa Claus, Utopia and Martians, God forbid that we place a creature on the level with the Creator to call a thing God! We would rather be correct in God's sight and render Him the honor due *only* to His name than to be considered learned, educated, cultured, refined, grammatically and editorially correct.

To many the idea of a human god is objectionable. Many rightly see that a human god is no greater than we and must fall short of helping poor, frail humanity. A god with human characteristics, even though they be of power far greater than ours, is still a dependent creature. Humanity is limited and never self-sufficient. We need a God Who indeed is God. Men generally speak of their god as being divine, and by this very word mean to express a transcendency that lifts their god above man. But even though men generally attribute to their gods a superhuman power, wisdom and glory, there is yet so much trust in a human god -- even when men claim that Jehovah is their God -- that in His fear we do well to examine our own lives and thinking, lest we be found praying to and confessing a god instead of God.

All idolatry is not image worship, even though all image worship is idolatry. And image worship always manifests itself in the worship of and trust in a creaturely god. Look about you in the image worship of the Pagan world that still outwardly and openly sacrifices to idols of wood and stone! What monstrosities they make! A fierce looking, hideous conglomeration of parts of birds and beasts and of man is the composition of their idol. To try to express the power(?) of their god, they give their image those parts of animals that symbolize power to man. Their terror before this figment of their own imagination they express in fierce, scowling lines upon the face of their idol. In one way or another and by borrowing from the creatures which they can see and of whose powers they know, the heathen make an image of what they think their god is like. It does not always turn out to be a human god but more often far more like a beast even than man. But the outcome always is, when men begin to fashion an image of their god, that we see a god that is nothing more than a combination of creatures. And it may be added that no matter how beautiful we might try to make our image, it will still be a gross insult to the living God Whose place we try to take away by our idol, or Whom we claim to represent by our image.

Isaiah asks not foolishly but in all seriousness, "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?" Isaiah 40:18. Compare Him to any creature, be it man in His image, or be it Gabriel and Michael the archangels, you have dragged Him down from His lofty, divine position and made Him (only in your thinking and never in actual fact) a creature-god. You have insulted, debased, ridiculed Him. No wonder He strictly forbids in the second commandment of His law that we make any graven images to worship as representing Him. Did Israel do Him justice by making a golden calf? and saying, "These be the gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And it is not simply representing Him by a golden calf that is condemned, but all likenesses of God, and all ideas concerning Him except those which He gives of Himself in His Word.

He is the Incomparable One. There is no creature like unto Him, for He is the Creator and not a creature. And though a man may be quite satisfied and pleased when you make a likeness of him in marble or upon canvass, the living God wants no representations of Himself by the creature. Man may even be flattered by that likeness and become puffed up to see his likeness displayed before other men. God is filled with righteous wrath and indignation when the creature tries to express in the created matter the uncreated God. Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria, "God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." We must know Him and derive our opinion of Him from what He says in His Word of truth, and not from some statue or picture which most assuredly will tell the lie concerning Him. For He cannot be likened unto any creature, but as the incomparable and transcendent God can be known only by what He says of Himself. He can be known only in His Word.

How can you with finite, limited material make a likeness of that which is infinite and unlimited? How big will you make this likeness and show that He is bigger because He is infinite? How many eyes will you give that likeness to show that He is all-seeing and all-knowing; or will you make Him all eye? But then where is the hearing, the speaking? How will you show His holiness? By a halo of gold around His head? And this will adequately express that His whole being is holy? It will clearly teach the unlearned that He IS holy and not that holiness hangs over Him or is added to Him? The Son of God in our flesh had definite features -- which by the way, He did not want preserved. He could have led man to invent the camera and color film twenty centuries ago, had He wished to have us know these physical features, and were they essential for our faith and salvation. His Son in our flesh also we must know by faith and as He is revealed in the Word. We need no likeness of Him

Who could be likened, had God chosen to preserve His features for us today. We need His life, His Spirit and His salvation, not a photograph or statue of Him. Surely we do not need a statue of Him on the dash board of our automobiles, of Mary and any of the saints. This too is image worship and idolatry, for it puts the creature in His place to one degree or another.

So far we have not lost many readers, no doubt. To a point we always find agreement and can jointly condemn certain evil practices and works of unbelief. But let us look inwardly as well as outwardly. Is the God Whom we trust actually God, or is He a human god and thus not God? It is relatively simple to find another's human god. What about ours? If, indeed, we have not already taken the position that He is dead.

Indeed, what do we say of His love, mercy and grace?

The fool says in his heart that there is no God; and the Church has every right to call those who thus speak heathens. The Modernist says that God is dead; and the Church has every right to say that those who speak that way of God are not Christians and are likewise heathens. Scripture does that! In Psalm 115:2 those who ask, "Where is now their God?", are called heathens. Certainly they are not disciples of Christ and worthy of the name Christians. Christ never professed that God is dead. A church member who takes that stand is dead! He evidences a dead heart, a heart as dead as stone. He reveals himself as one dead in trespasses and sins. He shows that there is not a spark of spiritual life in him. But while we can agree on the idolatry of these extremes, what about presenting the living God as having attributes that are beset by human limitations?

God is love. He is the God of all grace. And Christ is our merciful High-priest. To this all must agree, for this is the literal word of God. But the question is whether we listen to what Scripture has to say of these attributes of God. Do we begin with the love of man and explain God's love in its light? Or do we actually see that God is love and that in man, created in His image and before the fall and only after regeneration, there is a creaturely reflection of that infinite love of God? Jesus said, "I am the true vine, ye are the branches." And again He said, "I am the true (rather than good) shepherd." Shall we change these and say that Christ is like the natural shepherd and like the natural vine? Scripture approaches the matter from the exactly opposite direction. The vine which we see with the natural eye, and the human shepherd who tends the literal flock of sheep are the pictures. Christ and His people are the true vine and branches and shepherd and sheep. No different is it with God's attributes of love, mercy and grace. What we see in man of love, mercy and grace are such faint reflections of what is so infinite in God.

Arminianism of every hue and flavor presents a human god who is disappointed in love far more often than he is loved by the object upon which he sets his affection. God loves everybody, so the story goes, but he succeeds in getting so few to accept his love and to love him in return. With this, of course, goes a human power. No, to be honest we must say a sub-human power. This is even reflected in that God-dishonoring question which results from having an imaginary god, "Why not let God have His way with you and save you?" Here, indeed, is a human god, for that god turns out to be man. He has the power to frustrate the god that wants to save him. And if God's love is a reflection of ours, this is to be understood as being the power(?) of His love. God must be disappointed in love, if His love is no more sturdy and substantial than that of the creature. Vines and shepherds die. If God as our shepherd is a reflection of the human shepherd, the Modernist has his room to say today that God is dead. At least He will come to death sooner or later. If Christ, the vine, is only a picture of what we see growing in the field, He too will die. For all these are temporary creatures that depend upon an Independent, Self-sufficient One.

Let us break down our images of Baal. Let not our children see and be tempted to bow down and to put their trust in Dagon, Ashteroth or any of the modern idols. But by all means break these mental images as well and smash them to smithereens! It is more difficult to do that. But the danger of a mental image is not less than that of an image of wood and stone. And the trust in a mental image that originates in man's mind and is not derived from the Word of God is idolatry and image worship as surely as Israel committed these sins in worshipping the golden calf.

It may be said of and to Modernism, "Your god is too small." But this holds for Arminianism and Pelagianism and all false doctrines as well. They always are trust in human gods, and so often in gods that have less power and wisdom even than man. A human god cannot save humanity, for it is produced by humanity and has all of its frailties and shortcomings. In His fear look up to Him Who is in the heavens and has done as He has pleased. Trust in the God of Psalm 115:3. He will not let you down.

STANDARD BEARER STAFF MEETING

The Standard Bearer Staff will meet, D.V., the evening of June 6 at 8 o'clock P.M., in our Doon, Iowa church. Will all the staff members please take note of this annual meeting?

J. A. Heys, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to our sister, Mrs. Jake Van Den Top and her children, in the recent passing of their husband and father,

MR. JAKE VAN DEN TOP

May our loving Father comfort the hearts of the bereaved family with His eternal Spirit.

Rev. R. Decker, pres.
Mrs. C. Klein, sec'y.

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

Rationalistic Biblical Criticism

(Continued)

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

2. Its Method and Result (cont'd). The facts available in the study of Scripture manuscripts do not warrant more than one author of Genesis. Nor does single authorship necessarily demand one single style of writing throughout. One author treating different subjects may very well reveal different styles appropriate to his themes. A university professor preparing a manuscript of a philosophy text-book writes in a style different from his successful efforts at poetry. A preacher's pulpit style may be generally rhetorical, but his colloquial style, humorously practical. An electronics engineer would be forgiven for explaining his specialization in technical terms; yet we would expect him to come with a different style when addressing the literary club. A teacher does not write to his class in the same style in which he writes to his wife. Yet in Scripture God addresses His Church sometimes as "disciples" (learners) and at other times as His "bride."

Further claim for this theory of diversified authorship is made on the basis of repetition in Scripture. There is said to be repetition of the Genesis 1 account of creation in Genesis 2. This is said to infer twin authorship of the repetitive passages. But that which is summarial and supplementary is not repetitive. The same may be said for Joseph and Pharaoh who had double dreams of the same prophesied events which applied separately to them. This does not suggest double authorship. Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, but the reiteration of it on the plain (Luke 6) does not imply different orators.

It must be admitted that these literary deductions came about only after thorough and scholarly examination of the Hebrew manuscripts and versions, together with the study of history, archaeology and contemporary writings. The facts, and all available material, with the possible exceptions of the latest findings in archaeology and the latest rebuttals of orthodox scholars, have been carefully examined and scrutinized. But the trouble is that the explanations given the objective facts and data consist of philosophies and hypotheses. From real phenomena we are led to learned suppositions. The drawback, to Modernism, is the supernatural element in Scripture, and the rationalistic interpreters have always rejected it on the grounds that it is more of a detriment than an asset to the cause of Christian truth. The Old Testament was explained as an outgrowth of the myths and folk-lore of the heathen nations surrounding Israel. Over against this, we believe that the only explanation perfectly in agreement with the facts is that the Old Testament is the revelation of God. By "the revelation of God" we do not mean the self-accumulated information the human mind acquires in meditative gropings for God, thus making revelation a product of man's intellectual achievement. But by revelation we mean the reception of truth at the disclosure, and on the authority of God. To us it is much more staggering to the human mind to believe that the compiling of the Pentateuch as we now have it came out of this labyrinthine patchwork of Modernism, than to believe the simple miracle of an original composition given by God through the hand of Moses.

3. Its Inaccurate Representations. Is there any central and basic argument appealed to in support of this smithereen-theory of the structure of Scripture? There is; the gist of it being that in Exodus 6:2 the E author states that the name *Jehovah* was not revealed until the time of Moses. Therefore, the passages in Genesis, where the name Jehovah appears, were not written by the person who recorded these Exodus words of God to Moses, for he would not put his name in the patriarchs' mouths as though they were familiar with it. He would not, this means, create an anachronism, i.e., the misplacing of historic language, and assign it to a period earlier than when it came into existence. (Further illustration of an anachronism we have in the use of cannon in Shakespeare's "King John," as cannon were not employed in England until 100 years or more after his reign). Therefore it was a different writer, J, who made his contributions to the Book of Genesis at an age far later than the time of Moses. So the argument runs.

But it simply cannot be that by the name *Jehovah*, God was not known until after the call of Moses, for in this very chapter (Ex. 6) Moses' mother, Jochebed, is mentioned, and her name consists of the abbreviated form of *Jehovah: Jo* plus *chebhedh* equals *Jehovah* is *glorious.* Besides, we may take Ex. 6:2 as a question (rather than a negative declaration), which was asked, "by My name Jehovah was I not known to them?" The question requires the self-evident answer that He was so known. Jochebed's parents must have so known Him.[1] Intellectually they had this knowledge, but they

did not know in the fulness of religious experience the complete significance of this name Jehovah. That could not be until their redemption from Egypt.

Since we have so many diverse documents, written by so confusing an array of compilers, as E and the three subordinates of his school, J and the three lesser J's, C (covenant code), D, P and his subjects, with no one knows how many R's (editors), how can we believe that there is an unanimity of thought running between them whatsoever? How may we be sure of the identity of the J passages in distinction from the E, etc., when the destructive critics do not agree among themselves? De Wette, Knobel and Bleek say one thing, Stahelin another, Kuenen with still a different opinion; Ewald has his peculiar view, and Hartmann, Bohlen and Wellhausen, although agreeing with each other, differ from all the rest. For while denying that Moses was the author of Genesis, of either the J or E sections, or that he was even the compiler R, some critics attribute the authorship to Samuel, some to Hilkiah, others to Jeremiah, still others to Ezra, others to someone after the captivity, while a few hold Genesis to be a collection of the labors of all these mentioned. How then may we even speak of a *Modernistic* theory, when that has not earned the recognition and reputation of a *theory* which is only a private opinion held among scores of conflicting opinions and jumbled irrelevancies?

4. Its Attack on Old Testament History. One of the most time-worn contentions of this modernistic theory (?) is that the religion of the Old Testament, and the Book of Genesis in particular, make "no claim to being in any way supernaturally furnished," and that "the early narratives of Genesis respecting the Creation, the Fall, and the Flood are based upon myths and traditions which the Israelites inherited in common with other branches of the Semitic family."[2]

It has always been naturalism's pet argument, in the attempt to be rid of the supernatural element, to affirm that the Old Testament has very little, if any, historical accuracy. Its basis is therefore not historical, but mythological. The Creation, the Fall, the Flood are not objective, historical events; but since these accounts so closely resemble the popular legends then current among the surrounding heathen nations, they must have had their origin there and were adopted therefrom, and eventually came to be regarded as part and parcel of Israel's own religious fictions. These accounts do have value, in that they stimulate imagination as to what the history of Israel may have been like; but they are useless as a guide to historical truth. Unoriginal Israel simply acquired its religion gradually from long exposure to the prevalent, environing heathen cultures. "The labors of Rawlinson, Lenormant, George Smith, Schrader, Sayce and others have shown indisputably the affinity of the Israelite with the Chaldean cosmogony."[3]

Mark, it is not, as we Reformed would say, "the affinity of the Chaldean legends to the Israelite cosmogony," which is the fact, but the statement, as modern criticism makes it, means, as the word "affinity" stresses, that the Israelite records have a connection through causal relation with the Chaldean, i.e., the Chaldean source is the cause and origin of the Israelite stream. But is this the correct picture? The Flood legends, indeed, are found among every people, but these fabled accounts do not in any way gain an ascendancy over the pseudepigrapha (false-writings), to say nothing of the fact that they come nowhere near the high quality of Holy Scripture. But is it reason to argue that because there are legends of the Flood everywhere in the world showing similarities to the biblical account, that therefore the biblical account itself must be a legend and of legendary origin? One may as sensibly aver that because there are Coca-Cola signs in every foreign country in the world bearing resemblances to similar signs in our country, that therefore Coca-Cola must be of foreign origin! Furthermore, how would the Chaldeans, Greeks, Hindus, Phyrygians, Chinese, Polynesians, Mexicans and Cherokee Indians all independently stumble on the same myth, if theirs was not a tradition of the same historical event?

5. Its View of Science and Scripture. Another favorite attack upon the Word of God is to argue that the Book is not a scientific treatise, but an expression of certain tribal beliefs and religious aspirations of past ages. The implication is that the Bible is not in harmony with science, not any more than a collection of Babylonian superstitions would be. It is filled with errors which contradict the findings of science, so that the best we can do with the biblical material is to "interpret it in a new way" and consider it "as the highly symbolical expression of a truth which was intuitively perceived by its redactor or by the sages who communicated it to him."[4] The Flood as related in Genesis, according to such reasoning, is not an inspired record of a universal deluge, but an allegory meant to reveal a natural aversion on the part of God toward violence and injustice.

But it is not the Genesis record which conflicts with true science; it is philosophy, of one brand or other, which does. Facts do not conflict with Scripture, nor does Scripture ever conflict with facts, but unwarranted interpretations of the facts do. Science has never been able to controvert the biblical account of the universal Flood, nor has it made such an attempt. Only certain philosophers have done so, or certain anti-Christian scientists who allowed themselves to depart from the field of true science for the dead-end alleys of speculation. Not the Scripture, but the self-confident critic is in the wrong. . . .

1 *Old and New Testament Biblical Theology,* G. Vos, p. 73, Theol. Sem. of the Reformed Episcopal Church, 1934.
2 *Hastings' Bible Dictionary,* II, Genesis, p. 146, Scribner's, N.Y., 1900.
3 Ibid.
4 *Human Destiny,* Lecomte du Nouy, 112, Longmans, N.Y., 1947.

ALL AROUND US—

Defense of the Formula of Subscription
The Obscenity Issue
The Prayer Issue

by Prof. H. Hanko

DEFENSE OF THE FORMULA OF SUBSCRIPTION

We have observed in previous issues of the *Standard Bearer* that the Church, pressing on towards modernism, is making concentrated efforts to dispose of the creeds. Especially in the Reformed Church disposing of the creeds implies also disposing of the Form of Subscription. (Presbyterian Churches also require a promise of their officebearers to uphold the creeds, even though they do not use the Formula.) Hence, attacks are being made upon this Formula in efforts to set it aside. The idea is that, setting aside the Formula, the door will be open to free discussion of all and any doctrine which the Church has confessed, to re-examination of such doctrine, and to the possibility of arriving at different doctrines than those historically maintained. Free discussion with nothing binding upon the consciences and faith of the people of God is the desire of these men. (This became very evident in a recent article in the *Reformed Journal* written by Henry Stob.)

In *The Banner*, Rev. Conrad Veenstra, emeritus minister in the Christian Reformed Church, rises to the defense of the Formula and points out that it is being violated in the Church. It is good to hear such a protest.

By way of introduction to this article, Rev. Veenstra offers a brief history of the adoption of the Formula at the Synod of Dort. From there he proceeds to discuss the fourfold purpose of the Formula. He points out that it demands 1) a declaration of agreement with what is confessed in the Reformed Standards; 2) that it elicits a promise from those who sign it that they will "expound correctly and rise to vindicate these truths when challenged"; 3) that it binds the signer to reject these errors -- especially the error of Arminianism; 4) that it spells out the way in which an objector to the creeds must walk: the way of gravamen to Consistory, Classis and Synod; the meanwhile keeping silent in public and private, in teaching, preaching and writing these views.

After this introduction, Rev. Veenstra asks the question whether the Church is maintaining her Formula. After pointing out that a growing characteristic of our times is lawlessness in society, politics and even in the Church, he finds these weaknesses beginning to show themselves also in the Christian Reformed Church. He then gives a couple of examples, and we quote from his article.

> All of us remember that a few years ago differences of opinion arose regarding the doctrine of infallibility of the Bible. To us, it seems the novel opinions were in conflict with Article 3 of the Belgic Confession, yet the royal road of not writing in public, but revealing our sentiments to consistory, classis and synod was not followed.
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> At present there is much discussion of theistic evolution as a possible explanation for the origin of all things. But is not Article 12 of the Belgic Confession clear on the doctrine of creation as the origin of all things? . . . In the light of the Confession and Scripture, there seems to be no room for theistic evolution. If it can be harmonized with the doctrine of creation, why not go to consistory, classis, and synod to have such views judged?
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> The view has been advocated that "God loves all men redemptively." But how does this fit in with the confession in the Canons of Dort (2:8) "that Christ by the blood of the cross . . . should effectively redeem . . . all those, and only those, who were from eternity chosen to salvation . . . ." The view advocated seems in complete contradiction with the creed. Can advocating this view be compatible with the subscription to the Form?
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> To mention but one more illustration, namely, the recent writing on reprobation. The position seems to us to conflict with the Canons (1:15) which declares that "God has decreed to leave some sinners in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion . . . . And this is the decree of reprobation."

The author concludes this article by asking: "How can brethren justify their public writing and teaching on these subjects in the light of their having subscribed in good conscience before God to the Creed?" And he adds: "We must demand anew that leaders in church and school hold themselves to their promises made when they signed the Form of Subscription or accept the penalty of being suspended from office."

This position of Rev. Veenstra we heartily endorse. What he writes is so true. And, surely, it is high time that someone rises up in the Christian Reformed Church to call attention to these violations of the promises made by those who signed this document.

But we have a few questions of our own to ask.

First of all, is it not perhaps too late to ask that the penalty of suspension from office be applied to those who violate their own promises? After all the

Formula also says ". . . being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the consistory classis and synod, under the penalty in case of refusal to be, *by that very fact,* suspended from office." (Underlining, ours.) Should not that suspension from office have taken place sometime ago when these writing began? It is never too late to undo a wrong, but it does become increasingly difficult. All the more so when Prof. Decker, who is referred to above, was recently reappointed to teach in the seminary.

Secondly, what about those who have been guilty of this violation? What do they think about this? In the official church paper of the Christian Reformed Church they have been accused of violating this important document and of breaking their promise. Will they simply overlook this? *Can* they overlook it? I am sure that a minister of the gospel or professor who has been publicly accused of breaking his oath of office and becoming worthy of suspension, if he is at all serious about his calling, will rise in righteous anger in his own defense. It seems to me that the sacredness of the promise demands this.

Surely, things cannot continue in this way.

THE OBSCENITY ISSUE

The issue of pornography has been before the Supreme Court of the United States in several cases within the recent past. In an earlier decision, the Supreme Court had seemed to many to go too far in approving pornographic material which is at present flooding the mails and polluting countless newsstands throughout the country. The Court had made the test of pornography to be whether "to the average person, applying contemporary standards, the dominant theme taken as a whole appeals to prurient inerest." On the basis of this standard, material which was considered by many to be obscene had been approved. In fact, one judge of the court in particular wrote an opinion which expressed the view that even this standard was too strong and that the principle of "freedom of speech" permitted anyone to write or to say anything which he pleased without limitations by the court. While his view did not prevail on the bench, nevertheless, proph - ets of gloom predicted that the Court was opening the gates to yet greater streams of filth. The fact was that the court had not yet condemned any one publication.

In a more recent decision, the court ruled that Ralph Ginzburg, a noted publisher of filth, was guilty of disobeying the laws and that he should be sent to jail. The decision was complex: although it was made by a 5-4 majority, nine justices, in three decisions, wrote fourteen different opinions on the matter.

The court has therefore committed itself to the position that some material is indeed pornography and should be banned, while its publishers penalized. But the material has to be pretty bad before this can be done.

The issue goes considerably deeper than any court decision, however.

It is surely evident that the decisions of the court reflect a growing immorality among the citizens of this country. Much lower moral standards (or none at all) are being accepted. One need only do cursory reading in news media to become aware of how deeply the filth of obscenity has penetrated the lives of the citizenry. No legislation, even though it would be far stronger than that made by the Supreme Court, can change the foul heart of man.

But all of this is due to fact that the objective law of God has been abandoned. This is the great problem facing the Supreme Court: they have no standard of what constitutes obscenity. They search for such a standard here and there, but always outside God's law, and come up with the standard of whether "to the average person, applying contemporary standards, the dominant theme taken as a whole appeals to prurient interest." Even this makes the standard of obscenity some kind of majority vote of the populace. And, if the morals of the populace decay, the standards decline along with them. There is then at last nothing left of all sin which can be called obscene.

But God's law is very explicit about these things. The seventh commandment forms the basis; and its interpretation is given throughout Scripture. Paul writes to the Ephesians: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints: Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient . . . .And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." Eph. 5:3, 4, 11, 12.

When the law of God is rejected as the standard for our life, moral chaos results.

It is certainly the calling of the saints, more urgent than ever, to keep her garments unspotted from the world.

THE PRAYER ISSUE

Many have not been happy with the decisions of the Supreme Court which forbade prayers of any kind in the public schools. Many bills were introduced into both houses of Congress to restore such devotional exercises. Up until recently these efforts were unsuccessful -- their sponsors could not even get the bills on the floor of Congress for consideration and debate.

But Senator Everett Dirksen, minority leader in the Senate, recently introduced a constitutional amendment which would provide for voluntary prayers within the schools. It reads: (I quote from *Christianity Today):*

> 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.

While Dirksen does not want prescribed prayers to be foisted upon the students, nor that those who do not want to pray be forced to pray, nevertheless, his amendment provides for voluntary prayers to be made

by those who wish to make them. This proposed amendment has gained considerable support in the country.

It would be well, it seems to me, to abandon all these efforts permanently. It seems sacriligeous to make such a holy exercise as prayer (an exercise which is the peculiar privilege of the people of God anyway) some sort of legislative football. It is much better to let the issue die.

And, after all, there is no real solution to the problem. The schools are public institutions. And the basic wrong lies here. The responsibility of education belongs to parents, not to the state. As long as this is not followed, no solution to the problem exists. One cannot build a straight house on a crooked foundation.

BOOK REVIEWS—

Spiritual Depressions: Its Causes and Cure

Man in the Occurring of God's Revelation

The Ten Commandments

Spiritual Depressions: Its Causes and Cure, by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, 300 pages, $3.95; Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones is noted as a gifted preacher who ministers at Westminster Chapel in London, England.

The book deals with spiritual depressions. When I first saw the title, I thought the book was a book on Psychology and that it treated mental diseases. However, it discusses spiritual depressions, and calls attention to the fact that a child of God should be a living witness of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This gospel is a tremendous gospel, is designed and adapted to cover all our needs, is a power that is able to transform all of man.

I enjoy its emphasis upon the gospel of divine grace. I enjoyed reading, e.g., the following on page 59: "I think we should abolish this word decision. I do not like it.....Let me sum up this point by putting it like this. There are the people who decide to take up Christianity instead of being taken up by Christianity." And, in the last chapter (incidentally, in these several chapters the author treats various Scriptural texts; they are sermons he preached on consecutive Sunday mornings), he emphasizes that a child of God can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth him. On the one hand, he refutes the error which would emphasize the "I" only. And, on the other hand, he refutes the error which would obliterate the "I", making the child of God a stock and block. And all emphasis is upon the grace of God in Christ. I certainly may recommend this book to our readers.

H. Veldman

Man in the Occurring of God's Revelation, by Ds. M. P. Van Dyk, 247 pages, f 12.75; Published by J. H. Kok N.V.

This book, too, is written in the Holland language. The Holland title reads: "De Mens in het gebeuren van de Godsopenbaring." Also of this book it is true that it is not for laymen. The writer places himself before the question: What is man's place in the revelation of God? Can a certain independence be ascribed to him, or must all independence be denied him? And the author studies this question particularly in connection with the theology of Barth, of whom Rev. Engelsma is writing in our Standard Bearer. Is it true that, according to Barth, man is more or less relegated to the background?

As we stated, this book is written in the Holland language; it is not for laymen. I would assume that a proper evaluation of this book would depend upon a thorough study of the theology of Karl Barth. The undersigned confesses that he is hardly qualified to do this. However, one must not underestimate the position and influence of Barth. And we certainly believe that this book can be helpful as one examines the writings and teachings of this well-known theologian. Unto that end, we do not hesitate to recommend it.

H. Veldman

The Ten Commandments, by Ronald D. Wallace, 181 pages, $3.95; Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Dr. Wallace, educated at the University of Edinburgh and New College, Edinburgh, having held charges in England, is presently serving as Professor of Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia.

The author had intended originally to write a book containing no more than ten sermons, one on each commandment. But it seemed to him that a more useful contribution could be made to the subject by writing a book of this nature. The purpose of this book is to discuss and treat the ten commandments in the light of Jesus Christ, and to interpret the Law of God by the Gospel, seeing each commandment in the light of the whole Biblical message, as centering in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This book of 181 pages treats each of the ten commandments in as many chapters.

We may recommend this book to our readers. It is easily read and digested. This does not mean that we agree with all its contents. Our people will undoubtedly conclude that the author's treatment of the ten commandments is different in many instances from the way we treat them. This, however, does not necessarily mean that we would discourage the purchasing of this book for this reason. But, we do not agree with all its contents. Discussing the sixth commandment, for example, the author appears to condemn capital punishment. One also wonders whether he assumes the position that the Christian must judge whether a war is justifiable or not, and that he must determine whether he should obey in all instances the call to serve one's country in war. We, of course, believe in capital punishment and also maintain that the call to arms may never be refused by the individual, unless it would involve the Christian in a direct attack upon the Church and Cause of the Son of God. However, with discretion the book can certainly be read.

H. Veldman

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

May 1, 1966

Hudsonville, in its April 25th congregational meeting, chose to call Rev. M. Schipper, of Southeast Church, from a duo which included Rev. H. Veldman, of Hope Church in Grand Rapids.

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The Correspondence Course for the Protestant Reformed ministers in Jamaica is proceeding satisfactorily. Rev. J.A. Heys, their instructor, has finished a series of five lessons covering "The Church in the Old World", and devoted the sixth lesson to a review. The seventh tape that went out began a new series on, "The Church in the New World". It called attention to the fact of Noah's sin and the development of sin to that of Nimrod, who was an early revelation of the Anti-Christ. This latest lesson contained questions regarding some of the Five Points of Calvinism, and the truths found in the Fifth Head of Doctrine in our Canons. Rev. Heys concluded the tape with words of encouragement, telling his students that he was happy with their work -- in their written tests, and the sermons they were returning on the tapes before their re-use. The Mission Board is also well pleased with the result of this unique venture and has plans for a course on the New Testament, with another instructor preparing for this.

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We gather from the bulletins from our churches that the Annual Young People's Convention for 1966 will be a week-end affair -- an innovation in the history of our conventioneers. The Mass Meeting will be held Friday evening; Saturday will make room for an outing, and "Sunday will be a day devoted to the Service of the Lord. Contributing to the spiritual fellowship among our young people, in addition to two church services, will be discussion groups in the afternoon revolving around the topics 'Faith in Work' and 'Education'. A Singspiration following the evening service will conclude a day of spiritual devotion."

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The Reformed Witness Hour features Rev. G. Lubbers, of Southwest Church, for the month of May. The topics for the second half of the month are: May 15 -- "Duty of Parents to Their Children"; May 22 -- "Christ, the Lord of Servants and Masters"; May 29 -- "The Great Foe".

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The Western Ladies League met in Doon's Church April 15. Rev. J. Kortering, of Hull, spoke on "Enduring Friendship", and Doon's pastor, Rev. R. Decker, was at the podium for a short "Question Hour".

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The Grand Rapids area church bulletins of April 24 all had the same outside appearance. The covers were furnished by the Society for Secondary Education and were intended to remind the people of the financial drive to be held that week. The face of the cover contained a drawing of a balance scale with a caption, "Weighed in the balance and found wanting." The back cover carried a message from the Board calling attention to the duty of the church to provide for faithful replacements of our "watchmen on the walls of Zion" when the time comes for them to be released from their duties. It questioned our awareness of the seriousness of providing to our utmost for the proper training of our covenant children, and warned against the indictment that we may be, "weighed in the balance and found wanting" with respect to that training.

* * *

Rev. G. Van Baren of First Church, was the speaker at the Men's League meeting held in First Church April 18, and at the Ladies League held April 14 at Hope Church. At the Ladies Meeting he spoke on "The Signs of the Times," based on the Book of Revelations. At the Men's meeting Rev. Van Baren spoke on, "The Second Coming of Christ." Both these topics have been timely ones ever since our Lord's Ascension when the attending Angels told the Church, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven." The speaker warned his hearers about trying to prevent this Second Coming; to try to read the Signs in the light of Scripture; to be diligent in the study of those Scriptures, in society and in our homes -- that those Scriptures may be a lamp unto our feet to light our way even unto the end, knowing that Christ will keep His Church. Speeches like these surely cause us to respond with the Apostle, "Come, Lord Jesus, yea come quickly".

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The Prot. Ref. High School Circle met April 4 at Southwest Church. The program consisted of a speech on, "The Principles of Teaching Bible", by Miss Agatha Lubbers, of Hope Prot. Ref. Chr. School.

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The Oak Lawn Men's Society invited the ladies of the church to their meeting held April 27. Rev. Vanden Berg read a paper on, "Our Calling With Respect to the Fifth Commandment." Discussion followed the speech after recess.

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The Redlands Sunday School rendered an Easter Program immediately after the morning service. The children sang some appropriate hymns, and their pastor, Rev. C. Hanko, told the Resurrection Story. The Choral Society rendered their Easter Cantata the previous Monday evening. An offering was taken then to build up a fund for a new piano in the auditorium.

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"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:58

. . . see you in church

J.M.F.