

The  
Standard  
Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankful hearts to our ever faithful Covenant God, we announce the 55th wedding anniversary of our dear parents,

MR. AND MRS. JADOB H. VANDER WAL  
(First Church, Grand Rapids)

On October 26, 1911, they were joined together in the bond of Holy Matrimony and each moment since, and especially during recent years while experiencing serious physical afflictions have tasted continually the wondrous promise of our Lord that all things work together for good to them that love Him.

With the Psalmist of old, together we confess --  
"O Lord, my God, I praise Thy Name, all other names above; O give Him thanks, for He is Good and boundless is His Love".

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Vander Wal  
Mr. and Mrs. Dick Vander Wal  
Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Versluys  
14 Grandchildren  
7 Great Grandchildren

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## MEDITATION—

## Manasseh, Sinner-Saint

by Rev. M. Schipper

"Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God."  
II Chronicles 33:13b

Manasseh!  
Sinner - Saint!

Not in the long list of those who are called the great heroes of faith does his name belong. There is such a list recorded in the Holy Scriptures, you know. The writer to the Hebrews records their names, beginning with Abel, the first martyr. Carefully and unerringly he follows down the list, marking for us who they were,

what they believed, and how they demonstrated their faith. But you look in vain in this long list for the name of Manasseh.

Rather, his fame, or shall we say, his notoriety is to be pointed out in another direction. He belongs to the list of those who had greatly sinned, but who in the eleventh hour of their lives are brought to a most wonderful conversion through the mercy of God. He



fits well in the list of those who were guilty of terrible sins, but who later found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Like Paul, for instance, who was guilty of persecuting the church of Christ, who himself confessed that he was the chief of sinners, but who was converted on the way to Damascus and became the greatest of all the apostles. Or, like the woman who was guilty of being a harlot, who had fallen into the sin of adultery, but who later is found washing the feet of the Saviour with her tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head. Or, like the thief on the cross, who all his life time indulged in all the sins of his time, but in the last moments of his life was forgiven and given the promise of Paradise. So was Manasseh! Who shed much innocent blood, and not withstanding was pardoned, finding mercy with God!

Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God!

A small text, but set in a large historical context!

Not only is this history recorded in II Chronicles 33, but also in II Kings 21. The latter passage records practically the same facts as the former, with this difference, that the former only informs us of his conversion. From both of these passages it becomes clear that the intention of the Word of God is to show that the realization of the kingdom of heaven is not dependent on the inherent goodness of man, but solely on the sovereign and eternal mercy of the living God.

Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah!

Son of a God-fearing king of Judah!

And this cannot mean that his father was without sin. For what man is perfect in all his ways? Hezekiah, like all of us, will have to say: "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in Thy sight, O God!" Of one particular sin the Scriptures inform us that Hezekiah was guilty. He had entertained a delegation from the wicked king of Babylon, and had showed them all the riches of his house. For this the prophet Isaiah in the name of the Lord had rebuked him, informing him that all those things would one day be brought into Babylon. Hezekiah realized his sin and confessed it. And the Lord promised not to bring judgment in his life time. (Isaiah 39).

But of Hezekiah we read: "He did right in the sight of the Lord." II Chronicles 29:2. He restored the true worship of Jehovah, just the opposite of his father Ahaz, who had done so wickedly. Hezekiah opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites once more into the sanctuary and made them sanctify themselves for the true worship of God. He instituted a great revival in Jerusalem. Gathered the rulers and the people together and proclaimed a solemn passover, while all the instruments of idolatry were destroyed. God blessed Hezekiah and prospered him greatly. He became exceeding rich, and his kingdom increased.

Manasseh, was the son of Hezekiah's old age!

Hezekiah, you will remember had been sick unto death. We are not told the nature of his illness, but the prophet had informed him that it was fatal. And Hezekiah had prayed that his life be spared. Many reasons have been given to explain this prayer, but only one of them satisfies us. He had no son, who

could take his place, and for this he really prayed. None there was who could follow him to the throne of Judah who was of the royal line of David. And God had promised this as one of the sure mercies of David. For the fulfillment of the promise Hezekiah evidently prayed. And his prayer was answered three years later when Manasseh was born. We read in verse 1 that Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, which reign must have begun immediately upon the death of his father, to whose life had been added fifteen years.

So we conclude that at least for the first twelve years of his life Manasseh had a covenant training. And this is no small matter! To be brought up in a home where the fear of God dwells, to be trained with a Christian education, that is never a small and insignificant matter! Such without mistake was the training Manasseh received. He was schooled in the law of Jehovah. He was instructed in the same religious principles that moved his father.

Moreover, Manasseh was a royal son of David! His name appears in the genealogies of Christ. (Matthew 1:10). This means that Manasseh was in the generations of the royal elect line. The very generations that must bring forth the Christ. Now we can understand why Hezekiah prayed so earnestly when he was sick. He knew he was of the seed of David, and should he die leaving no seed, the Christ could not come. In Manasseh, therefore, he found the answer to his prayer.

Let us not fail to notice how important this truth is as a background for the study of Manasseh! When we see how wicked this man became, we must see it on the background of God's sovereign election and the counsel of His covenant. This is, indeed, the high point in our meditation regarding Manasseh!

Manasseh, the sinner!

How wonderfully the Scriptures reveal and do not spare even the children of God when it comes to revealing their sins! Fact is, when we read the account of the sins of Manasseh, it appears none committed more sin and fell so deeply as he. Moreover, if the same Scripture did not tell us that he was a child of God you would conclude he was a reprobate of the worse sort.

He sinned, first of all, against his religious training! To repudiate that is a heinous thing! To all his father told him of God, His promises, His covenant, His law and service, he turned his back. The stories his father told him while he sat on his knee concerning Jehovah's power to deliver His people and His great love for the kingdom of David, he now laughed to scorn.

His departure from all the principles of his religious training was accompanied by his embracing all the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. He built again the high places his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim...and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them.

Very bold he was in his wickedness! He even went into the house of the Lord to build there altars for all



the host of heaven. Thus with his kingly power and influence he made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err.

And if that was not bad enough, he even caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom!

Manasseh, the unbeliever!

Who when he and his people were rebuked by the Lord for their sin, would not hearken! His devilish pride, and his love for sin, moved him to misuse his power and to corrupt his way and to lead Judah astray! Verily, to look at him, he appeared no different than the most ungodly of the heathen.

Manasseh, nevertheless, the saint!

And God's saints cannot perish!

The mercy of God is His constant desire and unchangeable will to reach down to the sinner in his deepest misery, not only to deliver him, but to make him blessed as God is blessed! And that mercy in its operation first makes the sinner most miserable that he may know his sin and guilt.

Thus Manasseh was brought in irons to Babylon. There in captivity he was sorely afflicted. So great was his affliction that all his sinful pride was humbled, and all his arrogance broken. O, how wonderfully the Lord knows how to bring His beloved to despair, so that they cry out after Him!

When Manasseh was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And as he prayed for forgiveness, God heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom.

Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God!

There was another king who had exalted himself over against the King of heaven and earth, whom God had humbled, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. So

deeply had the Lord humbled him that he ate grass as the oxen. And at the end of his humiliation his kingdom was restored to him, and his honor and brightness returned to him. Then opened he his mouth and blessed the Most High, and he praised and honored Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. He, too, knew that God is God, but with a knowledge that was so different. It was the knowledge that is impressed upon the wicked, and a confession that is forced out of him.

How different is the knowledge of the child of God! Of the sinner who is saved by grace!

Manasseh knew that Jehovah was his God!

The God of his salvation!

The God, Who, for His covenant's sake cannot allow one of His Own to perish! Though his sin be even greater than that of Babel's king, so great is His mercy that it must deliver from the greatest misery, unto the highest good!

And what is the highest good?

That they, sinners great though they be, lost and undone in themselves, may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent! To know Him is eternal life. To know Him is to dwell in His fellowship, to be taken up into the friendship of His covenant.

Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah He is the God, and all the rest are idols in whose service is the bondage of sin!

O, indeed, the realization of the kingdom of heaven, does not depend on the inherent goodness, nor is it frustrated by the inherent badness of men, but it depends solely on the sovereign, elective, and eternal mercy of the God Who worketh all things after the counsel of His immutable will!

## Editor's Notes

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

### *New Place for Announcements*

Hereafter, all announcements, obituaries, anniversary notices, etc., will be found on the next to the last page of each issue, and not scattered throughout the magazine. The only exception to this will be an occasional announcement immediately below the masthead on the inside front cover. We believe this change will be advantageous for the reader, who can now make a habit of looking for announcements in a fixed place in each issue; and we also believe that this will improve the appearance of the magazine.

In order to make this change, however, there must

be a change in the deadline for announcements. All announcements for the issue of the 1st of the month must be in the hands of the business manager (not the editor) no later than the 20th of the preceding month; and all announcements for the issue of the 15th must be in by the 5th of the month. Any tardy announcements will automatically be postponed to the next issue. If this rule is not observed, we cannot meet our publication deadlines.

Incidentally, — speaking of publication deadlines, — there was more than one report to your editor of lack of delivery or tardy delivery on the issue of September



15. Checking into this, I learned that this can only be the fault of the Post Office Department. But if you do fail to get your copy of any issue, please write to the business manager, who, I am sure, will gladly help you if he only knows of your problem.

\* \* \*

#### *Important Publication News*

The Permanent Committee for the Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature made a decision recently which, I am sure, will be welcome news to many readers. The decision is to undertake the publication of two books. One of these is the late Rev. H. Hoeksema's exposition of the book of Revelation, which will be published under the title, "Behold, He Cometh!" The other will be a new edition of "The Triple Knowledge, An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism." The Eerdmans Company has agreed to assign to us the copyright on the latter work, which originally appeared in ten volumes, four of which are now out of print. The new edition will be in one volume. Tentative plans are to publish these works within the coming year, D.V.; but no definite publication date can be fixed at this time.

In part, the publication date will depend on the response to our first huge project, "Reformed Dogmatics." For in order to proceed with new projects we must recover our capital investment in that first project. And the recovery of that investment is dependent on one thing: sales!

Right there is where you, the reader, come into the picture.

For one thing, have you sent in your \$12.95 and your pre-publication order? This sale price will be in effect until November 15. After that the price will go up to \$14.95. A return order envelope was enclosed with the September 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Look it up, and use it. Or, if you have lost

it, mail your order (and your check) to: Reformed Free Publishing Association, (Permanent Committee for the Publication of Prot. Ref. Literature), Post Office Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

On second thought, why not order two copies, — one for yourself, and one for your friend's Christmas present?

\* \* \*

#### *Annual R.F.P.A. Meeting*

Elsewhere in this issue you will find the secretary's and treasurer's reports which were presented at the annual meeting of the R.F.P.A., the parent organization of our *Standard Bearer*. It is not my intention to rehash those reports, nor to report on that meeting. There is one item of note to which I wish to call attention. Our secretary reported that there was a net increase of 78 subscriptions in the past year. This is encouraging. You say, perhaps, that is not a large number. No, but it nevertheless represents about a 200% increase over the net gain in subscriptions in recent previous years. Last year, for example, the net gain was 26 subscriptions. Moreover, I know that a good many of these new subscriptions came from people outside our Protestant Reformed Churches. This, too, is encouraging; for it is one of the chief aims of our *Standard Bearer* to bear the standard of the truth to others in the Reformed community, and we are glad when our voice is heard.

Particularly the Board of the R.F.P.A. may be encouraged by this trend. Let us hope that the trend continues. Perhaps a concerted campaign of some kind could be made with a view to increasing the number of subscribers and readers. The Board could explore that possibility. Would it not be wonderful if next year the secretary could report another 200% increase, for example, in the net gain in subscriptions?

Meanwhile, let all of us face this question: what are YOU doing to increase the number of subscriptions?

## EDITORIALS—

# Winds of Doctrine from the Netherlands

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

From time to time one reads disturbing reports and claims about the ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands, particularly in the Gereformeerde Kerken. As is well-known, the decisions in the Geelkerken Case of 1926 have been under official review by the Synod of those churches; and the outcome of that matter remains to be seen. But there have been disturbing things written on that matter. Recently the Contribu-

tions column of *De Wachter* (Sept. 20, 1966) carried an article signed "Vander Werff" in which the finger of accusation is pointed at several Dutch scholars and in which the author allegedly cites chapter and verse, that is, points to the occasion and the speech or writing in which the alleged doctrinal errors were set forth.

It is not my purpose to repeat and thereby to spread all the charges made in this article. Several of them



have to do with the Genesis-question and related matters, and most of the alleged errors are very intimately connected with the burning issue of the inspiration, infallibility, and authority of Scripture, as well as with what are called hermeneutical problems, i.e., problems pertaining to the proper method of interpretation, or exegesis. I will say that if all of these charges are true, and if the alleged errors are indeed as alleged, then the situation in the Netherlands churches is indeed very serious. If leaders and educators can promulgate such errors without ecclesiastical censure being exercised, then I do not hesitate to say that the future looks very dark, if not hopeless.

Moreover, if all of the accusations made in the article referred to are as accurate as the charges made concerning a certain Dr. J. Stellingwerff, then the report is dependable, and then there is reason for grave fears with respect to the doctrinal soundness of the Dutch churches. For "Vander Werff" charges that Dr. Stellingwerff denies that Adam was the first man, denies the universality of the flood, and (yes, this is not a printing error) denies everlasting punishment! And these charges are true!

It so happened that about the time when this article was published in *De Wachter*, I was finishing the reading of a little book by Dr. Stellingwerff, "*Oorsprong en Toekomst van de Creatieve Mens*." This book belongs to a series of works by Reformed scholars under the general heading "Christian Perspective." Earlier I had become aware (through reports and reviews of others) that in this book Dr. Stellingwerff denies the truth of creation; but I could hardly believe my eyes when I came to the passage about everlasting punishment and about hell. I read and re-read the passage. I then telephoned a colleague and read the passage to him without comment, lest I was misunderstanding or reading more into the passage than the author intended. But there are no two ways about it: the author indeed denies everlasting punishment and denies the reality of hell!

It is nothing short of amazing, alarming! The more so when such stuff innocently appears under the heading of "Christian Perspective."

In proof of the above, I will quote some pertinent statements from this book. The translation is mine.

"Primary in that which Scripture says about everlasting death and the pool of fire is that the fire and the death are everlasting and not that that which is cast into this mighty fire are everlasting. Thus it is out of the question that there should be any remnant that can escape this annihilation, this radical desolation. Never shall the enemies of God and the powers of sin and misery have any more opportunity. Their meaning (significance) is finally at an end.

"The last judgment has death, the final end, the everlasting desolation of death and the realm of the dead as its consequence.

"There shall be a punishment from which the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and their followers cannot escape and which offers them no possibility for new activity. Neither day nor night shall there be opportunity to escape. For them death, the fire, is

an everlasting desolation. In that picture of hell what is primary, in my opinion, is the remnant-less perishing of all that is cast into this most powerful, everlasting fire. Just as, according to the epistle of Jude, also Sodom and Gomorrah lie under a punishment of everlasting fire, (Jude, vs. 7). (Note: Jude, 7, speaks of Sodom and Gomorrah "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." H.C.H.)

"Scripture warns against a participating in the everlasting torment of the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. Thus it is in the visions of John. We are therefore warned; but therewith we are nevertheless not called upon to append a theology about an everlasting balance (equilibrium) between a full heaven and a full hell. There will be gradation in the judgment. One must not think that one can escape the judgment and the punishment outside of the atoning blood of Jesus.

"There is no balance between hell and heaven because everlasting death is principally something other than everlasting life. One who sees a dead person next to a living man discovers this immediately. The dead man is capable of nothing, is nothing, perishes. He does not join in any more forever. On the other hand, the living person is capable of everything, certainly the everlastingly living. He always joins in forever; he can therefore never more be passed by. An everlastingly dead person is nothing; an everlastingly living one is an unavoidable partner.

"We often give to hell and to everlasting death its own place in the new creation by ascribing an active meaning to the speech of the Bible about an everlasting torture (*eeuwige pijniging*). By an everlasting torture (or, torment) we easily understand an always continuing feeling of pain. Now the pain-feeling appears to be very strongly dependent upon the period of culture in which one lives and the circumstances under which one must bear the pain. It appears to me to be possible that by pain in the Bible is not to be understood that which one feels with the senses, but much rather the opposite of joy, which rests upon friendship and love. And everlasting torture then means that God nevermore offers friendship, that he definitively turns away from these men and will no more be concerned with them at all. The Judge of heaven and earth has definitively rejected them. He passes the death-sentence and executes it. Then the corpse is burned in everlasting fire.

"Not the pain is eternal, but the torture, and then too, not the always continuing torture, but rather the irrevocable judgment that as capital punishment comes painfully and that remains as a sentence forever passed, (*het onherroepelijke oordeel dat doodstraf pijnlijk aankomt en dat eeuwig blijft geveld.*) Just as the example which Jude gives in his epistle. This apostle wrote: 'even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.' If one looks for this eternal fire, then he finds the Dead Sea. In the same manner as this example, the last judgment also has the death of death and the realm of the dead as its consequence. Fire is not the figure of pain. God has never willed the fire-death. Indeed, after capital



punishment fire was used as the means of annihilation of the corpse and of the possessions of the condemned one."

Thus far the quotation and translation.

The above presentation is all supposed to be based on Scripture, and the author makes the appearance of an attempt to base it on Scripture in the context preceding this quotation.

However, it is perfectly obvious, when one strips away all the window-dressing and devious pseudo-exegesis of this presentation, that what is left is this: 1) A denial of the everlasting torment and the everlasting suffering of the wicked. 2) The simple annihilation-theory, clothed in some apparently Biblical language.

And this is supposed to be Christian perspective, and that too, out of the Reformed community of the land of our fathers?

I have not presented the author's evolution-theory in this editorial; perhaps I will do so in the future. Nor is there transparent in the book a connection between his evolution-theory and his denial of everlasting punishment. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see that one who begins by denying the creation-record, as does Dr. Stellingwerff, will end by denying everlasting punishment, and eventually by denying still more. For at the heart of all these denials lies the matter of the authority of Holy Scripture.

One can only lament with Jeremiah: "How is the gold become dim!"

## The Nature of the Atonement

### Limited or General?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

It is becoming increasingly evident that the question whether the atonement is in its very nature limited is an extremely crucial one for the Reformed faith. This is evident in the Dekker Case itself, both from the writings of Prof. Dekker and of Dr. Daane. But a careful study of the Report of the Doctrinal Committee will reveal that this issue is extremely crucial with respect to the atonement-aspect of their study, and that they make a crucial error when they concede this point to Dekker and Daane. In a way they attempt to hedge and to qualify their position somewhat, evidently because they themselves feel that they have conceded an important point. To this I will return at the proper time, however. I only wish to emphasize now the crucial importance of this question, and thereby to emphasize that it is important to see what the confessions have to say about it.

Once more, however, I wish to underscore the fact that we must consider the nature of the atonement as a *whole*. In the course of this discussion we are distinguishing various elements in that nature of the atonement. But these various elements must not be considered separately from one another. Together they all constitute the one nature of the atonement. The element of satisfaction, of substitution, of a definite and personal character, and of the infinite value of the atonement, — these all belong together, and they must be considered together. Each element is indispensable, and that, too, in relation to the others. Take one of these elements away, therefore, and essentially you destroy the whole nature of the atonement and will

find it fundamentally impossible to maintain the remaining elements.

Now we turn to our confessions.

#### THE CONFESSIONS ON THE DEFINITE AND PERSONAL ELEMENT OF THE ATONEMENT

It is certainly a mistake to think that we must look for the doctrine of limited, definite, and personal atonement only in the Canons of Dordrecht. This is usually done. And I dare say that most of us are automatically ready to turn to the Canons and to the Second Head of Doctrine when the subject of limited atonement is brought up. Now it is certainly true that the Canons speak of this doctrine, and that too, definitively and in unequivocal language. But we must not imagine that at Dordrecht an entirely new doctrine was adopted. This, in fact, would imply that we assume the position of the Arminians at the time of the Synod of Dordrecht. The Arminians did not relish the position of accused heretics who were on trial at the Synod. They wanted to be treated as equals and as in good standing. They did not claim to militate against the confessions then held by the Reformed Churches, but rather attempted to maintain that they were in basic harmony with the creeds. They wanted rather to meet on an equal footing with the Reformed, and they wanted to subject the existent confessions (the Catechism and the Belgic Confession) to review and reformulation. Our Reformed fathers, on the other hand, considered the Arminians heretics, charged that they were not in harmony with the confessions



even as they then existed, and dealt with them as such. They put the Arminians on trial. And in that connection they did not view the Canons as an altogether new statement of doctrines which were not found in the Catechism and the Belgic Confession. Rather did they consider the Canons to be an *explanation* of certain points of doctrine. The Canons, therefore, made more explicit certain doctrines which were already contained in the other creeds of the Reformed Churches.

This means, therefore, that we may expect to find the very same doctrines in the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession as we find in the Canons. And it means that we should be able to discover an expression of those doctrines there, and not only in the Canons.

As Reformed people, therefore, we need not and we do not pin the entire doctrine that Christ died and atoned only for the elect on Canons II, 8, for example.

I propose, therefore, to look for this same doctrine of definite and personal atonement in the Catechism and the Confession, first of all; and only thereafter shall we turn to the Canons, Second Head.

That this is the correct approach to and view of our confessions is beyond all doubt. First of all, anyone who is acquainted with the history of the Arminian controversy and of the Synod of Dordrecht will know that the above presentation is true. It is simply a matter of history. In the second place, let me call your attention to the fact that this is the official presentation of the matter in Reformed churches. My authority for this is nothing less than the Formula of Subscription. There we find the following language:

"We, the undersigned, professors of the Protestant Reformed Churches, ministers of the Gospel, elders and deacons. . . do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this, our subscription, that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine, contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, *together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine*, made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, do fully agree with the Word of God." (emphasis mine, H.C.H.)

This same language is found in the last paragraph of the Formula of Subscription, which speaks again of "the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod."

Notice this carefully.

The Canons are the *explanation* of some points of the *aforesaid doctrine*. They are not something new, but an explanation. An explanation of what? Of some points of the aforesaid doctrine. What is the aforesaid doctrine? It is the doctrine contained in the Confession and the Catechism. The conclusion is unavoidable, therefore: the doctrines contained in the Canons are merely explanations of what was already contained in the Confession and the Catechism. You will find the same doctrines there.

The question now is: do we indeed find the doctrine of definite and personal atonement through substitutionary satisfaction in the Heidelberg Catechism.

My answer is *yes*.

And the Catechism is literally full of all kinds of proof of this. I will first quote a series of passages from the Catechism which bear directly on this issue, reminding the reader that the pertinent word or words in each quotation are italicized. Thereafter I will give a brief explanation as to the significance of these quotations.

"Because he is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost.....to be *our* only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of his body, has redeemed *us*. . . ." Qu. and A. 31.

"Because he hath redeemed *us*, both soul and body, from all *our* sins, not with gold or silver, but with his precious blood, and hath delivered *us* from all the power of the devil; and thus hath made *us* his own property." Qu. and A. 34.

"That is *our* Mediator; and with His innocence and perfect holiness, covers in the sight of God *my* sins. . . ." Qu. and A. 36.

"That he...sustained. . . the wrath of God against the sins of *all mankind*: that so by his passion, as the only propitiatory sacrifice, he might redeem *our* body and soul from everlasting damnation, and obtain for *us* the favor of God, righteousness and eternal life." Qu. and A. 37.

In answer to the question as to why He suffered under Pontius Pilate, we read: "That he. . . might thereby free *us* from the severe judgment of God to which *we* were exposed." Qu. and A. 38.

The 39th Answer is again very definite and personal: ". . . for thereby I am assured, that he took on him the curse which lay upon *me*. . ."

The 44th Answer speaks the same language. Not only is it personal when it speaks of assurance, but also when it speaks of the objective work of Christ: "That in my greatest temptations, I may be assured, and wholly comfort myself in this, that *my* Lord Jesus Christ, by his inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies, in which he was plunged during all his sufferings, but especially on the cross, hath delivered *me* from the anguish and torments of hell."

And, to mention no more, I quote the 52nd Answer, which concerns Christ's coming to judge the quick and the dead, but which very appropriately connects this with His atoning work: "That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head I look for the very same person, who before offered himself *for my sake*, to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from *me*, to come as judge from heaven: who shall cast all his and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall translate *me with all his chosen ones* to himself, into heavenly joys and glory."

There are many more such references in the Catechism. The reader can go through the Catechism himself with an eye for similar statements. But those cited above are sufficient. They are very clear. And they all make direct mention of Christ's atoning work.

The question is now: what do these statements mean? Do they speak of an atonement which is definite and personal, and that too, in its very nature? Or are they general? Or are they, perhaps, purposely vague,



leaving the identity of that “we, our, I, my, me, us” an open question? Or do they leave us with the impression that while the atonement itself is general, the application of that atonement is particular? Or is it thus, that while the atonement is here presented as definite and personal, this definiteness does not belong to the *nature* of the atonement? Or is it even thus, that the

Catechism simply does not use any excluding language here, and that it is merely silent about the question whether any are not included in that atoning death of Christ?

I will let the reader ponder these questions in the light of the language of the Heidelberg Catechism until next time, D.V.

## CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

# The Providence of God Government

by Rev. H. Veldman

We concluded our last article with a quotation from Rev. H. Hoeksema's Dogmatics. Writing on that phase of God's providence which is known as Government, Rev. Hoeksema writes that God, when creating the world, did not have all kinds of possibilities in mind, but was moved and prompted by only one purpose. And that one purpose was, not to perfect all things in the first Adam, who was of the earth, earthy, but to bring them to final perfection in Christ, Who is the Lord from heaven. The final goal of all things, as conceived by God in His eternal counsel, is the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth. This is the only purpose conceived by God in His eternal counsel and will. And the providence of God certainly means that, from the very first beginning to the end of the world, that wonderful return of our Lord Jesus Christ, God governs and guides all things by His counsel unto that end which He has in view. And, from the beginning of the world even unto the end, nothing ever happens which does not happen according to that counsel of the Most High. God is one and therefore His counsel is one, and also His purpose is one. This is surely Scriptural. It is certainly emphasized in Isaiah 46:10: “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” This passage certainly emphasizes that the Lord's counsel shall stand, that He is never influenced by anything outside of Himself, and that therefore the entrance of sin into the world must never be divorced from this sovereign will of the Lord. And this truth is also beautifully set forth in Eph. 1: 9-10: “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself; That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which

are on earth; even in him.” This passage needs no clarification. Here we are told that it was the mystery of God that He should gather together all things in Christ. Hence, it was not the Lord's purpose to gather together all things in the first Adam and then in the second Adam, should the first Adam fail, but to gather together into one all things, in heaven and on earth, in our Lord Jesus Christ. God's eternal counsel, therefore, never knew any other purpose, than this uniting of all things in Jesus Christ.

## GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND SIN

This aspect or phase of God's providence is commonly known as concurrence or cooperation. It cannot be said that the word, “cooperation,” conveys to us a Scriptural idea of the truth. There are those who like to quote I Cor. 3:9, and we quote: “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.” It is, of course, especially the first part of this text which they like to quote. But, in the first place, it must be said that this cannot be considered to be a true translation. A better translation would read: “For we are labourers together of God.” The idea of the text is that the apostles were labourers together, not with God, but because of God, of God. It is God Who caused them to be labourers together, with one another. And, in the second place, this is emphasized in the latter half of the text, where we read that the church is called the building of God. We repeat: it can hardly be said that the word, “cooperation,” conveys to us a Scriptural idea. We surely cannot maintain the thought that God and man work together, that the Lord and man may be compared to a team of horses, each doing his part. But, as is the case with the word, “providence”, which word does



not appear in the Bible with respect to the Lord's control over all things, so also this word has found its way into the terminology of the church throughout the ages. And when we speak of "cooperation" we mean that work of God whereby He realizes His will and counsel also through the acts of all His moral-rational creatures. It is well, however, that we devote a few articles to this phase of the providence of God: God's providence and sin.

We may certainly say that the sovereign government of the Lord over all things and sin has been a "bone" of contention throughout the ages. The Pelagian would solve this problem simply by denying God's absolute sovereignty and maintaining the will of man as wholly independent of the Lord. He confuses man's freedom with man's sovereignty. According to the Pelagian conception of things, the will of man, as far as its root is concerned, is good. He can will to do good. And, all things are dependent upon this will of the sinner. However, with this conception we simply lose God as the sovereign Ruler of the universe, and have no eye for the stern reality that all men sin and that but few are saved. The deterministic conception of this problem goes to the other extreme, and explains this problem simply by denying the responsibility of man. According to this view, man is merely a machine. He is moved about by God's own hand without any action on his part. This operation of God simply takes place through the will of man. Man is wholly passive. Such is the deterministic conception. Also this presentation we must wholly reject: such a conception has no place for man as a responsible, moral being.

In Reformed circles, in connection with this problem, we are faced, first of all, with the infralapsarian conception of sin. The word "infra-lapsis" means literally: under the fall. The exponents of this doctrine place election and reprobation, in God's counsel, as following the fall of man, prefer to speak of sin as taking place with the Lord's permission, and therefore believe that God has elected and reprobated out of a fallen humanity; reprobation, then, is merely God's decree to leave people in sin and death. The motive prompting this conception is to nullify the charge that God is the author of sin. However, this infralapsarian view of sin and grace is surely not satisfactory. We, when making this statement, are aware of the fact that our confessions are infralapsarian. But we are also aware of the fact that the supralapsarian view of sin and grace has always been allowed. Firstly, this view is unsatisfactory because it does not explain the strong expressions of Holy Writ touching upon this matter. And, incidentally, the infralapsarian concedes this point. Secondly, it does not answer to its purpose. The infralapsarian purposes to avoid making God the author of sin. But, I pray you, what is more cruel: a God Who causes man to fall, or a God Who can prevent this fall but nevertheless leaves that man in sin and perdition? Thirdly, the infra-lapsarian view is fundamentally dualistic. Dualism, as well as the antithetic conception of things, speaks of light and darkness, life and death, as contrasted with each other. But the antithesis explains this contrast as originating in the one

source, the only true God, whereas dualism presents it as having a two-fold origin, light and darkness always opposing one another, with the outcome ever in doubt. We declare that infralapsarianism is dualistic because it places sin in God's counsel without explaining its origin, as independent of the Lord. Far better is surely the supralapsarian view of things. This view places, in God's counsel, the decree of election and reprobation before the fall of man. Creation and man's fall are but God's sovereign means to realize His sovereign decree concerning the salvation or perdition of man.

This problem of the providence of the Lord and sin is difficult. The difficulty of this problem does not lie in the propositions as such. God is sovereign, and man is a responsible, moral-rational being. This is clearly the teaching of the Word of God. We must never confuse or detract from these two fundamental principles. Both must be maintained. But the difficulty lies here: how can the holy God direct the actions of iniquity so that we do not lose sight of man's responsibility and yet maintain that God is holy and righteous? God may work sin, but man does the sin. Now we do not purpose to solve this problem. But we do desire to discuss this question and to inquire of the Word of God what it has to say about it.

We have already called attention to the Scriptural significance of God's providence, both from the aspect of preservation and government. The Lord preserves all things, in the absolute sense of the word, and He also governs all things, leading them to that one determinate end which He has willed from before the foundation of the world. However, we must also face the reality of sin. The fact of sin as such we surely cannot deny. Even the most optimistic of men must acknowledge the fact of sin. One may refuse to glorify God, and have no consciousness of sin in the true, spiritual and Scriptural sense of the word. Yet, who would have the courage, the brazen effrontery today to lay claim to perfection—such an one must be viewed as well nigh beside himself. The daily murders, the constant presence of wars and rumors of war speak but too emphatically of the jealousy and hatred governing the children of men. Apart, however, from the natural man, who does not discern spiritual things, and therefore surely does not discern the reality of sin, anyone who has learned by the power of the grace of God what it means to be a sinner, understands the fact of sin and iniquity. What a tremendous phenomenon is this reality of evil! At the dawn of creation, when all the handiwork of God united in singing praises unto the Lord, when not a solitary defect marred the whole creation, sin entered this world and caused all things to become subject unto the curse of the Almighty. Death and destruction it left in its wake. Sickness, misery, care and sorrow are our lot, every man's lot. Moreover, there is also the fact of sin itself. We all are conceived and born dead in sins and in trespasses. What an iniquity abounds upon the face of the earth! Scripture, and our own experience impress upon us the reality that the powers of hell and darkness are ever attempting to subject this earth unto themselves. And, what



is more, it seems that they may continue unmolested, mocking at God and His Christ, and making of the church of God the plaything of the ages.

Having God's providence and sin clearly before us, we face the question: what is the connection as such between them, as according to the Scriptures, without as yet discussing the question how they are actually related to one another? And then we would remark, in the first place, that the child of God demands a Scriptural explanation of God's providence of sin. I must have an explanation of the reality of sin, and I must have this explanation from the Scriptures. I must have this explanation, first of all, because of the fact of the power

of sin. We must contend with this power of sin within our lives. But we must also deal with the power of sin in the world round about us. That wicked world hates God, His Christ and His Church. Seemingly they may proceed unmolested in their wickedness. And it is for the child of God of the greatest significance whether God is God, or whether that world rages against the Lord as having power in itself, and that therefore the cause of God's righteousness must remain in doubt even unto the end. So, the child of God must have an explanation of this problem as revealed to him in the Scriptures. The Lord willing, we will continue with this discussion in our following article.

## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD ....*Psalm 68:11*

# Faith and Mission Preaching

*by Rev. C. Hanko*

Ever since the fall in paradise, guilt-burdened sinners have asked in deep despair: "What must I do to be saved?"

To that ever-recurring question there is always and can be but one answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." And those who heed that word receive the assurance: "Thou shalt be saved!"

This immediately calls to mind the well-known account of the conversion of the Philippian jailer as recorded in Acts 16:25-34.

As we read this interesting account we are impressed, first of all, by the wonderful hand of providence that brings the jailer under the ministry of the Word to work his conversion. There was the Macedonian call that came to Paul at Troas and brought him to Philippi. Little did the apostle realize at that moment that a prison-keeper was one of those represented by the Macedonian man in the vision. Then there was the preaching of Paul and Silas that soon became a common topic of discussion, to a great extent through the antics of a demon possessed girl. For even the devil, in spite of himself, helped to arouse curiosity in the preaching of Paul by causing the girl to trail behind him day after day with the ever-repeated chant: "These men are servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." Even the city jailer became interested in these strange happenings. Maybe in his time off he went to hear what Paul had to say. Surely there lingered in his thoughts that persistent: "Servants of the Most High God," "Shew us the way of salvation . . . salvation." God had not left himself without witness in Philippi. Many heard the preaching of the Gospel, even if out of curiosity. Many rejected it,

some were deeply moved by it. How wondrous are the ways of God, unfathomed and unknown!

And then it so happened that the jailer was brought into personal contact with God's ministers of the Gospel. These men were put under arrest for the good they had done to this wretched damsel by releasing her from the power of the demon. After having been cruelly beaten, they were placed under the special surveillance of the jailer. He understood his duty well, for he brought Paul and Silas into the inner prison, chained them to the wall, bound their feet in stocks, and securely locked the doors. He made sure that they would not escape. Strange prisoners these, for they offered no resistance to their arrest, although they were guilty of no crime. They submitted to the cruellest whippings, although Paul as a Roman citizen could have had special protection against such an unjust treatment. They allowed themselves to be cast into prison and bound in chains without as much as being shown the courtesy of having their bloody wounds washed and bound. While the jailer tossed about in what may well have been a troubled sleep, these men filled the prison with beautiful strains of songs in the night, giving thanks to God that they were counted worthy to preach the Gospel of Christ and to suffer for His sake.

Then two wonders happened in rapid succession.

The first wonder was the earthquake. Not as if an earthquake is an unusual thing, possibly even in that area. But an earthquake is always a forceful reminder of the power of God who with the mere touch of His finger shakes the earth down to its very foundations. No one but God can do that, and even wicked unbelief



cannot escape His testimony that He is God. And now at the stroke of midnight, on the very night when these notable prisoners are so securely bound within their prison cell, the divine hand reaches out and touches that very spot. The jailer, rudely awakened, soon realizes that the prison itself is undamaged, but the prison doors are torn from their locks and stand open. Still more amazing, the chains that held the prisoners are torn from the walls, the stocks are shattered. A power beyond his control has reached in and released his prisoners.

His first reaction was only a deep concern for his personal safety. He saw himself called to account for the escape of his prisoners, especially these two notable ones. How could he ever explain these mysterious happenings and expect anyone to believe him? He would be disgraced, discharged from his position, possibly even severely punished, maybe with death. In his utter despair suicide seemed the only honorable way out of a bad situation. And so with drawn sword in his hand, ready to plunge it into his heart, he intended, as he hoped, to end it all. But even then he found himself hovering as it were, over the very brink of hell. He found himself face to face with the Most High God, the righteous Judge of all the earth. In mere seconds his whole sinful life must have passed in review before his troubled mind.

Already a second wonder was taking place, although the jailer himself did not yet realize it.

He was aroused out of his bitter ruminations by the voice of Paul, assuring him, strange as it might seem, that not one of his prisoners had escaped. The Most High God, Whose presence was so keenly felt within that prison, prevented His servants from leaving, even though the way of escape had been opened for them. What a relief to know that he need not concern himself about that any more.

But now his spiritual problem loomed bigger than ever. He realized that before the face of the living God he was nothing but a wretched, lost sinner, that deserved everlasting condemnation. He trembled in holy fear and guilty shame. And that brought to mind anew the familiar chant of the strange damsel, "These men are servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." Calling for a light he rushes into the dark, dank prison hole, falls down at the feet of Paul and Silas in deepest reverence, and asks: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Actually, without realizing it, he was saved already. God is always first. He does not wait for the sinner to take the initial step, for then no one would be saved. But already the Spirit of God had wrought regeneration in this wretched sinner's heart. Already the life of the Spirit convicted him of sin and guilt under the righteous judgment of the true and living God. Already godly sorrow was working repentance unto the knowledge of salvation. Eagerly he turned to Paul and Silas in the conviction that these men must be servants of the Most High God who were able to show him the way of salvation.

All he could ask was: "What must I do?" The question arouses our curiosity. Did he in pagan ignor-

ance think that some great sacrifice would have to be made to appease this God? Did he still in the pride of his flesh hope to contribute something toward his salvation? If so, the apostle brushes aside any notion of the sort by answering in essence, "There is absolutely nothing that you yourself can add toward your salvation. For salvation is by faith. And that is never of man, but the work of God." Thereby the apostle also assures him that nothing of ourselves is necessary toward our salvation. God asks, wants nothing of us. It is all of Him, that no flesh may ever glory in His presence.

In a few simple words Paul sums up the entire glorious gospel of salvation: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Glorious gospel? Not for the proud sinner to whom salvation means nothing more than an escape from a bad situation in which he finds himself. Jesus is no help to him. Nor is this a glorious gospel for the individual who wants to save face, retain his dignity, or have something to boast about in the future. Believing in Jesus is a deeply humiliating experience for the flesh, because Jesus is either our only and complete Savior, or He is no Savior at all. It is none of self, and all of Him. Nor is this a glorious gospel to him who lacks that gift of faith. The man who knows only a temporary remorse for the wrong he has done, will find no comfort in the call to faith in Christ. There is a sorrow for sin that wants to continue in the same evil way but escape the consequences. That person discovers that Jesus is for him a stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence. He scorns in bitter disgust the only possible way of salvation. No, to any one who lacks the grace of God in his heart this saying is hard; he cannot receive it. Faith is the humanly impossible way out. To ask it is to ask too much. The sinner steeped in sin turns a deaf ear to any message like that.

And yet that Word of God makes the way of salvation so very simple. Believe! It is as simple as that. Believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross to bear the sins of His people and to bear them all away. Believe that He arose to give unto His own eternal life. Believe that He is mighty to save, so that anyone who comes to Him in true sorrow for sin is being drawn by His almighty power. Believe that though our sins be as scarlet, they are made as white as snow by His atoning blood. Believe that in Him alone is life, eternal life, salvation full and free.

It is as easy as that. For that same Word that calls us to believe is the power of God wrought by the Spirit drawing Christ's sheep unto salvation. The Spirit works through that Word. We hear the voice of Jesus say: "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest for your soul." And we experience the wonder of God within us that we are able to respond: "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief."

I realize that this description of faith is far more inclusive than a mere decision for Christ. But I am convinced that when the Holy Spirit works in the heart of the lost, yet elect sinner, He works far more than some mere vague decision. I also know that the Spirit



does not begin by telling the sinner: "God loves you." For that sinner realizes very well that a righteous God cannot love him as he stands condemned in all his sin and guilt. But the Holy Spirit does convict us of sin and condemnation so completely that we despair of ourselves, and are ready to be led to the cross of Jesus. At the foot of the cross He opens our eyes to a love so great, that it spared not God's only begotten Son, but offered Him up as a sacrifice for our sins. There we realize that Christ who died was also raised again. He lives, and the proof of His life is His work of grace in our hearts. For we now love Him even as He loved us, and confess in holy wonder: "My Lord and my God!" Faith is the living bond that unites us to Christ, whereby we become partakers of Christ and of all His benefits.

That is what the jailer experienced. Quietly he listened as Paul spent the fleeting hours of the night instructing him in these wonderful truths of Scripture. Greedily he absorbed in his soul the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ, God's Son and our Lord. It all took on meaning, new meaning, personal meaning for him. God

was speaking to him, banishing his erroneous notions, clearing up his doubts, assuring him of that wonder that salvation is of the Lord, solely by grace. And as he listened, his soul responded in growing conviction: I believe! I believe in Jesus Christ as my personal Savior.

Readily he even bowed before that truth revealed to him that God gathers His Church in the line of the generations of believers. He saw that he had been called out of a world of sin and death to be engrafted into Christ and into the church of the living God. And there he would experience that God's covenant runs in the line of continued generations of those who believe. Ever richer grew the assurance: "Thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Yes, faith is the way of salvation. But it is not man's way, it is the power of God that creates in us a spiritual knowledge and a sure confidence that we are saved. Therefore the preacher of the gospel never hesitates to include in his glad tidings the blessed refrain: "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

## A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

# David and Goliath

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

*And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together....*

*And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying .... who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?*

*I Samuel 17:10, 26*

There was something about the music of the young harpist who played in his court that cleared the mind of Saul and drove his deep depression far away. It was hard to say just what. About the only explanation was that musical instruments were rare and the mastery of them almost unknown. It was a new experience even for a king to have the air filled with music all around him for extended hours. It could not help but to captivate his attention and carry his mind away from those bitterest thoughts. It seemed as though with that young man there came the crisp freshness of the Judean air, the radiant glory of the open field, the bubbling life of the mountain streams, and upon the wings of his music they entered with their healing balm into the king's troubled soul. The days were not many before the strength and interest of the king revived. Even the young musician could return to his home as the king took up again his normal activities.

Still, it was not as though anything basic had really

happened. The curse which Samuel had pronounced was still there, and in the back of his mind Saul knew it. It was just that, for the moment, by the means of this music, the king had come to the point where he was able to ignore it, able to act as though it didn't really matter, able to live as though it weren't there. That is, until the Philistines came.

There was something about the Philistines that had always troubled Saul more than any other enemy. Against other enemies he had always been able to maintain himself in strength; but when the Philistines came, it seemed as though things somehow went amiss. It was almost as though they were there for the special purpose of trying him. So now again, things were just beginning to look up again and there they were pitching their tents in his territory between Shochoh and Azekah.

Saul knew, of course, what he had to do. Years had passed since he had last engaged in battle with the Philistines, and those years had brought him a vast



amount of experience in the tactics of warfare. Quickly he called his army together and pitched camp over against them just as any commander would be expected to do. That wasn't the trouble. It was that other, that fear which for a short time the magic of music had seemed to have driven from his mind; now it was there again throbbing through his head just as loudly and terrorizingly as it ever had. Always before he had had that one great consolation even though he couldn't always understand it; he had had the assurance that the great and mysterious power which Samuel represented was behind him; but now that was gone. All he could remember were those terrible words of curse, "Thou has rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." He couldn't forget it. It terrorized him every day anew; it paralyzed him, he couldn't move. There he stood surrounded by a great army, but never had he felt so much alone.

And then, as though to mock him in his terror, there stood Goliath. It must have seemed a frenzied dream that first morning in the camp when he heard the rumbling in the valley and looked out to see Goliath towering there. Standing full ten feet high, and looking twice that, the great Goliath called and shook the mountains with his voice as he called to Saul to come out and meet him in battle. What was a man to do, particularly one who himself was used to standing head and shoulders above everyone else? Before Goliath he looked like a child, and that was the way he felt too, even though there were still hundreds of feet between them. It all seemed to fit in together to make Saul completely unable to move.

Meanwhile in Bethlehem circumstances were being prepared which were to bring David once again into contact with king Saul, only now in quite a different capacity.

David's three oldest brothers were members of Saul's army. Thus they were among those summoned when the Philistines had invaded the land, and they had been encamped with Saul on the battle field ever since. But the reports which came back to their home since they had left were not good, at least they were unbelievably strange. First, of course, there were the almost unbelievable stories of that great giant who came out each day to defy the armies of Israel and mock them. But even stranger than that was the fact that no other reports followed. Israel's army by this time was a large army and strong, accustomed to pushing a battle with determination until victory would result. But now week after week went by without reports of any attacks or battles or even minor skirmishes. To Jesse, a man who had always been deeply concerned about the welfare of his nation, this all did not make sense. Regardless of how big and imposing the Philistine's giant might be, there was no reason why the hundreds of thousands of Israelite soldiers should not have moved in and attacked. Why the battle was not joined, Jesse could not understand.

Finally he could bear the concern no longer. Calling to him David, his youngest son, he instructed him to carry some provisions to his brothers in the army and to inquire of them the real reason as to why the battle

went as it did. There was good reason why Jesse chose David of his five remaining sons to perform this mission. Not only was David far more inclined to share his father's concern for the welfare of the nation than any of the others, but he was known to be courageous as well as observant and truthful in all that he did. Besides, being as yet little more than a young shepherd boy, he would be the least likely to be molested should he meet up with the enemy.

When at last David arrived upon the battlefield, what he found there was even stranger than the reports that had come to them in Bethlehem; he found the whole great army of Israel cowering in absolute fear. The terror which gripped the heart of the king had had its effect also upon his men. Although Saul had long mastered the trick of keeping his face calm regardless of what his inner feelings might be, the men very quickly felt that new uncertainty which had come upon him. Beyond doubt, when the army had first come together there at the valley of Elah, there had been many of the valiant men of Israel who were more than ready to go out to do battle against this new invasion of the enemy. Even when Goliath had first appeared, as terrible as his appearance might have been, a simple call from the king would surely have brought many volunteers from the ranks willing to give their all against any odds for the sake of their country. But Saul had hesitated, and the result was a disaster. Day after day the men gazed upon the imposing figure of the giant, listened to his mocking challenge, and noted the indecision of the king until each had taken second thoughts and no one dared to move. Even more, when at last the king's call for a volunteer came, it was not a simple request, but was couched in promises of riches, a royal marriage, and absolute freedom in Israel which sounded more like a bribe than anything else. It only frightened the men the more, until all hope of finding anyone was gone. The terror of Saul's own heart had engulfed the camp.

To the young David entering the camp of Israel's army for the first time, it must have seemed incomprehensible. In his young mind, the army of Israel had always been idealized. With his faith in God, he firmly believed it to be undefeatable. That he should now find this very army cowering in fear and doing nothing was to him unbelievable. But that was nothing at all compared to his amazement when Goliath suddenly appeared in the valley to hurl once again his daily challenge at Israel, "Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together." The sound of that voice stopped David short and sent shivers of amazement down his back; but with him it was different than with the others. He was yet a young man, hardly more than a boy, who had grown up in a home where the name of Israel had always been held in highest respect, for it belonged to the children of the living God. Time



and again he had spent hours and even days in the field carefully piecing together songs by which he could sing its praises; but such words as these that came from Goliath he had never heard. He could not imagine why that great army of Israel did not rise up in shocked indignation to plunge down the hill and silence the mockery of that voice together. Was there not one in the camp who could endure the mockery of that voice no longer? Eagerly he looked about to see who would be stepping forth to meet the arrogant challenge. After all, there was no cause for fear. Jehovah their God was with them; and before Him the size of Goliath meant nothing. But all he saw was men drawing back and cowering in fear while those about him plaintively explained, "Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel."

David was astonished at the very suggestion that a reward should have to be offered in the attempt to find someone to meet this challenge, and unbelievably he asked again, "What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

It was Eliab, David's oldest brother, who first suspected the direction in which the conversation was going and did what he could to head it off. He knew David and his utter lack of fear. It might seem im-

possible, but it was not; this boy was about to volunteer to fight that giant. He had to be stopped. It was not just concern for David's safety that troubled him, it was the thought of the shame that would come upon him and his father's house if one of his own family should be guilty of precipitating the defeat of the nation, and it was the shame he already felt to think that in this youngest brother there was a courage that he himself lacked. There was only one thing that Eliab could think of which might stop him, that was to challenge David's obedience. Thus angrily he said, "Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle."

But David was not to be distracted with such petty complaints. His heart had been stirred with much more serious concerns, concerns for the name of his God and his nation. He simply answered, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" and with that he turned to pursue his inquiry further.

It was not long before the men began to realize that here was one the like of whom over a month of searching had failed to turn up, one with the courage to fight with Goliath. He appeared almost impossibly small in the middle of that army of grown men, but the desperation of the hour was such that no possibility could be ignored. The word soon came to the ears of Saul, and David was brought before him.

**THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—** *"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."*  
Psalm 96:9a

## The Form for Excommunication

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

To the liturgy of the Reformed Churches belongs the Form For Excommunicating impenitent persons from the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. This form may be found in the back of our Psalters, along with our other Confessions. It may be divided into four main parts. The first part contains an informative section, in which the congregation is made aware of the sin and impenitence of the offender and the necessity of excommunicating him. This is followed by a short paragraph in which the act of excommunication itself is described. Thereupon an important exhortation is laid upon the congregation in which she is enjoined to be of the proper spiritual attitude and behavior toward this matter. The form then concludes with an appropriate prayer. Following the above

described order, we will briefly discuss the contents of this Form For Excommunication.

### *The Informative Part*

In order that you may have this material before you, we will quote this part of the form in full. It reads as follows:

"Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ; it is known unto you, that we have several times, and by several methods declared unto you the great sin committed, and the heinous offence given by our fellow-member, N., to the end that he, by your christian admonition and prayers to God, might be brought to repentance, and so be freed from the bonds of the devil (by whom he is held captive), and recovered by the will of the Lord. But we cannot conceal from you, with great



sorrow, that no one has yet appeared before us, who hath in the least given us to understand that he, by the frequent admonitions given him, (as well in private as before witnesses, and in the presence of many), is come to any remorse for his sins, or hath shown the least token of true repentance. Since then he daily aggravates his sin, (which in itself is not small), by his stubbornness, and since we have signified unto you the last time, that in case he did not repent, after such patience shown him by the Church, we should be under the disagreeable necessity of being further grieved for him, and come to the last remedy: wherefore we at this present are necessitated to proceed to this excommunication according to the command and charge given us by God in His holy Word; to the end that he may hereby be made (if possible) ashamed of his sins, and likewise that we may not by this rotten and as yet incurable member, put the whole body of the Church in danger, and that God's name may not be blasphemed."

When the disagreeable necessity of using this form of excommunication in the church arises, the reading of it certainly does not acquaint the congregation for the first time of the offender and his sin. The various steps of christian discipline have been followed. Both with and without the name of the offender this matter has been made known to the church. The magnitude of the heinous offense committed has been set before the congregation in order that, if possible, through the prayers of the church the sin might be removed and the offender set free from the bondage of the devil. Prior to this time of excommunication the consistory informed the congregation of her intent to proceed with the excommunication if there was no evidence of repentance. All of this, designed to help and save the offender, was necessary in order that the whole congregation might be able to assist with its admonitions and prayers in bringing this person to repentance. But it has all been of no avail and now the most disagreeable necessity is laid upon the church to proceed in that work which Christ, the head of the church, has given to her.

We note here that emphasis is placed on the information which is now given to the church concerning the offender's impenitence. There has been not even the least token of repentance; the sin is aggravated daily; and the offender continues to scorn the patience shown to him in the labors which the church has bestowed upon him. Of all this the whole church must now be witness because the entire congregation participates in the excommunication and is responsible for it. The very fact that no one of the congregation has come to the consistory, either to protest the decisions previously made or to produce some evidence that there is at least the beginning of repentance, indicates the approval and concurrence of the congregation in the disciplinary labor of the consistory. The congregation must always be mindful of its responsibility in these matters. If an injustice is done against a member of Christ's flock, we may not keep silent or just look the other way. We must speak out in protest against all injustice and insist that truth and right be maintained. It is undoubtedly much easier to tell

ourselves that it is no concern of ours or to make up all kinds of excuses for our failure actively to perform our duty; but this cannot relieve us of our responsibilities. If we know that a member of the church is going to be unjustly excommunicated or has been unjustly barred from the Lord's Table and we do nothing about it, the guilt of the misdeed becomes ours.

On the other hand, if a member is disciplined, and we have knowledge, which the consistory does not, of some things that might indicate a hope or possibility of repentance, we must also tell the consistory. Such information might prove very valuable. It might open up an avenue of labor for the consistory which otherwise is closed. It very likely would have a bearing upon the decisions which the consistory must make with regard to the time interval between the various admonitions and the time of the excommunication finally. Although the members of the church do not labor in these things in the same official capacity that the elders do, they must nevertheless be conscious of the labor which they are called to perform. A lack of this is detrimental to the entire spiritual life of the church. The church is a body. It is one, though composed of many members. The unity of these members is rooted in the faith and love of Christ, which also constrains them to exercise care for each other. Spiritually, therefore, it is impossible when one who belongs to the church becomes sickly and offensive to the church, to ignore that one or shove the whole matter off on the consistory. The love of Christ in us demands of us that we seek the well-being of that member in every way we possibly can. If he is guilty, we tell him and admonish him in love. If he is innocent, but for some reason unjustly disciplined, we uphold him and defend as much as we are able his honor and good character. When then no one has appeared at the consistory to do any of this, the consistory may rightly assume that every member in the congregation is agreed in the matter of the excommunication that must take place.

This act of excommunicating a member from the church is called here a "disagreeable necessity". It is this because by it the church is sorely grieved. It hurts deeply, and the pain the church suffers in this is not a physical one, which can be alleviated through various remedies; but it is a spiritual sorrow of the heart. Realizing the seriousness of what is to take place the church cries in pain for the soul of him who will not be brought to repentance. Just as the church, together with the angels in heaven, rejoice when one sinner is brought to repentance, so is she grieved to witness one who has come so close to the Kingdom of God go the way of perdition.

If then there is any consolation to be found in the performance of this disagreeable task, it must be in our keeping before our mind the three-fold purpose that this labor must serve. Briefly stated that purpose is: (1) the conversion of the sinner, (2) to maintain the purity and well-being of the church, and, (3) for the honor of the Name of God. Our excommunication form puts it thus: "to the end that he may hereby be made (if possible) ashamed of his sins, and likewise that



we may not by this rotten and as yet incurable member, put the whole body of the Church in danger, and that God's Name may not be blasphemed."

All of this is introductory. It must serve the purpose of bringing the church to a full realization of the situation. She must understand that what she is about to do, though most undesirable, is not a matter of her choice but is the performance of her duty to Christ. She must obediently use the power He has given to her and in that way trust that through her He will sovereignly and graciously perform a work that will always be salutary for His Church. In that confidence the most difficult and unpleasant tasks can be performed.

#### *The Excommunication*

The next paragraph in the Excommunication Form describes the act of excommunication itself. It reads thus:

"Therefore, we, the ministers and rulers of the Church of God, being here assembled in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, declare before you all, that for the aforesaid reasons we have excommunicated, and by these, do excommunicate N. from the Church of God, and from fellowship with Christ, and the holy sacraments, and from all the spiritual blessings and benefits, which God promiseth to and bestows upon His Church, so long as he obstinately and impenitently persists in his sins, and is therefore to be accounted by you as a heathen man and a publican, according to the command of Christ (Matt. 18), who saith, that whatsoever his ministers bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven."

The importance of this paragraph cannot be over emphasized. It contains the very heart of the matter, the excommunication itself. Several things, then, are to be carefully noted here. First of all, the form

designates the officiating office bearers in the public act of excommunication as the ministers and elders of the church. This excludes the deacons because this is a matter of discipline which, strictly speaking, does not belong to the office of the deacon. In practice, however, where the deacons are added to the consistory under the provision of Article 37 of the church order, they naturally would also participate in this disciplinary work. But even then, this is not in their capacity of deacons. Insofar as they serve as assistants to the elders or advisory elders only would they have a part in this labor. The work of discipline belongs to the office of the ministers of the Word and the elders because these two offices are reflective of the prophetic and kingly office of Christ. It is through the efficacious Word of Christ and by His sovereign and royal authority that excommunication from the church is enacted. The ministers and elders therefore perform this work as representatives of Christ. And through them, as the official organs of the church, the whole congregation functions. That ministers here is plural means two things. Firstly, this is because under a former system there often were several ministers in one congregation in a given town or city. Secondly, I believe the fact that this excommunication has been preceded by a long labor of love that involved also the Classis and the ministers and elders of those churches represented in the Classis, this plural is proper. By the approval or concurrence of the Classis the various disciplinary steps took place. In them the ministers and elders also had a part. In a sense then the excommunication is performed by the whole church even though it is done by the local congregation. Each church in that federation of churches recognizes and honors what is done; for in it the churches together also had a part.

## EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

# COCU

## 2

# A Merging, Emerging Church

*by Rev. G. Van Baren*

The prospects are "bright." Before very long the possibility exists that seven large Protestant denominations, maybe more, will merge into one large super-denomination containing 24 million members. That is what "COCU" is about (Consultation On Church Union). The "Consultation" which has been in progress for the past five years is a gathering of nine representatives from each of the seven participating denominations. These men annually discuss various aspects of the

question of merger. They have been analyzing the difference between the denominations. They have been coming to conclusions. The pattern is being set forth of the large, presently unnamed (as far as I know), super-denomination which they hope and pray (?) will emerge as a fruit of their consultations.

And as I pointed out last time, the goal of those seeking such merger is not merely to form this one super-denomination of seven existing denominations,



but to work towards an organization consisting of all the churches of the land. Then there will be one united "church" proclaiming that "unity" of which Christ spoke in John 17 -- so they say.

But what problems, what differences, are being ironed out by the representatives to COCU? One can well imagine that denominations ranging from Presbyterian to Methodist and Episcopalian would have many doctrinal and confessional differences. But is this what concerns them?

### THE DOCTRINAL-CONFESSIONAL ISSUES

I will be quoting in this article from a paper-back book entitled, "COCU -- The Reports of the Four Meetings," published by Forward Movement Miniature Books. This book summarizes what has been discussed and decided at the first four meetings of COCU during 1962 through 1965.

It becomes readily evident that the concern of COCU is neither doctrinal nor confessional. They recognize that different denominations do have different creeds, these appear to be included in what are called "traditions of the church", but very little is done with the doctrines taught in these creeds. At the first meeting in Washington in 1962, the gathering stated these to be the issues before them:

We have sought to isolate issues that need further study and clarification. Among these are: (1) the historical basis for the Christian ministry that is found in the Scriptures and the early church; (2) the origins, use and standing of creeds and confessional statements; (3) a restatement of the theology of liturgy; (4) the relation of word and sacraments. (pg. 18)

However, not much is done with point 2 above. Rather, there is the deliberate attempt to minimize all differences on doctrinal issues. At the Lexington meeting in 1965 the following was stated: (pg. 57ff)

The issues which divided us were not the profound ones of theology and traditions. Indeed, what we have learned together in these three years, and our greatest source of hope, is that old theologies and traditions of a separate nature has given way in this ecumenical century to an amazing consensus....

Our disagreements a year ago (admitting that we have all too politely, and even carefully, skirted around some of the hardest questions) were really on scheduling and time; one might say on caution versus commitment, which is a hard alternative for any serious man.

To encourage "ecumenism" on the local, grass-roots, level, the following advice is given: (pg. 88)

In interchurch groups of this nature, little is to be gained from arguments about old points of difference between churches; each side is likely to fall back into extreme positions that have generally been outgrown. Members of the various churches need to discover and appreciate what they have in common before they can tackle their differences creatively.

What must interchurch study groups talk about?

People from several neighboring churches could meet, as members of the Christian Church in the community, to study and discuss matters of common

concern in that community. Recent experiments in this kind of ecumenical action have been highly successful. An inter-church group could direct its attention to such community problems as: the local health services; public school policies; high school drop-outs; labor-management relationships; civil rights; or public transportation.

### THE ISSUES OF CONCERN

In what was COCU most concerned? First, they did concern themselves with Scripture and its place in the church. At their Oberlin meeting of 1963 COCU addressed itself to the question of Scripture and Tradition. Among many statements made is found this concerning Scripture: (pg. 23)

The six churches represented in the Consultation On Church Union recognize and acknowledge that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments *have a unique authority.* (italics mine)

The Holy Scriptures witness to God's revelation, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and to man's response to the divine revelation.... They are the inspired writings which bear witness to the divine deeds in our history by which God has called into being and sustained his people and by which God calls all men to unite in his service and share in his reconciliation of the world to himself.

There appears to be no clear-cut declaration that Scripture is the infallible, inspired Word of God.

The second subject for discussion, and considered to be their chief problem, was the question of the ministry. At the first four meetings of COCU no final, conclusive decision was made. COCU stated, "The ministerial orders should include the historic ministries of bishops, presbyters, (elders) and deacons although we acknowledge that the particular functions of these ministries require further clarification..."

The proper administration of the two sacraments also was subject of papers and discussion. Concerning the one baptism, the following was affirmed: (pgs. 45-46)

1. The understanding of baptism as a means of grace. The primacy of grace must be stressed, whether infant or adult baptism be practiced. The primary significance of baptism lies not in what we do but in what God has already done for us in Jesus Christ, to which faith is our response.

2. The understanding of baptism as the decisive work of God leading to the continuing life in God....

3. The meaning of baptism as a corporate act of the Church under the authority of the living Lord. Baptism is not a private affair. At each baptismal service the faith of all the baptized members is continuously reaffirmed and proclaimed.

4. The particular witness of infant baptism. Infant baptism is the manifestation of our helplessness and of God's grace on our behalf. It is also a witness to the corporateness of the Christian life. In the nurture of the covenant community it always anticipates confirmation or personal confession of faith. Thereby, parental and congregational vows uttered in behalf of the baptizand are fulfilled.

5. The teaching emphasized in adult baptism. Here



the stress is on the conscious dedication and commitment of awakened faith....

6. The common search for fulness of spiritual life. In spite of tensions within our communions, and weaknesses of practice, infant baptism and adult baptism both seek to express and fulfill the same spiritual life. Both seek to include infants within the one fold of Christ's Church, and both seek to nurture these little ones in one faith which thereby can reach mature, responsible expression.

So COCU has neatly included both infant and adult baptism (take your pick) and has lost sight of the idea of the covenant in this sacrament. The differences with respect to the Lord's Supper are also solved by presenting general conclusions to which most denominations could apparently agree. (cf. pgs. 52-53)

1. In the Lord's Supper, symbols and symbolic actions are used. However, the Eucharist is an effective sign; the action of the Church becomes the effective means whereby God in Christ acts and Christ is present with his people....

2. Christ is the minister, the high priest of the Eucharist....

3. Christ is present as the Crucified who died for our sins and who rose again for our justification, as the once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the world who gives himself to the faithful....

4. The Holy Communion is the presence of Christ who has come and who comes to his people, and who will come in glory....

The final problem of major concern for COCU was liturgy, or, the manner of worship for the church. Recommended here is: (pgs. 29-30)

The living Tradition of the Church implies certain basic elements of Christian worship but does not confine worship to a single plan or form. Unity does not preclude freedom nor require uniformity....

To encourage both unity and freedom it would be desirable to have three or four orders of service set forth as approved forms in a united church, with an agreed upon statement of the elements which are necessary for a whole and proper worship.

The above represents a very, very brief summary of COCU in its first four meetings. It would seem obvious that COCU does not intend to treat matters of doctrine, the matters which originally led to separation of the denominations. It is very unlikely that COCU would ever define its idea of infallible Scripture, of the virgin birth of Christ, of the Trinity, and such like doctrines. Rather it would forge a unity based on that which is outward: seeking consensus of opinion on baptism, eucharist, the ministry, and liturgy. Such unity, based merely on that, will of necessity be only external and will not be that unity of which Christ speaks in John 17: that the church may be one even as Christ and the Father are one.

## FROM HOLY WRIT—

# The Good Shepherd of Israel

by Rev. G. Lubbers

John 10:1-39

## THE DIVINE EPITOME OF THE SHEPHERD'S TESTIMONY (John 1:39)

The mouth of every man shall be stopped one day, and all shall be compelled to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord unto the glory of God the Father. That will be the final stopping of the mouths of evil men, who deny the Son of God, having come into the flesh. That will be the final vanquishing of the Antichrist and of all antichristians who are in the world.

Such a moment there is also here in our text which reads, "Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand." Here we see the futility of unbelief thwarted; the frustration of unbelief is exposed in all its poverty and helplessness over against the Christ of God. It is the helplessness of those whose mouths had been shut.

But there is more here in this almost trite and

factual statement of the Evangelist John. Here is the proof of the sum of all that Christ has said about Himself as the good Shepherd. None would take His life from him! He had been sent and empowered of the Father to lay down His life for the sheep and also to take it again. He will die in no other way than in His voluntary death on the cross as the expiation of the sins of the people. With great longing Jesus longs for that moment when He may eat the final passover with his disciples and drink the wine new in the kingdom of his Father. For the Son of man must suffer the sufferings of the cross, and thus be perfected; and God will thus bring many sons to glory. And when Christ went out from among the hands of wicked men, who would seize Him to kill Him, He is keeping the avenues open so that He may presently walk the Via Dolorosa. He is and remains the good Shepherd, and continues in the obedient role of the One sent of the Father throughout.



The verb in the Greek for "to take" is "piatsein", and it means literally: to seize, to take, to capture. In the Gospel of John it refers to the act of placing in a state of arrest, and thus the beginning of a judicial process. In this case it would lead inevitably to the stoning of Jesus, notwithstanding that all the arguments of the Jews had been met, and all their accusations had been shown to be without ground. It would simply have been the only answer of unbelief whose mouth had been shut by the evidence. Their is nothing reasonable in unbelief. Evil men are ever unreasonable men. They do not believe in law and order, and will not bow before the highest authority and majesty of the Word of God! Such has been the bloody history of all who persecuted the righteous, even from the time of Abel, the first martyr, till the time of Zachariah, the son of Berechiah!

Hence, they would take Jesus. As the conjunction "therefore" indicates, these Jews would take Jesus because they had been bested in the argument; and this is their only argument, as it was of evil men in the days of Henoah. He too was sought and they found him not, for "God took him." But here is a greater than Henoah. God did not take him, but he is very God in the flesh. He is the good Shepherd of Israel. Wherefore He "escaped" out of their hands.

There seems to be no proper word in the English language, or in any language, to express exactly what took place here. Here was evidently more than met the eye. For here is One Who can summon twelve legions of angels to His defense if He so desired. When He is brought into the world of inhabited men, the Lord says: let all the angels of God worship him! The Holland translation has "*ontging uit hunne handen*". The fact is only related. The manner is not told us by John.

However, we are told repeatedly of Jesus departing from the midst of the Jews who would seize Him. In some instances the manner is not told us, but the deep reason and motive is given. Thus we read in John 7:33 that the reason why the deputies, sent of the Sanhedrin, do not take Jesus into custody is that "never a man spoke as this man". It was simply the power and authority, the kingly mien which held the deputies at bay. For He spoke as one having authority and not as the Scribes. And this authoritative speech these Jews had just heard. They must too have felt the impact of this reasoning, the power of the Scriptures, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, convicting of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Of judgment because they believed not in the Son of God. It will only be later in Gethsemane that these men will be able to take Jesus when He gives Himself willingly into their hands. But they will there too fall prostrate to the earth merely upon His Word, "I am He", I am Jesus of Nazareth whom ye seek to bind and kill.

Behold, then, here the divine epitome of God's testimony concerning His Son. The very conclusion of this incident here, this confrontation of these Jews with the Christ of God, the good Shepherd, is such that He is the One sent of the Father into the world, and Who says: "I and the Father are one!"

Presently when His hour is fully come He will willingly give His hands to be tied, and being bound He will be led to the judgment hall of Caiaphas. Then will He be condemned to death because He said: "I am the Lord of glory, I am the Son of God." He will then be bound with the oaths of God to the cross. There shall the Shepherd of Israel be slain, and all the sheep shall be saved from the wolves of Satan's legions and cohorts!

#### *THE POSTHUMOUS CONFESSION CONCERNING JOHN'S PREACHING (John 10:40-42)*

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. The bearer of the precious seed of the Word may weep as he sows, and meet the death of the martyr. But from Abel onward, although they have died, they still speak. The Word of the Lord does not return void, but performs that unto which He sends it. The true preachers of the Word are always a sweet savour to God.

Thus it was with John, the Baptist. He was a man sent from God. His name was "John," that is, through him the grace and mercy of God would effectually be administered to the Israel of God. He will, under God, turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, and the disobedient will be brought to the wisdom of the just, and a people would be prepared for the Lord. When this labor is finished John is taken away to his reward as a prophet who spake the Word of God.

The rule for measuring a true prophet from a false one is given us in the Scriptures. The words of true prophets are verified from heaven by God Himself. Not so of the false prophets. In the days of Elijah fire from heaven verified the work of that righteous man. But here is the greater Elijah. Here is the Elijah who will reconstitute all things, pointing out the Christ of God, and manifesting Him to the people at the occasion of Jesus' baptism. And John preached the coming of the Kingdom; he preached repentance from sin, and a sanctification which was more than mere ceremonial and external cleanliness. There must be a bringing forth of fruits meet for repentance.

It was the time of Reformation!

The Old Testament priesthood of Levi must give way as a priesthood which had perfected nothing. He points out the Lamb of God which will take away the sin of the world. He sends his disciples away from himself to Jesus; the latter must increase and he must decrease. John is but the friend of the Bridegroom. He is not worthy to unloosen Jesus' shoe-latchet. Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Pentecost will come! All John's preaching was "concerning" (*peri*) Christ. John is the messenger before the face of the Lord. There is about to be the ushering in of the better Covenant. Thus John had preached. And this preaching had not fallen altogether upon deaf ears. There were some who had ears to hear. And they came confessing their sins and they were baptized. Principally they were, therefore, committed in their minds and hearts to the things which Jesus preached concerning Himself. Such were the people in Perea, beyond Jordan. These were the people who "were saying" (*elegon*) that they are



confirmed in their faith by the things which they "see and hear" in Jesus. The blind receive their sight, the lame walked, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life, and the poor (in spirit) have the gospel proclaimed to them! All that John said concerning "this one" is true. It is all *real*. They have not placed their hopes upon a phantom, a mere mirage in the desert; God has visited His people and the kingdom has come upon them. The promises of God, spoken to the prophets and the fathers, are being fulfilled, and the time foretold, that the Gentiles too would be joint-heirs of the promises, is at hand. Great and wonderful things are "at hand". Their spirits are lifted. John and his disciples may have had their doubts whether he is the "One to come", but these people harbor no doubt.

Not one of John's words will fall to the ground as so many idle tales and false hopes. "All things" which John spoke concerning "this one" are real and true. "This one" and none else is the fulfilment of the promise. This is God's beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased. Thus it had sounded from heaven at Jesus' baptism. It is all so real to them.

The sheep hear the voice of the forerunner, and

they acknowledge the Shepherd. Christ's sheep hear His voice and they follow Him. "They believed on him there." And those who believe are "many". Christ had many sheep beyond Jordan. He abides among them till the time appointed. How long we do not know. It was long enough. The mission was accomplished there, and will be accomplished at his exodus at Jerusalem. And when Pentecost is come, they will see the words of John verified when fire comes from heaven to baptize them, the fire of the Holy Ghost. Then all the sheep will come from the East and from the West and from the North and the South; the four winds will blow upon the earth. It will be from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth!

Then shall the great and good Shepherd in Israel be manifested. The Chief Shepherd shall appear, Immanuel, God with us. And He shall go before us. A table He prepares for us before our enemies, and He will cause the cup of all the sheep to overflow, and He will dwell with them forever!

Blessed faith of simple folk beyond Jordan.

Faith in the good Shepherd of Israel!

## Annual Report of the Reformed Free Publishing Association

Members and Friends of the Reformed Free Publishing Association:

Dear Brethren:

We do well to give thanks to God that through the *Standard Bearer* we have again had the privilege for another year to witness to the truth of His Word. This witnessing, we believe, has also been in harmony with the second purpose of our Association, namely, to reveal false and deceptive views repugnant thereto.

This year the meetings of the Board have revealed close harmony in the functions of the various committees under the leadership of our President, R. Bloem, and Vice President, C. Kuiper. As many already know, our president, because of corrective heart surgery, was absent from us for several meetings.

The I & E Committee for several months worked closely with the Mission Board in the distribution of some 35 copies of the *Standard Bearer*. These issues were sent to various consistories at their request to aid them in their church extension work. This committee also prepared a "Newsletter" aimed at encouraging the younger generation of men to become members of the R.F.P.A.

The Finance Committee, ever mindful of the need of a continual support from our people, has prepared a new insert-sheet that is to be mailed with the subscription notices. In the past, these notices have brought about a worthwhile increase in individual contributions.

The Book Committee, desiring that the increase in the interest in Bound Volumes continue, encourages our subscribers to purchase them for use in future personal study, as they contain a wealth of sound Biblical writings. They are an invaluable aid for every church society member. Activities of this committee also included distribution of literature at the Reformation Day Rally in Grand Rapids and the selling of the photographs of the late Rev. H. Hoeksema.

The Board would like to express its appreciation to Mr. James Dykstra, our business manager, for his excellent handling of the business affairs of the *Standard Bearer*. One of the notable aspects of his work is the low figure in the amounts due from accounts receivable.

This year we experienced a better than average increase in subscriptions. We had a total of 115 new subscriptions and 37 cancellations for a net gain of 78, compared with an increase of 26 last year. The total number of copies printed now is 1247, over against 1159 a year ago. Of these, 1017 are sent out as paid subscriptions and complimentary copies, 70 are for the Mission Board, 110 are reserved for Bound Volumes, and 50 are kept as a mailing margin.

May the Lord richly bless all who write in and work for the publishing of the *Standard Bearer*, and may it be used by Him in the furtherance of His kingdom's cause.

Gerald J. Bouwkamp, Secretary



## Annual Treasurer's Report, R.F.P.A., 1966

Balance on Hand Sept. 1, 1965	\$1,494.48
Receipts	
Subscriptions	\$4,314.25
Membership Dues	106.00
Gifts	4,503.16
Advertising	212.00
Bound Volumes	500.25
Receipts For Year	9,635.66
Total Receipts	\$11,130.14
Disbursements	
Wobbema Printing Co.	9,024.13
Holland Bookbinding	408.00
Mr. James Dykstra-Gift	300.00
Miscellaneous	91.22
Total Disbursements	9,823.35
Balance on Hand Sept. 1, 1966	\$1,306.79
Gifts	
Holland P.R. Church	111.96
S.W. P.R. Church	142.16
First P.R. Church	1,401.55
Randolph P.R. Church	66.96

Isabel P.R. Church	20.12
Hope P.R. Church	312.93
Doon P.R. Church	107.47
Kalamazoo P.R. Church	42.89
So. Holland P.R. Church	278.70
S. E. P.R. Church	199.59
Hull P.R. Church	106.90
Hudsonville P.R. Church	470.02
Redlands P.R. Church	132.10
Lynden P.R. Church	42.03
Edgerton P.R. Church	45.16
Oaklawn P.R. Church	40.73
Loveland P.R. Church	34.31
Forbes P.R. Church	13.25
First Men's Society	27.00
First Ladies Aid Society	50.00
First Jr. Mr. & Mrs. Society	36.75
Hope Ladies Aid Society	30.00
So. Holland Ladies Society	25.00
Individuals	758.75
Refreshments-Annual Meeting	6.83
Total	4,503.16
R. Bos, Treasurer	

## Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

(Act of October 23, 1962; Section 4369, Title 39, United States Code)

1. Date of Filing: September 21, 1966; 2. Title of Publication: The Standard Bearer; 3. Frequency of Issue: 21 issues per year; 4. Location of Known Office of Publication: 1326 W. Butler Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507; 5. Location of the Headquarters or General Business Offices of the Publishers: Same; 6. Names and Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor—Publisher: Reformed Free Publishing Assn., Inc., 1326 W. Butler Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507; Editor: Rev. H. C. Hoeksema, 1842 Plymouth Terrace, SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506; Business Manager: James Dykstra, 1326 W. Butler Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507; 7. Owner: Reformed Free Publishing Ass'n., Inc., 1326 W. Butler Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507; 8. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None; 9. Paragraphs 7 and 8 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner. Names and addresses of individuals who are stockholders of a corporation which itself is a stockholder or holder of bonds, mortgages or other securities of the publishing corporation have been included in paragraphs 7 and 8 when the interests of such individuals are equivalent to 1 percent

or more of the total amount of the stock or securities of the publishing corporation; 10. This Item Must Be Completed For All Publications Except Those Which Do Not Carry Advertising Other Than the Publisher's Own and Which are Named in Sections 132.231, 132.232, and 132.233, Postal Manual (Sections 4355a, 4355b, and 4356 of Title 39, United States Code)

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Single Issue Nearest To Filing Date
A. Total No. copies printed (Net press run) .....	1250	1250
B. Paid Circulation		
1. Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter sales .....	None	None
2. Mail Subscriptions .....	952	952
C. Total Paid Circulation .....	952	952
D. Free Distribution (including samples) by Mail, Carrier or Other Means .....	135	135
E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D) .....	1087	1087
F. Office use, Left-Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled after Printing .....	163	163
G. Total (Sum of E & F — should equal net press run shown in A) .....	1250	1250

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

James Dykstra, Business Manager

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Southwest Mens Society wish to express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Peter Offringa and the children in the loss of their husband and father:

MR. PETER OFFRINGA

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose.

Rev. G. Lubbers, President  
Henry Brands, Secretary

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church on its first meeting resolved belatedly to express its sympathy to one of its members, Mr. Albert Offringa, in the loss of his father,

MR. PETER OFFRINGA

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him". Nahum 1:7

Rev. M. Schipper, Pres.  
William Faber, Sec'y.



**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Consistory of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church and the congregation express their sympathy to their former pastor, Rev. Herman Veldman, in the death of his father

MR. JAMES VELDMAN

who was called to his eternal home on Sept. 14, 1966. "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever". Ps. 37:18.

D. Engelsma, Clerk

**IN MEMORIAM**

In the early morning hours of Tuesday, September 20, 1966, it pleased our heavenly Father to take up in glory our father, grandfather, and great-grandfather

CORNELIUS LUBBERS

at the age of 83 years and 2 months.

Full of joy and consolation he dies in the Lord.

"But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever". Ps. 52:8.

The sorrowing children

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Berens

Rev. and Mrs. George C. Lubbers

Mr. and Mrs. John C. Lubbers

Mr. and Mrs. Peter J. Lubbers

Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Jelsma

Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Lubbers

Mr. and Mrs. Bert Maring

22 grandchildren and

40 great-grandchildren

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Southwest Church Men's Society and the Southwest Eunice Society express their sympathy with Mrs. Peter Offringa and family and with the sole surviving brother, Mr. Simon Offringa, in the death of their husband, father and brother

PETER OFFRINGA

May the Lord Himself pour the balm of Gilead into the wounds of their sorrowing hearts in faith and hope of the blessed resurrection.

Henry Brands, Sec'y of Men's Society

Mrs. G. Lubbers, Sec'y of Eunice Society

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Bert Maring, in the death of her father,

MR. CORNELIUS LUBBERS

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. 1:21.

Harry Zwak, Vice Pres.

Mrs. G. Vander Kooy, Sec'y.

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Consistory of the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church expresses its sympathy to our brother elder, John C. Lubbers and his family, in the death of his father

CORNELIUS LUBBERS

who was called home Sept. 20, to be with the Lord.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth". Rev. 14:13

Consistory of the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church

Harry Zwak, Clerk

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Mens Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to three of its members, Mr. John C., Peter J., and Henry C. Lubbers, in the death of their father

MR. CORNELIUS LUBBERS

May the bereaved be comforted in the Word of God found in Ps. 116:15 "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints".

Hib Kuiper, Vice Pres.

Gordon Van Overloop, Sec'y.

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On Saturday, October 29, 1966, our parents, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Bykerk, will, the Lord willing, celebrate their 40th Wedding Anniversary. We are thankful to our God for His sustaining grace to them for these many years, and pray for His continued guidance and blessing upon them and us for the future years He may give us together. Isaiah 26:4: "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength".

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Saurman

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bykerk

Mr. and Mrs. Arie Bykerk

Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Bykerk

Lubertha Bykerk

All of the grandchildren

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Teachers of the Sunday School of the Prot. Ref. Church of Hudsonville herewith express their sympathy to our fellow-teacher, Mr. Peter Lubbers, in the loss of his father

MR. CORNELIUS LUBBERS

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints". Ps. 116:15

Donald Dykstra, Supt.

Betty Haveman, Sec'y.



## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

October 1, 1966

Rev. R. C. Harbach, of Kalamazoo, has received the call (for the third time) to be Home Missionary of our churches. First Church of Grand Rapids is the calling church.

Ebenezer Prot. Ref. Church, of Forbes, N.D. has tendered a call to Rev. D. Engelsma, of Loveland, Colo.

\* \* \*

Monday evening, Sept. 26, Hope's congregation, of Grand Rapids, gave a farewell social for Rev. and Mrs. H. Veldman who are going to take up their labors in Hudsonville, Mich. Mr. D. Kooienga, vice-president of the consistory, voiced the congregation's thanks for Rev. Veldman's faithful labors in their midst, and presented the departing couple with tangible evidences of appreciation, including furniture, a record album and a receipted order for Rev. H. Hoeksema's "Dogmatics" coming off the press in November. The program included numbers by the choral society and the Hope Heralds, and the showing of Mr. S. Beiboer's colored slides of the Rocky Mountains, with appropriate taped music, under the theme, "Great is Thy Faithfulness". The "farewell" was not a complete one for many of the children of the congregation because Rev. Veldman has agreed to conduct some of Hope's catechism classes until a new pastor accepts the post. The Veldman family moved into Hudsonville's parsonage Sept. 29, re-modeled and re-furnished for the new occupants. Prof. H.C. Hoeksema was scheduled to install Rev. Veldman in his new charge Sunday morning, Oct. 2.

\* \* \*

Classis West met in Edgerton, Minn., Sept. 21, and, according to bulletin news finished its business that afternoon at 3:30. The official Report has not yet reached our desk so will have to await its publishing until our next issue. Rev. C. Hanko, minister-delegate of Redlands, combined his trip with Church Visitation, and Rev. Engelsma, of Loveland, filled a Classical appointment in Pella, Iowa, thereby saving time and expenses for Classis.

\* \* \*

Loveland's Prot. Ref. Chr. School scheduled its Convocation Exercises for Tuesday evening Sept. 6. Rev. Engelsma was the speaker. The Board had invited "the children and their parents and all those interested in Protestant Reformed education" to attend. Refreshments were served which contributed to the sociability of the get-together after the program.

\* \* \*

Since our last issue of the news two of our ministers were bereaved of their fathers; as Rev. Vos, minister-emeritus of Hudsonville, so graphically put it in his bulletin: "their earthly remains were laid to rest against the great harvest of the ages."

\* \* \*

Upon reading a news item regarding two of our servicemen who said they longed for letters from the folks in their congregation, one serviceman re-

quested of us their addresses. Evidently we stay-at-homes little realize how homesick our young men become when separated from the fellowship of the people of their church. This concerned soldier wrote in part, ". . . if you would be willing to send me their addresses I'll write them myself because I know, for one, what it feels like when people from our own churches do not write. . ." Well, do you?

\* \* \*

Rev. G. Van Baren, of First Church, was the speaker at the Annual Meeting of the R.F.P.A. (Standard Bearer) held in Hudsonville Sept. 29. He spoke on, "The Standard Bearer, A Plan for its Failure." This negative approach was like an icy shower exposing his hearers to the chilling realization of what we *should not do* if we want our Standard Bearer to continue to witness to the Truth as we are privileged to proclaim it. After the speech three new board members were elected: the brethren G. Pipe, C. Westra and V. Graeser. Look for the secretary's and treasurer's reports elsewhere in this issue.

\* \* \*

*Is this news to you?* This sentence found in *Time* magazine is a shocking revelation of that to which some of our Covenant children are exposed: "On one T.V. station, *in one week*, the author found 334 completed or attempted killings, mostly during youngster's viewing time". That would be 334 violations of the Sixth Commandment between the reading of The Law on two successive Sunday morning services: and all in the name of Entertainment!

\* \* \*

Some bulletin notices as shadows of things to come: Mr. Fred Hanko, teacher in Adams St. School, is the scheduled speaker for the Mothers' Club October 6th meeting. His announced topic is, "The Teaching of Bible in School." Rev. M. Schipper has been chosen to address the Fall Meeting of the Eastern Ladies League on October 13. November 11 is the date set for a public lecture on "Protestant Reformed Education" in our Hudsonville Church.

\* \* \*

The September issue of "Highlights", Hope School's paper contained an editorial by Miss A. Lubbers which was an outstanding challenge to the teachers to educate their children for a world to come—*The World* to come. This editorial was the text of a chapel talk by Miss Lubbers on Sept. 8 before the student body, and must surely have inspired teachers and pupils alike to strive to be ready for that World to come wherein "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion and the ox shall lie down together—when all that is in part shall be done away and we shall see Jesus as He is."

\* \* \*

Bulletin quote (Oak Lawn's); "When we go to God in prayer the devil knows we go to fetch strength against him and therefore he opposes us all he can".

- R. Sibbes