

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Self-Examination

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION—

The Sword of the Prince of Peace

by Rev. M. Schipper

"And His name shall be called . . . The Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6b

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Matthew 10:34

His name shall be called the Prince of Peace!

Such is the name Isaiah ascribes to the Child to be born, and to the Son to be given!

But when this Son grows up and assumes the government which rests upon His shoulder, He declares to the constituency of His governed: Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, . . . but a sword!

On the one hand, the Son to be born is dedicated to the proposition of effecting an everlasting peace! At whose birth even the heavens will break forth into singing! Peace on earth to men of His good pleasure!

While on the other hand this same child, when He reaches the age of manhood, exclaims: I am come not to send peace, but a sword!

Strange paradox!

The Prince of Peace — with a sword!

The Prince Whose duty and work it shall be to bring peace!

But who does so only in the way of battle, of making division!

Prince of Peace, He is called! What does this mean?

To Whom does this appellation refer?

The term "Peace" in the Scriptures has both negative and positive content. Negatively expressed, peace is the very opposite of war, confusion, distress and misery. Peace is a condition in which there is no disturbance or division; where war and its attending miseries are wholly absent. Positively, peace is a condition in which there is friendship, mutual agreement, unity; and where security, safety, and tranquility abound!

Further, it must be established that the term "Peace" as here used is not a peace which in any sense can or will be effected by any counsels of men or leagues of nations. Surely all humanistic and modern conceptions of peace and peace-making have nothing in common with the peace of the Prince of Peace. Men and nations may foolishly imagine and plan universal peace, but as long as it is a peace which is established by the mere physical, coercive power of flesh and blood, and mundane instruments of war, there will never be a realization of their dream. There can and will never be any peace among men, unless the Prince of Peace alone brings it! There is no peace apart from the Peace of God!

Peace in its most absolute sense is to be found alone in God, and it comes only from Him!

God is, in the Scriptures, called more than once: the God of Peace! the Lord of Peace! and other closely related appellations! This signifies not only that He alone establishes peace, but that He is that peace Himself. Peace in God is that virtue of God whereby He, as the triune Covenant God, lives His own covenant life in the sphere of eternal love in such a way that all three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are bound together in mutual agreement of love, and live together a most perfect, tranquil life of friendship. There is never any disharmony or division in God, for God is One. And this One but also Triune God is the source of all peace to His people in and through the One Whom Isaiah calls: The Prince of Peace!

Peace, therefore, is not to be understood as a mere physical condition, but it is a spiritual entity! And spiritual things have to do with God and our relation to Him!

Man by nature, as he is born into this world, and is composed of body and soul, is at enmity with God! He hates God and is His enemy. Likewise it is true, that God is his enemy! Through the transgression of one man, all have become sinners. We are, as the apostle Paul declares, all the children of wrath by nature. We are under the wrath of God and will abide under it forever, unless God Himself by His grace extricates us from this state and condition. It is plain from the

Scriptures that there is no peace for the wicked. From Adam the first unto all eternity, the Scripture is true: "the wicked are like the troubled sea that cannot rest; there is no peace saith my God to the wicked." You and I belong to this category as we come forth from our parents into this world. Only through the grace of the God of peace and the saving work of the Prince of Peace will the relation of us to God and God to us, a relation of wrath and warfare, change. Then, too, and only then, will the relation of man to his neighbor change!

Christ Jesus, born in Bethlehem's manger, is the Prince of Peace!

It is the duty of a prince to set in order the things of the kingdom for the king. So, also, it is the high expectation of a prince when the kingdom has been perfectly arranged that he shall enter with the king into the glories of that kingdom. Moreover, it follows naturally that the prince, being the son of the king, is legally heir to the throne of his father. So, too, it must be understood that the Prince of Peace is the Son of the King of Peace, Who is God Himself! Through this Son, God arranges and sets in order the things of His Kingdom of Peace. When this Son has so fulfilled His office and work, He may of right expect to enter into the glories of that glorious Kingdom of Peace!

This Son of the King of Peace is sent into the world in the likeness of sinful men. He assumes our flesh and blood, and becomes like unto us in all things, sin excepted. And in our likeness bears in His own body and soul the burden of the wrath of God against sin. So perfectly did He bear it, that He became a perfect sacrifice of obedience before the holy and righteous God. He suffers and dies the bitter and shameful death of the cross, thus making atonement for all those whom the Father had given Him. He satisfies the righteous judgment of God Who will have peace only on the basis of perfect righteousness. Moreover, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of atonement, He breaks down the wall of partition between His people and God. So that God no longer can look down on them in wrath, but counts them as His friends, even as He saw and loved them in His counsel in Christ before the foundation of the world, when He chose them to become His precious possession. And having done all to abolish that which made us subject to God's wrath, the King of Peace crowns His Prince with glory and honor at His own right hand, whence also this Prince receives power through the Holy Spirit given Him to effect that peace also in the hearts of His people. So that His Word to His disciples shortly before His decease at Jerusalem is fulfilled: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the

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world giveth, give I unto you." And the word of the apostle is true: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But this Prince in His coming brings a sword!

How strange this sounds in the light of all that which we have said of Him in the preceding! Does that not all fade into thin air when we are placed before this declaration of Him: I came not to send peace, but a sword? Does He not Himself deny the very purpose of His coming? Much more serious these questions appear when we also ask the question: What does He mean by that sword? What is its idea?

Immediately we feel that this is figurative language. The sword of which He speaks is not a literal, physical instrument. For at no time did Jesus appear on earth with a sword. And we have His own statement to show that He never condoned its use when He declared to the apostle Peter in the garden of Gethsemane: "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." This is plain also from Luke 12:51 where the Lord says: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division." There can be no doubt therefore that Jesus is thinking of that only which a sword represents and does. A sword is an instrument that is used to make division by cutting. Jesus is speaking then of division, dissension, and war. If that is the meaning, and it must be, then it appears that He came to send division, dissension, and war upon earth. And, if that is not plain enough, He even adds, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." How contradictory this sounds to all that is said of Him as the Prince of Peace! On the one hand, He came to establish peace, a peace so wonderful that it passeth all understanding, reaching even unto heaven and the throne of a Holy and Righteous God, Who, seeing it, bends down in love and grace to those who were once enemies, but now covenant friends. While on the other hand, He came to begin a warfare that is so universal that it enters into every home, hamlet, city and nation, and effects every man, woman, and child who ever came into contact with Him or His!

* * * * *

Awful reality!

O, to be sure, He does not contradict the truth that He is the most glorious Prince of Peace!

Rather, He emphasizes the fact that His Peace is limited, as His atonement is limited! For as we have already seen, the angels at His birth sing: Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good pleasure! It is peace to men of His good pleasure, in whom He delights, who are well-pleasing to Him! There are many who are not of His good pleasure, who are not pleasing to Him, who will never taste of His Peace! Indeed, the wicked are like the troubled sea that cannot rest! And as it is true in a natural sense that a sea does not become troubled of itself, but is effected by the wind blowing upon it; so, also, it must be understood that the sea of the wicked is brought to unrest by the breath of the Prince of Peace! His Person, His Word, His Spirit, aggravates the wicked and draws out of him

a heated warfare. The sword that makes division was in Christ Himself as He appeared among men! The very holiness of His Person, the very power of His Word, and the very Spirit which was in Him struck opposition and made division! Beginning at Bethlehem, and culminating in the cross, His Word and Spirit made separation between sheep and goats, between righteous and wicked, between the children of light and the children of darkness, between His disciples and the synagogue of Satan!

Not with all men, did Christ come to make peace!

Nor was it His purpose to amalgamate all human society!

That modern doctrine of a universal brotherhood of man, Jesus never had in mind! Nor such a peace as is planned and sought after in the United Nations, and advocated by the Council of Churches, did the Prince of Peace come to realize! These searchers for peace, who deny the blood of atonement which is limited, and call the God of Righteousness Who can only be appeased by a sacrifice of blood, a "big bully," shall never taste of His peace!

Indeed, the separation which the Prince of Peace makes is so keen, so wide, so definite, that no inventive genius of man will ever be able to bridge the gap, or span the gulf that is fixed!

This sword of the Prince of Peace is an ever-present reality in the world into which He came! From His high and exalted place, the Prince continues to wield His sword through His Word and Spirit, through His church, through His apostles, His ministers, His people, in whose hearts His Peace dwells!

* * * * *

Glorious and abiding comfort!

Comforting it is to know, not only that before God we stand no longer as enemies, but friends; no longer as objects of wrath, but of His favor! But comforting it is also to know, how and why it is that in the world we must have tribulation, division, and strife!

The question is often asked: Why should there be so much strife? so much division? Why is it that even churches cannot have peace?

The answer usually given is: There is still so much sin in man and in the church! This answer is only a part of the truth! The other part is: that where the Word and Spirit of Christ is, there must be separation!

The disciples to whom Jesus said: I came not to send peace, but a sword, evidently imagined that to confess the Name of Christ in the world would be an easy task. Jesus puts them straight, when He intimates that there would be much opposition. Remember, He said, "For I am some to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Let all those, then, who have in their hearts the peace of the Prince of Peace, rejoice when they see that powerful sword of His making separation between sheep and goats, righteous and wicked, as it shall finally be wielded in the day of His coming!

Then shall they rejoice eternally in His kingdom of everlasting peace!

EDITORIAL—

The Nature of the Atonement Limited or General?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH AND THE ATONEMENT AS SATISFACTION

Also according to our (Belgic) Confession of Faith, the very nature of Christ's atonement consists in *satisfaction*, that is, the satisfaction of divine justice with respect to sin and the sinner. As might be expected, since the Confession of Faith follows a different order than that of our Heidelberg Catechism, there is not an elaborate treatment of this idea in the *Confessio Belgica*. Nevertheless, there are two key articles which mention the idea of satisfaction literally.

The first of these is Article XX, -- "That God hath manifested his justice and mercy in Christ." There we read:

We believe that God, who is perfectly merciful and just, sent his Son to assume that nature, in which the disobedience was committed, to make satisfaction in the same, and to bear the punishment of sin by his most bitter passion and death. God therefore manifested his justice against his Son, when he laid our iniquities upon him; and poured forth his mercy and goodness on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation, out of mere and perfect love, giving his Son unto death for us, and raising him for our justification, that through him we might obtain immortality and life eternal.

We may take note of the following elements in the above article: 1) That all the emphasis in this article is upon this key concept of satisfaction of God's justice, and that too, in connection with the manifestation of divine mercy. The way of the manifestation of God's mercy was the way of His justice; and the way of His justice was the way of satisfaction. 2) That in this article satisfaction is presented as the work of God Himself. God sent His Son to make satisfaction in our nature; and God "manifested his justice against his Son, when he laid our iniquities upon him." God, therefore, satisfied His own justice with respect to our sins. 3) That this article gives content to the concept *satisfaction*, in fact, virtually defines satisfaction, when it states that God sent His Son to make satisfaction in our nature, "and to bear the punishment of sin by his most bitter passion and death." Further, this satisfaction involved God's laying of our iniquities upon Christ. 4) That all this is presented as an accomplished fact: it was all accomplished nineteen hundred years ago. Then Christ bore the punishment of sin. Then God laid our iniquities upon Him. Then He "poured forth his mercy and goodness on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation." Hence, this satisfaction

means, if it means anything whatsoever, that if Christ bore the punishment of sin, those for whom He died have no punishment to bear. It means that if our iniquities were laid upon Him, we are free, so that they can nevermore be laid upon us. All those for whom Christ died were very really justified in His death and resurrection. Why? Because His death was the satisfaction for sin!

Such is the very *nature* of the atonement, according to this article.

The same note is sounded in Article XXI, -- "Of the satisfaction of Christ, our only High Priest, for us." Read this article, and you will discover the same basic elements as in Article XX.

We believe that Jesus Christ is ordained with an oath to be an everlasting High Priest, after the order of Melchisedec; and that he hath presented himself in our behalf before the Father, to appease his wrath by his full satisfaction, by offering himself on the tree of the cross, and pouring out his precious blood to purge away our sins; as the prophets had foretold. For it is written: He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and numbered with the transgressors, and condemned by Pontius Pilate as a malefactor, though he had first declared him innocent. Therefore: he restored that which he took not away, and suffered, the just for the unjust, as well in his body as in his soul, feeling the terrible punishment which our sins had merited: inasmuch that his sweat became like unto drops of blood falling on the ground. He called out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? and hath suffered all this for the remission of our sins. Wherefore we justly say with the apostle Paul: that we know nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; we count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, in whose wounds we find all manner of consolation. Neither is it necessary to seek or invent any other means of being reconciled to God, than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which believers are made perfect forever. This is also the reason why he was called by the angel of God, *Jesus*, that is to say, *Savior*, because he should save his people from their sins.

The language of this article is so very clear that further comment would be superfluous. Nevertheless, I cannot refrain from expressing wonderment that any Reformed man could even dream of making the atoning death of Christ general, that is, for all men. And

my wonderment is due to this very idea of *satisfaction*. If it is true that Christ's death means that satisfaction for sin is an accomplished fact, and it is true; and if it is true that Christ died for all and every man, and let us suppose this for the moment; then does it not follow before God and men that there is no punishment for sin left for any man? If this does not follow, then you must needs remove this element of satisfaction from the death of Christ. But then the death of Christ means absolutely nothing as far as atonement is concerned.

Indeed, satisfaction is the key to the whole nature of the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ!

SATISFACTION THE KEY ACCORDING TO THE CANONS

When we turn to the Second Head of Doctrine of the Canons of Dordrecht, it is clear from the outset that this concept of *satisfaction* was considered as crucial by our fathers. The Canons proceed from this key idea of satisfaction throughout. They do not literally make mention of other terms and ideas connected with the nature of the atonement, as we might perhaps expect them to do. Such terms as *vicarious*, *substitution*, and *limited* do not occur. Even a term like *atonement* is absent. But *satisfaction*, — that is the key! This may, at first glance, be rather unexpected and may seem quite out of place. But first impressions are in this case incorrect. Why did the fathers place all the emphasis upon this idea of satisfaction? Why did they not rather emphasize literally such notions as the *vicarious*, or the *limited* nature of the atonement? Was it because they did not believe in vicarious atonement? Was it because they did not believe that the atonement is in its very nature *limited*?

The very contrary is true.

It was just exactly because they believed that the atonement was in its very nature limited, and it was just exactly because they believed that this limited atonement was truly vicarious that they went to the very heart of the whole concept of Christ's atoning death: *satisfaction*. Remember, our fathers were fighting the very heresy that Christ died for all men and every man. It was the Arminians who claimed that it was possible and necessary in the preaching of the gospel to say to every man, "Christ died for you." This heresy our fathers opposed in Canons II. But they saw clearly that the only basis on which their opposition could be successful was on the basis of the satisfaction-concept. They saw clearly that if only men understood that the atonement and death of Christ were actually and objectively the satisfaction of God's justice, they could and would never maintain that the atonement was general, i.e., for all men. They saw clearly that if the Arminians wanted to maintain this satisfactory nature of the atonement, and, at the same time, wanted to maintain the general nature of the atonement, they would be inevitably driven to rank universalism, i.e., the doctrine that all men are actually saved. For once you grant that the atonement is satisfaction in its very nature, you must needs take

the position that one for whom satisfaction is made, one for whom Christ died, is surely saved.

This accounts for the solid emphasis upon the idea of satisfaction in our Canons. The whole Reformed, Scriptural concept of the atoning death of Christ stands or falls with that satisfaction-idea.

Let me add, in parentheses, that the Arminians saw this very clearly also. When they saw this, they tried to pour a different content into such concepts as the death of Christ and the atonement. Of course, they had to retain Scriptural terminology. They necessarily continued to speak of Christ's death and of the atonement. If they did not do this, they would immediately be recognized as heretics. But they had to rid the death of Christ and the atonement of this all-important satisfaction-idea. Some of these Arminian attempts are described and rejected in the Rejection of Errors of the Second Head of Doctrine. The famous Hugo De Groot invented the so-called governmental theory of the death of Christ. He emptied the death of Christ of this key element of satisfaction of justice and made of Christ's death a divine demonstration of what God could justly do to all men on account of their sins, a demonstration designed to make men acknowledge God's righteousness and to bring them to repentance. According to this theory, if only men will acknowledge the righteousness of God and repent, they will be saved. Actual removal of guilt and satisfaction of divine justice are not necessary. But no matter by what devious theories, the Arminians saw clearly that in order to maintain their view of a death of Christ for all men which did not actually result in the salvation of all, they were compelled to get rid of *satisfaction*. Today, perhaps, most Arminian preachers and evangelists are not very doctrinally and exegetically inclined. They speak rather generally of the death of Christ and of the atonement, and they probably never expound the nature of that death of Christ and of the atonement. Possibly they never make explicit any "theory" of the death of Christ. Nevertheless, they can never explain the atonement as meaning that Christ actually made satisfaction for the guilt of all men and every man and at the same time admit that all men are not saved. Hence, either explicitly or implicitly they deny the element of satisfaction in the nature of the atonement.

After this little digression into the history of the doctrine, let us return to the Canons.

In the very first article of Canons II this principle of atonement through satisfaction is laid down. It is presented as the only possible way of escape from temporal and eternal punishment in body and soul. It is grounded in the attribute of God's justice. And, as in the Heidelberg Catechism, it is anchored in the truth of God's simplicity, the truth that God's mercy and God's justice can never be in conflict, but are always in perfect harmony. Let the article speak for itself:

Article 1. God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And his justice requires (as he hath revealed himself in his Word), that our sins committed against his infinite majesty should be punished,

not only with temporal, but with eternal punishment, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

Sin, therefore, is guilt. It is debt. It is liability to divine punishment. And the punishment demanded by God's justice is temporal and eternal punishment in body and soul. Unless the satisfaction of divine justice is made, that is, unless this debt is paid, there is no possible escape from that punishment. By the same token, if once satisfaction is made, that is, if once the debt to divine justice is paid, then such satisfaction and payment of the debt can never again be demanded. *If satisfaction is made, then that debt is no more!*

Let us stop right here for a moment, and apply this truth.

The very *nature* of the atonement is *satisfaction*. Remember, it is this nature of the atonement which Dr. Daane is very concerned about. To say, therefore, that Christ died for all men is to say that He satisfied for all men. To say that He satisfied for all men is to say that there is no more debt for all men. And to say that there is no more debt for all men is to say that there is no more punishment for all men. They are all saved! General atonement....universal salvation; these two are inseparably connected. By the same token there can be but one basis, ground, for limited salvation, namely, limited atonement. UNLESS, God forbid, you want to deny that the atonement is in its very nature satisfaction!

(to be continued)

QUESTION BOX—

Nebuchadnezzar a Child of God?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

QUESTION

From the Men's Society of our Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church and its secretary, Gerald Kuiper, come the following question:

"In our discussion of the book of Daniel in our Men's Society we came to the problems of whether Nebuchadnezzar truly believed in his heart that God was above all, whether he really 'praised and extolled' God from his heart, and whether he was a child of God. The problem arose from the fact that verses 34-37 of Chapter 4 sound 'pretty good' to some of us, especially since there is nothing else said about Nebuchadnezzar, except Daniel 5:18-23.

"We request then, that you answer our question in *The Standard Bearer*..... The main question, of course, is whether Nebuchadnezzar was a child of God."

REPLY

For the reader's convenience, let me give the background of this question as well as the contents of the verses mentioned.

In Daniel 4 is recorded Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great tree that was hewn down so that only the stump of its roots were left in the earth. This dream is interpreted by Daniel with application to the king. The heart of that interpretation is in vss. 24-26: "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over

thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule." This prophecy was fulfilled upon the king, "and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." Then follows the passage which gave rise to the question under consideration: "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation; And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

The passage from Daniel 5 is in the context of the handwriting on the wall that came to Belshazzar at his drunken feast. Daniel here recounts the history of

Nebuchadnezzar's abasement in order to accuse Belshazzar of gross pride. No new information about Nebuchadnezzar is added in this passage. In fact, after Chapter 4 no more history of Nebuchadnezzar is given us in Daniel. Significant about the passage in Chapter 5, I think, is the fact that once more it is stated that this judgment came on Nebuchadnezzar "till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will."

I must confess that this question never occurred to me before, but that I simply took the position that Nebuchadnezzar was certainly not a child of God. In studying the question, I have not changed my opinion on that score, but have been strengthened in it. Evidently the question was occasioned by the amazing and clear and emphatic language of this "confession" of Nebuchadnezzar. This same language has caused some good commentators to disagree also, so that some take the position that Nebuchadnezzar was truly regenerated and converted. The men of Edgerton, therefore, may console themselves that they are not the first, and probably will not be the last, to wrestle with this question.

I would prefer to explain this very clear acknowledgement of Nebuchadnezzar from the fact that the Lord compelled the proud and wicked and (do not forget) antichristian king to acknowledge, in spite of himself, God's absolute sovereignty and dominion and the absolute sway of God's kingdom over the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, and, in fact, over all the kingdoms and inhabitants of the earth. In this connection, I present the following considerations:

1. Nebuchadnezzar personally was "the head of gold" in the dream-image of Daniel 2 which represents the antichristian world-power, which shall be broken in pieces by "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands." To me it is unthinkable that this antichristian "head of gold" was nevertheless a regenerated child of God.

2. Nebuchadnezzar made similar admissions on other occasions, after which it became plain that he was not a child of God. Cf. Daniel 2:47 and especially Daniel 3:28.

3. Such language comes from the mouth of wicked kings more frequently. Think of Pharaoh's admissions in Exodus 9:27, and Exodus 10:16, 17. Think, too, of the language of Cyrus's decree in Ezra 1. All such language does not imply faith and regeneration, but simply means that the wicked, to their own condemnation, must acknowledge that God is GOD.

4. Not only is there no personal confession of sin and of trust in the Lord in the king's acknowledgement, but one can still detect a good deal of "I" in the king's account. Moreover, there is absolutely no evidence that this "confession" was followed by a life of conversion. For example, would not a converted king have ended the captivity of God's people? And would he not have instituted radical reform in his own kingdom?

5. What took place in Nebuchadnezzar is quite consistent with the purpose twice stated by Daniel: "till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." In undeniable fashion the Lord had caused Nebuchadnezzar to know this; and in unmistakable language Nebuchadnezzar, though he hates God and opposes God's everlasting kingdom, must acknowledge this. Only then is his kingdom restored.

6. The result is: a) That the wicked, antichristian king stands condemned out of his own mouth. b) That God's persecuted people in the midst of an antichristian kingdom may take comfort from the fact that even the wicked world-power must acknowledge that the Most High, Who is their God, ruleth. c) That God is glorified not only in the salvation of His people but also in the judgment and condemnation of the antichristian power. Ultimately, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

SELF EXAMINATION

(Concluded)

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

The part of the communion form that we want to consider in this article is the concluding paragraph of the preparatory part of this form. From a practical point of view this paragraph is very significant. In the preceding section which dealt with the matter of self-examination we discovered, among other things, that

we are all dead in sin and deserving of the curse of God. Further, those who are defiled with many sins are enjoined upon the command of Christ and the apostle Paul to keep themselves from the table of the Lord. To them it is declared that they have no part in the kingdom of Christ. They are warned to abstain

from partaking of the heavenly meat and drink signified in the sacrament, lest their judgment and condemnation be made the heavier. These are hard but nevertheless absolute facts. The wicked and ungodly who are not brought to repentance have no place in the communion of Christ. As long as they continue in their sins, they are and must be excluded from the table of the Lord.

From these facts an altogether erroneous conclusion can very easily be drawn. A child of God who very seriously examines himself comes to the sound conclusion that he is sinful, very sinful, and deserving only of God's wrath. He is also deeply conscious of the sanctity of the Holy Supper, and when he puts these two together he comes to the conclusion that the Supper is not for him, a miserable, wretched and curse-deserving sinner. In some circles where ignorance of the truth prevails, this notion is rather common and those who hold to it even consider it to be rather virtuous. It supposedly reflects a deeper sense of humility. God must certainly be very pleased with those who so forthrightly confess their total unworthiness and who are so serious in the acknowledgment of His absolute holiness. But this same idea is not uncommonly found in the minds of young people in the church, when they are confronted with the matter of making confession of faith. On the one hand they experience a desire to do so, but then they begin to look at themselves, and they discover how sinful they are and how little they know of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, and they come to the conclusion that they better wait. They must learn more first and they must improve themselves before they are ready to confess Christ.

For several reasons this idea must be condemned. In the first place, a careful analysis of it will unveil the fact that it is not rooted in a consciousness of humility at all, but has its origin in the sinful pride of our old nature. It is based on the false supposition that we must or can so improve ourselves as to make ourselves presentable to God, and it denies the truth that this can be and is done only by the free and sovereign grace of God. It is the works-notion applied to salvation which excludes grace, for "if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." (Romans 11:6) It stems from the sinful boast that we are able to do the work of Christ, and it denies the complete adequacy of His work for us and in us. In the second place, if this notion is consistently followed to its logical end, it leads to the certain conclusion that no one can partake of the Lord's Supper. If we must wait until we have reached a state of sinlessness, we will not find it on this side of the grave, but will have to wait until we can celebrate Communion in heavenly perfection. This is directly contrary to the command of Christ Who ordered His church in the present world where sin still adheres to all its members to: "Do this till I come!" Christ did not tell His church to celebrate the Holy Supper only after she has reached perfection. Neither did He single out a few select members of the church and give to them the sacraments, but He told His church to: "Do this in remembrance of Me!" In the

third place, this erroneous idea fosters a vain and superficial conception of righteousness and holiness and leads to the altogether wrong practice where the *self-righteous* rather than the truly righteous gather about the table. Righteousness is determined according to a standard of *man* instead of by the criterion which God has established. And it need not be said that such righteousness is no righteousness at all but, as the Scriptures declare, it is as "filthy rags". Jesus declares that publicans and harlots enter the kingdom before the self-righteous Pharisees. The former have more place at the table of the Lord than the latter. Christ did not come to call the "righteous" but sinners to repentance, and this call of Christ is also applicable to His Table. It is not prepared for those who in themselves profess to be without sin, but it is for those who in themselves confess to be sinners.

Finally, although this view therefore is to be rejected, we must warn against a possible wrong conclusion which some might infer from this rejection. It might be reasoned that the table of the Lord is then opened to all sinners and therefore it does not matter how much we sin, and as long as we acknowledge we are sinners we can come to the table. We thereby attempt to justify our continuance in things which we know are not pleasing to God. We neglect our duties in the church or we violate our sacred vows or we continue to follow certain pleasures of the flesh in the world, and when it comes time to celebrate communion we make light of these things by telling ourselves and God that we are not yet perfect. We must know that such an attitude is of the evil one and to follow it is to invoke God's holy displeasure. We must remember that the table of the Lord is not prepared for sinners who want to justify and continue in their sin but for those sinners alone who are penitent, who hate sin and seek with all they are to flee from it.

With this in mind we can understand that the prohibitions and warnings of our Communion Form are given *not* to discourage and deject the contrite hearts of the faithful, but to encourage the faithful saints to reject all other ways and to come to the table of the Lord in the way of faith only.

In this light we would have our readers carefully consider the following paragraph of the Communion Form, which Dr. B. Wielenga in *Ons Avondmaals Formulier* says is a beautiful piece of liturgy that is replete with *the gospel*.

"But this is not designed (dearly beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord), to deject the contrite hearts of the faithful, as if none might come to the supper of the Lord, but those who are without sin; for we do not come to this supper, to testify thereby that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves; but on the contrary, considering that we seek our life out of ourselves in Jesus Christ, we acknowledge that we lie in the midst of death; therefore, notwithstanding we feel many infirmities and miseries in ourselves, as namely, that we have not perfect faith, and that we do not give ourselves to serve God with that zeal as we are bound, but have daily to strive with the weakness of our faith, and the evil lusts of our flesh; yet, since we are (by the

grace of the Holy Spirit) sorry for these weaknesses, and earnestly desirous to fight against our unbelief, and to live according to all the commandments of God; therefore we rest assured that no sin or infirmity, which still remaineth against our will, in us, can hinder us from being received of God in mercy, and from being made worthy partakers of this heavenly meat and drink."

The blessed gospel contained in this part of our liturgy consists of the unspeakable promise that God in mercy receives sinners and makes them worthy partakers of heavenly meat and drink. He gives to them eternal life through Jesus Christ, and He works in them this life by the grace of the Holy Ghost. The above quotation lucidly presents the particular and unconditional character of this promise of God, and this may indeed be emphasized, but our purpose is not to do so now. Our attention must be focused upon the *recipients* of this promise of God, since this part of the Communion Form still deals with the matter of self-examination. If we, through self-examination, find ourselves answering to the description of the recipients of the promise which is given here, we need not be dejected but we may then come to His Table with confidence.

We note concerning these children of faith that they are "contrite in heart". A broken heart and contrite spirit delights the Lord. They do not claim to be perfect or righteous in themselves, but they do profess to be perfectly righteous in Christ Jesus. In Him they are sinless, and yet they readily acknowledge that sin very much adheres to them. Their life they seek out of Christ and with the apostle Paul confess: "It is no longer I that liveth but Christ that liveth in me." These saints are not dead, but they do lie in the midst of death. In that sphere of death where they consciously sojourn they are aware of the "infirmities of the flesh" and are not oblivious of the "miseries within themselves". The knowledge of sin and misery is very much their experience. Weary and heavy laden they are as they struggle through the present vale of tears and labor for the rest that remains for the people of God. Particularly disturbing to the faithful saints

is the fact that faith is not yet perfect in them, and consequently they find themselves failing to give themselves to serve God with the fervor and zeal they ought. Toward this they do not assume an attitude of indifference, excusing it because we cannot be perfect anyway, but it is the cause of a constant, deep-felt sorrow. The things they would (in their regenerated hearts) they do not and the things they hate (as being in Christ) they do. The sinful desires of the flesh, disobedience and unbelief, are ever present, and these cause an experience of wretchedness and grief. They earnestly desire to fight against and overcome these foes, and they long sincerely to live according to all the commandments of God. The will of God which is reflected in His law and in the precepts of the gospel is their chief delight. In them the battle of faith is fought with the flesh warring against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.

Are these then the characteristics of your daily experience? Is this typical of the kind of life you know? If so you may come to the table of the Lord in the assurance that God will receive you and feed you with the heavenly meat and drink, because these very things give evidence that God has begun a good work in you which He will perform until the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6) He has given to you the privilege of not only believing in His Son but also of suffering for righteousness' sake. He will strengthen you through the means of His Table, so that you can and will continue the struggle against sin, until you will receive the complete and final victory. In that battle you will never relent, and no matter how mighty the forces of evil may appear or how difficult the way may become, you will press on in His strength toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And you will never be ashamed, for the hope that is in you cannot be made ashamed. Into His everlasting communion He will receive you and you will confess: "All the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared...." — not worthy to be compared.

IN HIS FEAR—

A Case of Heart Failure

by Rev. J. A. Heys

Scripture speaks of heart failure.

Asaph, the psalmist, cries out in Psalm 73:26, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." And that there is an increase in the number of heart failures today in the sense of heart attacks, no one would care to deny.

Even the age at which such attacks occur seems to be pushed consistently downward. The medical world is seeking to explain why and to prevent them from taking place. Of course, each time one dies — regardless of the immediate cause — it is a case of heart failure. The very first sign of death, for which men both

skilled and unskilled look to determine that death has taken place, is the failure of the heart to beat with life's blood.

So it is. Heart failure signifies death. When that heart fails all of man's organs fail. He cannot breathe any more after his heart fails to do its work. His digestive processes stop. His brain and nervous system fail to function. His knees buckle under him as his muscles fail to support him. And the body returns to the dust from whence it came. The heart is a very important organ in man's body. All the other organs depend upon it and none can get along without it. We have no spare for it. It can take but a very momentary rest between each beat. A vacation of that heart, a moment of idleness so that it is not there on the beat, and we begin to suffer at once. Heart failure is failure of the whole man. And it would stand to reason that man would then be very careful of that heart. Were it on the outside where he could watch it and examine it regularly, he would look for signs of wear and of possible injury. Even then, at the first sign of a pain in the chest that takes away his breath, man rushes to the doctor, and the doctor quickly arranges for an electrocardiogram and puts the patient at complete rest, if a measure of failure is then determined. To try to prevent complete failure, the heart is relieved of as much work as possible. And therefore oxygen may even be supplied to take the strain off that heart.

And what of heart failure in the church?

You say that churches do not suffer heart failure? Well, if you are thinking of The Church, the body of Christ, it is true. This Church never has a heart failure and has everlasting life. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" are the words of Jesus to Martha at the occasion of the physical heart failure of her brother, Lazarus. Triumphant that Church sings:

For this is His word: His saints shall not fail,
But over the earth Their pow'r shall prevail;
All kingdoms and nations Shall yield to their sway.
To God give the glory And praise Him for aye.

In His fear, believing that Word of God, man has no fear that the cause of Christ shall ever fail. With the eye of faith upon Him Who is enthroned in the highest heavens, having complete control over all creatures in heaven, on the earth and even in hell, knowing and believing that He is the Great Spiritual Physician and the Merciful High Priest of His people, the God-fearing pilgrim here below has no fear that Satan, the Anti-christ and the whole host of ungodly together can possibly bring heart failure to The Church.

One would expect in that church-world extreme care, however, for the heart of The Church. One would expect the membership of that Church to be alarmed at any signs that there might be something wrong with the heart. At least one would expect that believers everywhere would attach to the heart of that Church extremely great importance and would appreciate and treasure that heart with its work to the very utmost—even as they do with their own physical hearts.

But that is not true. O, indeed, according to that new principle of life, of which John speaks in I John

3:9, according to which the new man in Christ does not and cannot sin, the believer is concerned and rejoices in God's work and trusts Him completely to bring His Church through all trials and tribulations into everlasting blessedness in the kingdom to come. But because of the flesh that still cleaves to all of us, it may be observed today that respect, love and even interest in the condition of the heart of the Church is so lacking. Yea, according to the flesh men are not even concerned when attempts are made to stab that heart unto failure! Men are ready to cut it out, to destroy it, *to deny it even belongs in the Church!*

We are, of course, speaking of that which our Church Fathers always called the heart of the church: *Sovereign and eternal election*. Indeed, already some are perhaps disappointed. Election! Who wants to hear about that in this day and age? To many that doctrine has been outmoded and been discarded a long time ago. This is the age of God's love. This is the age of the gospel, and election curbs the joy of that gospel. Election makes the mission field impossible. Election gives an entirely wrong impression of the great and glorious God of love of which the Scripture speaks. Thus men talk today. They want nothing of that heart of the church and would give her an heart that is sure to fail. After all, you just cannot do that. No one can transplant a heart. Mechanical hearts have been devised and used to take over temporarily while the heart itself was repaired, but even then, the mechanical heart is a mute testimony of the fact that without a heart man cannot live. And the Church cannot live without the heart which is election.

That may be and will be disputed. The reason for this is that men do not know anymore what that Church actually is. Men do not turn to the Word of God and in His fear listen to what God has to say about that heart but instead approach with preconceived ideas and philosophize about her. They speak and write of *their* church, of man's church and want nothing of God's Church. Quite general is the idea that the church is the society or a society for saving souls. That language is not borrowed from Holy Writ, even though all the true members in that church are saved souls. The purpose of the Church is not man and his salvation but God and His glory. The Church does not have on her somewhere a sign, "Made in the U.S.A." nor "For the Salvation of Souls". She *does* have on her the sign of "Chosen from before the Foundation of the World". She does have, as Paul writes to Timothy, have this on her cornerstone, "The Lord knoweth them that are His" and, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."

There also you have the purpose of that Church, and it is: *Soli Deo Gloria*—To God Alone Be Glory! And note again the text above from I Peter 2:9, the purpose is that we show forth the praises of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. How shall we and can we praise Him, if the all-important and crucial part of that call depended on our choice and not His? Why should we not have something

whereof to boast and wherein He is obligated to us? O, He called, but what if we had not answered, or rather had said to Him, "No, thank you."? If we in time determined the constituency of His Church, would it be His Church or ours? And would there be any church at all? If we take that heart away, can WE replace it with one of our own making? Consider that if *His eternal and unchangeable* choice has not determined the membership of His Church, then *ours* does *in time*. And then He will have to be satisfied with what we do and accept the kind of church that we would be willing to make. In His fear we would never dare to talk that way. Many others do not either. When their "offers" of salvation to all, the love of God for all men with a sincere desire to save every last one of them, and their condition promises which depend upon man's act of faith are shown to mean exactly that, they reject the consequences of their teachings and yet boldly go on and teach the heart out of the Church. They continue to look at the Church as though she were a society for saving souls rather than a glorious manifestation of the God of our salvation in all His sovereign grace and inscrutable wisdom. God saves His elect and makes them living members of His Church. The Church, as a living organism, brings forth the children of the Church. But the one and sole purpose of the Church is the glory of her Maker. In that powerful -- and therefore generally glossed-over and avoided -- passage of election in Ephesians 1:3-6 we read very specifically, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him. In love have predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

We are predestinated or elected unto the adoption. We have been chosen that we should be holy and without blame before Him. The goal of our election is salvation in all its richness. All the physical and spiritual blessedness of verse 3 is comprehended in the adoption and the sanctification and justification of being made holy and without blame before God. But that is not the same as to state that the Church is a or even the Society for Saving Souls. The purpose of the Church and the deepest goal of election is expressed in the text in the statements that we are made to be holy and without blame *before Him*; He predestinated

us in Christ *to Himself* and to the praise of the glory of *His grace*. The Church exists and was elected from eternity that ALL the praise and all the glory may be God's. Yea, the statement means that the glory of the grace of God must shine forth. Therefore there must be a Church. And that Church comes into being and exists in such a way that there is NONE of our work that enters into its cause or existence. Not even our will, and certainly not the decisive choice of which all Arminianism speaks, must be the reason why the Church has come into being or that any single member is in that Church. It must not in any sense and to any degree be to the praise of man. It must not and will not shine with any of the glory of man's works but only of God's grace. Therefore, although the benefits of the Church are salvation, the adoption, everlasting life, righteousness and holiness, the Church is not a society for realizing this blessedness. It is not even a society for transmitting this blessedness to coming generations. God does that through the Church, but there must not be a church in order to give God this opportunity. The Church exists because He decreed from before the foundation of the world to manifest the glory of His own grace.

That Church, then, has a calling to preach the gospel. Through that preaching God will save souls and those who are thus used may say with James, "Let him know, that he that converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins", James 5:20. But then he will preach the gospel and not a perversion of that gospel. He will preach the good news that God has chosen us from before the foundation of the world and that our future glory does not rest on such flimsy and even hopeless grounds as our possible decision to take it. The Church is not a society for saving souls but the Organism of Saved Souls Chosen Thereto from all Eternity.

She is not a society -- and we will have to continue with that next time -- and her calling is to be to the praise of the glory of God's grace. She must, therefore also preach damnation and approach the unregenerated with the awful truth of His just wrath and intense hatred of sin. In fact the love of God and His grace can only be shown on that background. There is also a praise of the glory of God's wrath. In His fear we will not ignore it but preach it with the undeniable doctrine of eternal and sovereign reprobation.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Classis West will reconvene, in continued session, on Wednesday, January 12, 1966, at 9:00 A.M., in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois. Delegates are to write the clerk of the South Holland consistory for lodging.

Rev. David J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

ANNOUNCEMENT

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, Wednesday, January 5, 1966, 9:00 A.M., at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. Consistories will consider this an official announcement in the appointment of their delegates.

M. Schipper, Stated Clerk

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

Saul Selected To Be King

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people.

I Samuel 9:17

God has a way of giving to his people exactly what they desire, and quite frequently it does not turn out as wonderfully as they had expected. This was what happened to Israel in the days of Samuel.

Israel wanted a king and asked of Samuel that God provide one. This in itself was not so very wrong, for already through Moses such a king had been promised. The thing is that they did not want a king to lead them in the service of God, they did not want a king who would be to them a spiritual leader; what they wanted was a king like the other nations about them, a king that would establish them before the world. And so that was exactly what they got.

Neither was it that God did not warn them. He told Samuel to set before the people exactly what kind of a king it was that they were asking for and exactly what kind of a king they would get if their request was granted. It was not a pleasant picture, the picture of a tyrant who would misuse them all down the line. But to the people it made no difference. So often people say when evil comes upon them, "If only we had known that this would happen." But here, as so frequently in Scripture, we are shown that once people have their hearts set upon sin, they will not turn back no matter how clearly they are warned of the results that it will gender. Israel's only answer to Samuel was, "Nay; but we will have a king over us."

So it was that God selected a king to rule over Israel, exactly the kind of king that Israel wanted.

Neither was it as though the Lord spitefully gave to them an evil and perverse man to be their king, a man of tyrannical nature or one of such inferior abilities that he could not possibly have ruled the nation aright. No, God's choice as king for Israel was an excellent young man of admirable quality, he had every characteristic that the people themselves would have required. He was a handsome man with fine features, a tall stature and a powerful body; he was a courageous man with a strong loyalty to his people and country, ever ready to go forth into battle; he was a man of kind disposition who could become very concerned about the needs and hardships of the people; he was an intelligent man with wisdom and discretion; he

was of good family and background raised in the traditions of Israel and himself always careful to live according to them; he was a modest man without inclination to force himself upon others; he was an Israelite among Israelites, ideal in every respect. There was only one thing he lacked, and that was what the children of Israel wanted too, he was not sensitive and alive to the Word of God; and in the end, it was that which made the difference.

The story of Saul begins with a rather homely incident which nonetheless serves to bring out some of his more desirable characteristics. Saul's father, a fairly wealthy man it seems, of some reputation and influence, had lost some asses. When thereupon he called Saul to him and commanded him to take a servant and undertake the none too desirable task of trying to find the asses, Saul complies without a complaint. Even more in this search, he proved himself to be thorough, going systematically from place to place pursuing his task; he proved himself to be a man of perseverance as he refused to become discouraged even after a rather lengthy search; he proved himself to be a congenial companion to the servant rather than an overbearing master, and he proved himself to be considerate in his final concern for the worries of his father. There was nothing crude or rude about Saul; he was in every respect a man of appealing personality.

It was not until Saul and his servant were approaching a city in which Samuel was living at the time that a rather disturbing feature began to show itself, and then it seems to have been so small that we are hardly apt to notice it.

It came about when, after an extensive and unsuccessful search, Saul said to the servant, "Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us."

This reasoning the servant surely understood. It was just that he, as Saul himself, was not one that liked to return from a task that was not successfully completed. Thus it was that in one last desperate effort he answered Saul, "Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go

thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go." This was indeed a strange suggestion. The servant seemed to think that, because Samuel was a prophet, they could go to him and ask him about something as mundane as whether they should continue to look for the asses, and where to look, and Samuel would tell them. It was the voice of ignorance. Samuel surely did not spend his time and use his prophetic powers merely to tell people how to go about finding lost possessions and the like. The servant had very likely heard from someone that the prophet could predict the future with accuracy and saw no reason why they shouldn't be able to turn that power of his to their own advantage.

But it is not the naivete of the servant that bothers; it is the answer of Saul. He does not reprove the man; he apparently did not even find the idea shocking, although it may not be that he took it very seriously either. Possibly just to humor the servant, he answered him, "But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?" Saul very evidently knew nothing at all about Samuel either as to what he actually did or for what considerations he did them. It is this complete ignorance on the part of Saul which we find so difficult to understand.

We may be sure that the ignorance of Saul was not due to the limitations of Samuel's circle of activity and influence. There were those judges who labored in only a certain part of Israel and whose reputation did not spread much beyond. But Samuel was not one of these. Samuel was the last and the greatest of the judges. From his youth he was also a prophet and the recipient of special revelations. This was very generally known. Besides, particularly after the death of Eli, he was the consultant of the leaders of the whole nation. The whole spiritual life of the nation pivoted in a very real way upon him.

Here was exactly the trouble, however; Saul was not really a part of Israel's spiritual life. He was part of the nation to be sure, a choice specimen of its young men, but from a secular, not from a spiritual point of view. Here was one of the sad results of the history of the judges. Through it there developed a class of people in Israel who had no real spiritual feelings: spiritually they were dead. They were Israelites to be sure. From a political point of view they were very good Israelites with consideration for and loyalty to their nation. They were often nice people and made good neighbors. In fact, they would often take part in the religious ceremonies as a valid part of the tradition of their nation. The only thing was that God really meant nothing to them. They felt no need of Him. They gave Him no worship. They really didn't even bother to know about Him. It was to this group that Saul belonged.

Thus it was that when Saul's servant suggested to Saul that they consult with Samuel on their problem, he caught Saul completely unprepared. Although he no doubt knew of Samuel's existence, he knew next to

nothing about him. It was not as though he had any objections against going to Samuel. If they could get something useful out of him, it would be worth while; and if not, it would be an interesting diversion after so many days of futile hunting through the wild. The only thing he felt was that as a matter of decency, if they were going to ask the services of the prophet, they had better be ready to give some small gift in return. And the few small coins the servant happened to have with him were enough. Good-humoredly Saul went along to meet this strange prophet.

What Saul did not realize was that Samuel was already awaiting his coming. The people had asked for a king that they might be like the other nations; and a king like the other nations God would give them, a king without feeling for God. Not that God would give them a man who was poor, bungling and inept. No, God would give them the choice, the finest of Israel's purely secular men. Saul was that man. God in His providence was guiding Saul's feet; and He had warned Samuel the day before that Saul was coming. Samuel had prepared a feast with which to welcome him, and thirty witnesses were there to observe that Saul had been with Samuel even if they did not recognize the importance of it yet.

There was a reason why God wanted Saul to meet with Samuel well before he was actually selected and pointed out to the people generally. That reason was deep within the nature of Saul himself. Because Saul was a purely secular man at heart, he would always be inclined to ascribe whatever happened to him to mere natural considerations. If God had waited until the public drawing of lots to let Saul know that he was to be king, Saul would have been the first to ascribe it to mere chance or good fortune. In fact, as time went on he would be unable to resist the temptation to consider it to be due to some personal excellence on his own part. Thus before it came to pass, God would make it perfectly clear to Saul that there was only one real reason why he received the royal office — it was appointed to him by God. God would give him every reason to know that he should be thankful to God for everything he received and obedient as unto a benefactor.

When, therefore, Saul entered the gates of that city, God was there waiting for him. Casually he asked some young girls who were drawing water where they could find the prophet; and, when they lifted their eyes and looked around, Samuel was already there walking toward Saul. All the girls had to do was to identify him. To the heart of Samuel meanwhile, God said, "Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people." Even Samuel did not realize yet that God was preparing one of the most remarkable confrontations of His own greatness over against unbelief. Saul represented the very best of the secular world, the finest that it could put forth. God did nothing to discourage him. In fact, God gave to Saul every possible reason to do only that which was right. But one thing Saul lacked — that was the grace of God in his heart. Without it, in spite of his earthly qualifications, he could only be the tyrannical man of wickedness which Samuel had predicted.

FROM HOLY WRIT—

Stephen's Apology Before the Sanhedrin

by Rev. G. Lubbers

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN THE TENT OF THE TESTIMONY

The issue before the court of the Sanhedrin, or, at least, before this meeting here in Jerusalem was that Moses is alleged to have spoken against this place. It is stated that Stephen taught that this Jesus of Nazareth had come to break down the temple here in Jerusalem, and that now the ceremonial ordinances of the temple and the temple-worship would no longer need to be enforced.

Stephen does not deny the charge. Instead he proceeds to show them from the Old Testament Scriptures that such was indeed the intent of the law; that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, the Jew first and also the Greek. This is according to the promise to Abraham "in thee and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed". (Galatians 3:8; Genesis 18:18) And the Scriptures cannot be broken! Stephen will wield the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

For a correct viewpoint of seeing the meaning and purpose of the Old Testament temple at Jerusalem it is of the utmost importance to remember that the temple was built upon *a man's* request, while the tent of the testimony was made upon *God's instructions* and *command*. Moses was not instructed to make a "building" but he must make a "tent". It was David who desired to make to the Lord a temple. After David is established in Jerusalem as king it came into his mind to build the Lord an house. It hurt David that he himself was living in a house made of cedar, while the Lord's Ark and presence was in a tent at Jerusalem. Even so, not David but Solomon built the temple unto the Lord. Now if a temple, a building were so very important certainly the Lord would not have "tabernacled" in the midst of Israel for more than four hundred and fifty years. Such was the history of the temple that it came really a half millenium after the Lord had given instructions to Moses to build the tabernacle. Let it not be forgotten that when David would build the Lord a house, the Lord sent His servant Nathan to David with the words "Thus saith the Lord, shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in

any house since the day that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?"

The house of cedar was really not important.

It could not really enhance the dwelling of God with Israel.

Besides it is a fact of history that the temple of Solomon was built about the year 1009 B.C. and was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 588 B.C. Only half of the time from Sinai to the destruction of the temple was there a building. In 588 B.C. the temple was utterly destroyed, even the Ark of the Covenant. The foundation of the temple of Zerubbabel was laid in 538 B.C. In 19 B.C. Herod rebuilds the temple which was standing in Jerusalem at the time of Christ and Stephen, and which temple was destroyed in the year 70 A.D. Now if a building were so important, why did the Lord not initially instruct Moses to build such a temple upon entering the land? And why did he tell David that it was not important? And why did he allow the temple to be destroyed by the Babylonians? And why was a smaller and lest magnificent temple built by the returning remnant after the captivity? And why, as a matter of history, did God have the temple utterly destroyed at the time of the final destruction of Jerusalem, never to be rebuilt?

In the light of all this can the temple, and this place be important?

That is the issue before the court!

It was indeed important. It was important as a "type". It was a picture of the heavenly. Moses was told to make it thus by the God of glory who had appeared to Abraham some four hundred years before this. Moses had ascended the Mount of God, Sinai, a mountain in Arabia. (Exodus 24:15-18) Here too he enters into the glory of the law-giving. We read "And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount of God forty days and forty nights." And here it was that the Lord

give directions to Moses concerning the building of the tabernacle by his angel. And after having given specific instructions to Moses concerning the minute details of the tabernacle, its furnishings, and its architecture, he says to Moses "And look that thou make them after the pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." Exodus 25:40

The pattern of the heavenly was the important matter.

This is clearly taught in Hebrews 8:5, where we read "Who *serve* unto the *example* and *shadow* of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle." Here the writer of Hebrews proves this point by quoting Exodus 25:40 "See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount."

Since this heavenly is the real tabernacle, and the earthly is but a mere type and not the reality itself, therefore "this place and temple" are to be removed by the Lord when the time of Reformation came in Christ. Says Jesus: break down this temple and I will rebuild it in three days.

Even Isaiah had spoken of this fact, seeing it from afar. When Jerusalem shall be on the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow to it; when Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem -- then shall it become evident that the "temple" is not the end in itself, but rather served as a type. Wherefore John says in the Apocalypse "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

David may build a temple of cedar to the Lord as executed by Solomon. This temple is no nearer to a fit abode for the Lord God Almighty than is the tent of the testimony. For the heaven of heavens cannot contain God. (I Kings 8:27; II Chronicles 2:6; 6:18). If the heaven of heavens cannot contain God, how much less the beautiful temple which Solomon built. That is at once also the reason why the Lord never told any of the tribes of Israel from Moses to David to build him an house of cedar. Such a house simply is not fitting, as such, for the Lord as a dwelling-place. Wherefore Isaiah says "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord; or what is the place for my rest?" Yes, Solomon built a temple, but that surely must be broken down when the reality comes, and this house is left an utter desolation!

What an apology on the part of Stephen!

It is the stringent proof from the Word of God itself.

The Lord of glory speaks through Stephen.

THE ARGUMENT THAT IDOL-WORSHIPERS SEEK TEMPLES MADE WITH HANDS Acts 7:39-43

That there ever was an Israel in name, but not in spirit, which did not desire the glory of God in the law-giving, as it points to the greater glory to come, is also shown by Stephen here before the Jewish Counsel. Wherefore whosoever does not desire to see the "type" of the temple, but clings to the temple itself, as a building made by the hands of men, must needs end in stark and hopeless idolatry of heathendom. Such was indeed the history of the temple, the constant ten-

sion and warfare between those who wanted the temple services according to the ordinances of Moses, and those who defiled the holy place with their idolatries. Here is signalled the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat who causes Israel to sin. Some eighty times Jeroboam is mentioned in Scripture, and always in connection with the sin of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. And the deportation both to Assyria of the ten tribes and to Babylon of the tribe of Judah is on the basis of this sin of Jeroboam, which was the root sin, the sin of departure from the service of God, the breaking of the Covenant as portrayed in the tent of the testimony: I am thy God!

Idolatry made of the temple, the tabernacle of the testimony, a mere shrine! Such a shrine could just as well stand at Dan and Bethel. It was not a picture of the heavenly. Thus also in the time of Jesus the temple had really become a den of thieves and robbers, it was a mere shrine to which pilgrimages could be made, while it had ceased to beckon their thoughts heavenward to the better and abiding tabernacle and promises.

It is one downward running tradition from bad to worse which leads from the making of the golden calf at the foot of Sinai. It is ever the heart which does not desire to be delivered from sin by Jehovah God, which hankers to return to Egypt. The form of the idols may change with the times and seasons; the essence of this idolatry is ever stubbornness and rebellion. Thus spake Samuel to Saul when he says "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry".

It was a resisting of the Holy Ghost!

It was a resisting of the Holy Ghost as He spoke through the shadows and types of better things to come. And to destroy the evidence of the Holy Ghost who spoke in the temple, the temple must be changed into a mere shrine of heathendom. That the Holy Spirit testified in the temple we see in Hebrews 9:8 "the Holy Ghost this signifying that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing". This testimony of the Holy Ghost must be stilled; yea, the Word of God must not be heard, the word of the gospel as portrayed in the temple!

That is the identical thing which these Hellenists and the Sanhedrin are doing here when calling Stephen to account. They prove themselves to be children of their fathers. Howbeit, not children of the believing fathers but of those who were carried away in captivity and into Babylon. They are those who desire to have the temple without the glory of grace. They will have a mere shrine. Essentially they bow down in the temple of those who worship the stars of heaven. They bow down in the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of the god Remphan, figures which they made to worship them!

Such is the line of departure from God's covenant.

From the golden calf at Sinai to the god Remphan, such is the line of degradation.

Such were ever the stiffnecked and uncircumcized of heart.

Such are these Sanhedrists according to Stephen!

SPECIAL REPORT—

RALLY REFLECTIONS

by Rev. M. Schipper

Concerning the Reformation Rally, held October 27, 1965, in the Civic Auditorium of Grand Rapids, Michigan, the Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has asked us to write a brief article and place it in *The Standard Bearer*. It is especially written for the information of those who were not privileged to attend this outstanding event.

It was, indeed, an outstanding event because never before in the history of our churches has an attempt been made on such a large scale to reach those outside of our churches with our peculiar truths as we were privileged to do on this occasion.

But let me begin at the beginning to narrate some of the facts which brought about and helped to realize this rally. One of the members of our churches, whose heart is filled with the love of the truth, wrote to me, suggesting that such a rally be held; and he even suggested that it be held in the auditorium we used. Because the idea was novel, and so different from anything we had ever done as churches, it did not register so deeply at first. However, the thought began to germinate, and more and more we conceived of the possibility of going through with the idea. We conferred with another of our Mission Committee members, who also got carried away with the idea the more he thought about it. We then brought the matter to the attention of the Mission Committee, which, when the plan was laid before it, did not hesitate a moment to act upon it. A committee of three was appointed to act as a steering committee; and we were given full power to proceed to lay the ground-work and plans which would be laid before a broad committee, which would be organized from representatives of each of the consistories in Western Michigan, plus a few individuals who were adept in the art of advertising, formation of a massed choir, etc. Also in this broad committee were representatives of the R.F.P.A., Young People's Federation, the Radio Committee of the Reformed Witness Hour.

We shall never forget the wonderful response shown in that first meeting of the broad committee. There our steering committee was prepared to give them the broad outlines of all that had to be done. And I might add, there was much to be done! No one, unless he is involved in a project of this kind, can realize all the details involved in the preparation of a program we

planned to put on. But, as we said, each member of this broad committee responded admirably to the challenge. And may I add, none ever worked more industriously and efficiently than they did!

Letters were prepared and printed and distributed to all the congregations involved, acquainting all our membership of what we planned to do, and pleading for their cooperation. A little later invitations were printed which were handed out to the various congregations to be distributed again to friends, relatives, and neighbors of our constituency, inviting them to our program. Bill boards, newspaper advertising, and radio spot announcements were used to acquaint the public.

But no one really knew until the evening of the program what the results would be of all our preparations.

Then the time arrived when all was in readiness. Tables were set and placed in the lobby of the huge auditorium, laden with samples of all our literature, which those visiting our program were invited to take with them free of charge. A massed choir of about 120 voices began to assemble behind the curtain on the huge stage. Over 40 of our young people, plus a few deacons, helped to distribute printed programs and usher the people into their seats. And after our organist, Mrs. Fran Lubbers, played the prelude, "A Mighty Fortress," the curtain on the platform opened and under the bright lights over the stage appeared our choir, uniformly dressed for the occasion.

By this time, we confess, there was a bushel of feathers in our stomach, which registered the nervous tension that had been slowly building up with the eager anticipation we had, to know how large an audience would make its appearance in response to our invitation. Our hearts were filled with joy and thanksgiving when we marched toward the podium to preside over the program, when we cast a glance over a sea of humanity that sat before us.

"Sons and daughters of the Reformation! Brothers and Sisters in Christ!" So we began the program by addressing our audience of approximately 2100 people.

"It is a privilege to welcome you this evening to share with us in the commemoration of the Protestant Reformation of the early 16th century.

"Next Sunday, October 31st, it will be exactly 448 years ago that Martin Luther nailed his protest on the

chapel door of Wittenberg, which served as the spark which lit the fire of the Reformation that is still burning.

"We believe that it is incumbent upon us, who, by the grace of God, have received such a rich heritage from our Reformed Fathers, not only to review that treasure with thanksgiving before the face of God, but also by that same grace to renew our purpose to preserve, to develop, and to propagate the principles that Reformation evinced!

"It shall be, therefore, the burden of this program to accomplish exactly that! In one word, it is our hope and prayer that not only our own Protestant Reformed people, but also you who are our guests this evening, will be so impressed by that which you will see and hear, that you will go home presently with the firm resolve in your hearts that the fire of the Reformation shall go right on burning, until the day when the Sun of Righteousness shall appear in His eternal glory!"

Such was literally our introduction, after which we then read the Scriptures of Ephesians 2, and led the audience in prayer, beseeching the throne of grace for God's indispensable blessing upon our program.

Then followed three selections by the massed choir, under the very able direction of Mr. Roland Petersen, with Mrs. Lubbers accompanying at the organ. It was a masterful rendition! I cannot really convey to you my personal feeling as I listened to these musical offerings. Let me just say, I have never heard anything better. The choir sang: "O Holy Jesus," by Johann Cruger; "Surely He Hath Borne Our Grievs," by Carl Heinrich Graun; and "Father, Long Before Creation," Chinese Anonymous. The last number was most beautiful! The words could easily have been written by a Protestant Reformed author, for they expressed truths which are pronounced among us. I watched the audience while the choir sang. What attention! What surprise was written on their faces! That singing was superb!

We then introduced the speaker of the evening: Professor H. C. Hoeksema. The introduction went something like this:

"Our speaker this evening needs no introduction as far as our Protestant Reformed people are concerned. He is well-known throughout our denomination.

"However, for those of you who are our special guests, he may need somewhat of an introduction, at least more than is noted on your program.

"Our speaker tonight is the son of the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema, who departed from us to go to glory last month. Before his father's last illness and death, our speaker was associated with his father on the teaching staff of our Protestant Reformed Seminary, where he is now serving.

"Professor Hoeksema has also replaced his father as Editor-In-Chief of *The Standard Bearer*, a publication which began some forty years ago, prior to the inception of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

"Our speaker received his academic training in the Christian Schools, and at Calvin College of our fair city, and his theological training was obtained in the Seminary where he now teaches.

"He is well informed, an able speaker, and a sound

defender of the truth which was once delivered unto the saints.

"We now present to you Professor Homer C. Hoeksema, who will speak to you on the subject announced on your program: Our Reformed Heritage."

We will not give you now the contents of his message. The Mission Committee has decided to have this speech printed in brochure form and it will be distributed to all our churches, and to anyone desiring it. Let me just say, that this speech was terrific! It was in our opinion a master-piece! The speaker showed his audience, first of all, wherein that Reformed Heritage consists. Secondly, he pointed out wherein there is today a general departure from the principles of the Reformation. And finally, he urged that there be a return to these Scriptural principles in doctrine and practice. We urge our readers to obtain the proposed brochure containing this message! We listened to the audience while we listened to the speaker. Not a sound could be heard. It was so quiet that you could hear the proverbial pin drop. We also observed more than one, who were strangers to us, taking voluminous notes. I am sure that even our own Protestant Reformed people never heard a better, more compact, more beautiful presentation than they heard on this program.

Then the choir presented to us three more beautifully rendered selections: "But the Lord is Mindful of His Own," by Mendelssohn; "The Lord is My Shepherd," by Noble Cain; and "With The Voice of Singing," by Martin Shaw. What was so amazing about the singing of the choir was the fact that at most they had practiced no more than seven to ten hours together, and there was no slip-up. Mr. Petersen and Mrs. Lubbers deserve much credit for getting the choir ready for this occasion. But we also know that unless the members themselves had not so faithfully responded, this part of our program could not have contributed what it so nobly did.

We then gave to the audience our closing remarks. We expressed a word of appreciation to all who helped to make this evening possible. We also expressed our appreciation to our guests who honored us with their attentive presence. We reminded all present that they should take with them our literature, which consisted of *Standard Bearers*, *Beacon Lights*, and all the different pamphlets produced by our churches, which I am told they did in a goodly amount. And finally we introduced the Rev. H. Veldman as president of our Mission Board, who would lead us to God in a prayer of thanksgiving.

After the closing prayer, the audience was asked to arise and sing the well-known Doxology, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow." And under the strains of the Postlude, Bach's Concerto No. II, the audience was dismissed.

What shall we say in closing these reflections? Let me say, first of all, the whole thing was one grand, thrilling experience! Our people were most responsive throughout. They gave most liberally, so that the expenses, which were great, were not only covered, but there was a rather large surplus which can be

used for other meetings of this nature. If there was only one result, it was a shot in the arm to our own people. They could draw only one conclusion: We are not dead, or dying, but pretty much alive! We could successfully produce a positive program in which God and His Word of Truth were highly exalted.

What our program produced as far as the visitors were concerned, God only knows, and only time will tell. We are sure they were deeply impressed, and perhaps many of them who are concerned about the modern departures from the truth went home with hearts that were heavy, but also with the knowledge that God has preserved His truth in the churches to which we belong.

Since this Reformation Rally, the Mission Committee has met and considered the matter of conducting more of these meetings, not only in the Grand Rapids area, but also across the country. In the not too distant future our people will be informed of our further activities.

It is our personal conviction that today, more than ever before, we have a calling to go into every Reformed community to witness to the truth, and to suggest to those, who are concerned about the lethargy, indifference, and even deliberate attempt to lead the church astray, that we are willing and ready to show them the way out.

EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

Vatican Council - Third Session

-3-

"The Constitution on the Church"

by Rev. G. Van Baren

We are in the process of examining one of the decrees approved at the third session of the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church: "The Constitution on the Church." In this article I wish to call your attention to the third chapter of this decree, entitled: "On the Hierarchical Structure of the Church and in Particular on the Episcopate." The chapter has been of rather great interest because it concerns itself with the old hierarchical order in the Romish Church. Protestants have wondered whether perhaps the pope would relinquish some of the power which, he claims, is vested in him. This chapter, it is said, will revise the old power structure of the Romish Church.

THE POSITION OF THE POPE

It should be pointed out that the chapter does not basically change the old Romish position towards its pope. May I quote a few paragraphs to make this plain?

In order that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, He placed Blessed Peter over the other apostles, and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion. And all this teaching about the institution, the perpetuity, the meaning and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and of his infallible magisterium, this sacred council again proposes to be firmly believed by all the faithful.

But the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head. The pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains

whole and intact. In virtue of his office, that is as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power. The order of bishops, which succeeds to the college of apostles and gives this apostolic body continued existence, is also the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church, provided we understand this body together with its head the Roman pontiff and never without this head. This power can be exercised only with the consent of the Roman pontiff. . . .

And this infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed His Church to be endowed in defining doctrine of faith and morals, extends as far as the deposit of Revelation extends, which must be religiously guarded and faithfully expounded. And this is the infallibility which the Roman pontiff, the head of the college of bishops, enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith (cf. Luke 22:32), by a definitive act he proclaims a doctrine of faith or morals. And therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly styled irreformable, since they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, promised to him in blessed Peter, and therefore they need no approval of others, nor do they allow an appeal to any other judgment. . . .¹

THE POPE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE BISHOPS

In this chapter, there does appear to be greater emphasis upon the authority of the bishops within the Romish Church. It is this which has been lauded by

many as a real change in Rome. The chapter points out that the bishops are successors of the twelve apostles:

... For this reason the apostles, appointed as rulers in this society, took care to appoint successors. . . .

... Therefore, the sacred council teaches that the bishops by divine institution have succeeded to the place of the apostles, as shepherds of the Church, and he who hears them, hears Christ, and he who rejects them, rejects Christ and Him who sent Christ.¹

The chapter seems to teach the local authority, and almost autonomy, of the bishop in his own diocese:

The pastoral office or the habitual and daily care of their sheep is entrusted to them completely; nor are they to be regarded as vicars of the Roman pontiffs, for they exercise an authority that is proper to them, and are quite correctly called "prelates," heads of the people whom they govern. Their power, therefore, is not destroyed by the supreme and universal power, but on the contrary it is affirmed, strengthened and vindicated by it, since the Holy Spirit unfailingly preserves the form of government established by Christ the Lord in His Church.¹

The same chapter teaches a certain "infallibility" of the bishops:

The infallibility promised to the Church resides also in the body of Bishops, when that body exercises the supreme magisterium with the successor of Peter. To these definitions the assent of the Church can never be wanting, on account of the activity of that same Holy Spirit, by which the whole flock of Christ is preserved and progresses in unity of faith.¹

The chapter also introduces the deacons as part of the Roman hierarchy.

At a lower level of the hierarchy are deacons, upon whom hands are imposed. . . . It is the duty of the deacon, according as it shall have been assigned to him by competent authority, to administer baptism solemnly, to be custodian and dispenser of the Eucharist, to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the Sacred Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of funeral and burial services. . . .

Since these duties, so very necessary to the life of the Church, can be fulfilled only with difficulty in many regions in accordance with the discipline of the Latin Church as it exists today, the diaconate can in the future be restored as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy. . . . With the consent of the Roman Pontiff, this diaconate, can, in the future, be conferred upon men of more mature age, even upon those living in the married state. . . .¹

Finally, I would point out that this chapter does not at all hide the intent of the Romish Church towards the world about us (including ourselves):

Because the human race today is joining more and more into a civic, economic and social unity, it is that much the more necessary that priests, by combined effort and aid, under the leadership of the bishops and the Supreme Pontiff, wipe out every kind of separate-

ness, so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of the family of God.¹

REACTION TO CHAPTER THREE

It is interesting to follow the comments of both Roman Catholics and Protestants concerning this special chapter. In press accounts one detected first great enthusiasm and high favor toward the expressions of this chapter. But then came the close of the third session of the Council. The pope appeared to throw overboard all ideas of "collegiality", and arbitrarily imposed his will over the majority of the bishops assembled at Rome. Liberal Roman Catholics and Protestants both deplored the action of the pope as that which negated the very intent of this chapter three. Notice, first, the enthusiasm:

We also have cause to rejoice at much that was said during the discussion on the Church. It is plain that the Counter Reformation's extreme emphasis on the hierarchical structure of the Church is on the way out. No one questions the special place of the Bishops, but our emphasis now is on the Church as a Christian community, on the people of God among whom there are different callings but all of whom have a Christian vocation. This shift in attitude is of inestimable importance.²

Chapter three of the schema *De Ecclesia* . . . teaches the doctrine that the episcopal college, including the pope as its head, holds the supreme ministerial power to teach and to govern in the Church. This means that the bishops are co-responsible for the teaching and policy-making of the whole Church; and even though the pope, thanks to his primacy, remains canonically independent from them, he enters into a dialogue relation with them. The chapter does not specify the precise forms in which this collegiality will find expression, but there can be little doubt that the manner and the tone assumed by the supreme ecclesiastical authority will undergo a considerable transformation.³

But then, after the last few days of the third session, came the afterthoughts:

Much more serious was the pope's interventions with regard to the doctrine on Ecumenism, and his application of the title "Mother of the Church" — so carefully rejected by the Council — to Mary. It is hard to understand the pope's motives in sending 19 "suggested emendations" for the doctrine on Ecumenism at a time when such recommendations could not be debated. At best, his action seems in bad taste, offensive to other Christians and scandalous to Catholics.⁴

The treatment of the schema on ecumenism illustrates a third concern. . . . For although the Council promulgated the doctrine of collegiality, . . . the actions of the closing hours suggest that there is a vast distance between promulgating a doctrine and actually practicing it. . . .⁵

The debate continues. Is the old hierarchical order breaking down? I believe not. I believe that there will be less evidence of the "naked power" of the pope in the future, but he has not relinquished an iota of the power he claims to possess. The very expressions of

fear by those ready enough to believe the best concerning Rome, ought to be warning enough for us.

1. These quotations were taken from the *Council Day-book*, Session 3, published by the National Catholic Welfare Conference, pages 316-322.

2. James O'Gara, *The Commonweal* (a Roman Catholic liberal magazine), Feb. 7, 1964; p. 569
3. Gregory Baum, *The Commonweal*, p. 130
4. Michael Novak (a Roman Catholic), *Christian Century*, Dec. 9, 1964, p. 1518
5. Robert McAfee Brown (Protestant), *The Commonweal*, Dec. 25, 1964; pp. 442-444

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Doctrine of Creation - Hodge

by Rev. H. Veldman

Writing on the *Scriptural Doctrine* of the creation of the universe, Hodge, in Vol. I of his *Systematic Theology*, pages 553 f.f., writes,

The Scriptural doctrine on this subject is expressed in the first words of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The heavens and the earth include all things out of God. Of which things the Scriptures teach that they owe their existence to the will and power of God. The Scriptural doctrine therefore is, (1.) That the universe is not eternal. It began to be. (2.) It was not formed out of any pre-existence or substance. It was free to God to create or not to create, to create the universe as it is, or any other order and system of things, according to the good pleasure of His will.

The doctrine of an eternal creation has been held in various forms. Origen, although he referred the existence of the universe to the will of God, still held that it was eternal. We speak of the divine decrees as free and yet as from everlasting. So Origen held that this was not the first world God made; that there never was a first, and never will be a last.

Of course those of the schoolmen who made the thoughts of God creative, or identified purpose with act, or who agreed with Scotus Erigena, must regard the universe as coeternal with God. This was done by Scotus in a pantheistic sense, but others who regarded the universe as distinct from God and dependent upon Him, still held that the world is eternal. The influence of the modern Monistic philosophy, even upon theologians who believe in an extramundane personal God, has been such as to lead many of them to assume that the relation between God and the world is such that it must have always existed. The common doctrine of the Church has ever been, in accordance with the simple teaching of the Bible, that the world began to be.

The second point included in the Scriptural doctrine of creation is, that the universe was not formed out of any preexistent matter, nor out of the substance of God. The assumption that any thing existed out of God and independent of his will, has ever been rejected as in-

consistent with the perfection and absolute supremacy of God. The other idea, however, namely, that God fashioned the world out of his own substance, has found advocates, more or less numerous, in every age of the Church.

Not only those of the schoolmen and of the modern theologians who are inclined to the Monistic theory (the creation came forth out of one principle of being or ultimate substance - H.V.), made all things to be modifications of the substance of God, but many Theistic and even Evangelical writers of our day hold the same doctrine. Sir William Hamilton also held that it is impossible to conceive the complement of existence being either increased or diminished. When anything new appears we are forced to regard it as something which had previously existed in another form. "We are unable, on the one hand, to conceive nothing becoming something; or, on the other, something becoming nothing. When God is said to create out of nothing, we construe this to thought by supposing that He evolves existence out of Himself; we view the creator as the cause of the Universe".....To this he elsewhere adds, "In like manner, we conceive annihilation, only by conceiving the Creator to withdraw his creation from actuality into power.....The mind is thus compelled to recognize an absolute identity of existence in the effect and in the complement of its causes --between the *causatum* and the *causa*," and therefore, "an absolute identity of existence" between God and the world. This doctrine the fathers, and the Church generally, strenuously resisted as inconsistent with the nature of God. It supposes that the substance of God admits of partition or division; that the attributes of God can be separated from his substance; and that the divine substance can become degraded and polluted.

The third point included in the Scriptural doctrine of creation is, that it was an act of God's free will. He was free to create or not to create. This is opposed to the doctrine of necessary creation, which has been set forth in different forms. Some regard the phenomenal universe as a mere evolution of absolute being by a necessary progress, as a plant is developed from a seed. Others, regarding God as a Spirit, make life

and thought essential and coeternal with Him, and this life and power are of necessity creative. God's "essence," says Cousin, "consists precisely in his creative power." Again, he says, "He cannot but produce; so that the creation ceases to be unintelligible; and God is no more without a world than a world without God." As, however, thought is spontaneous, Cousin, when called to account for such utterances, maintained that he did not deny that creation was free. (the undersigned wishes to observe that with this we may certainly agree. The Lord certainly was not compelled to create the universe. He was moved solely by Himself, by His own free and sovereign will, eternally, to glorify Himself also in the creature. This determination to create the heavens and the earth, which, of course, are never to be viewed as pantheistically flowing forth from or out of His own being, was a determination of the Lord's own free and sovereign choice.)

Some who do not admit that God is under any natural or metaphysical necessity to give existence to the universe, still assert a moral necessity for the creation of sensitive and rational creatures. God, it is said, is love, but it is the nature of love to long to communicate itself, and to hold fellowship with others than itself. Therefore God's nature impels Him to call into existence creatures in whom and over whom He can rejoice. Others say, that God is benevolence, and therefore is under a moral necessity of creating beings whom He can render happy.

According to the Scriptures God is self-sufficient. He needs nothing out of Himself for his own well-being or happiness. He is in every respect independent of his creatures; and the creation of the universe was the act of the free will of that God of whom the Apostle says in Romans 11:36, "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things."

Following upon this Hodge discusses the subject, in connection with the creation of the universe, of *Mediate and Immediate Creation*.

But while it has ever been the doctrine of the Church that God created the universe out of nothing by the word of his power, which creation was instantaneous and immediate, i.e., without the intervention of any second causes; yet it has generally been admitted that this is to be understood only of the original call of matter into existence. Theologians have, therefore, distinguished between a first and second, or immediate and mediate creation. The one was instantaneous, the other gradual; the one precludes the idea of any pre-existing substance, and of cooperation, the other admits and implies both. There is evident ground for this distinction in the mosaic account of the creation. God, we are told, "created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Here it is clearly intimated that the universe, when first created, was in a state of chaos, and that by the life-giving, organizing power of the Spirit of God, it was gradually molded into the wonderful cosmos which we now behold. The whole of the first chapter of Genesis, after the first verse, is an account of the progress of creation; the production of light; the formation of the atmosphere; the separation of land and water; the vegetable productions of the earth; the animals of the sea and air; then the living creatures of the earth; and, last of all, man. In Gen. 1:27, it is said that God created man

male and female; in chapter 2:7, it is said, that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." It thus appears that forming out of preexisting material comes within the Scriptural idea of creating. We all recognize God as the author of our being, as our Creator, as well as our Preserver. He is our Creator, not merely because He is the maker of heaven and earth, and because all they contain owe their origin to his will and power, but also because, as the Psalmist teaches us, He fashions our bodies in secret, Ps. 139:16. And the Bible constantly speaks of God as causing the grass to grow, and as being the real author or maker of all that the earth, air, or water produces. There is, therefore, according to the Scriptures, not only an immediate, instantaneous creation *ex nihilo* by the simple word of God, but a mediate, progressive creation; the power of God working in union with second causes. Augustine clearly recognizes this idea. (here the undersigned wishes to observe that, although we may speak of mediate creation in this sense, he fails to see the propriety of speaking of second causes. How can the dust of the ground be viewed as a second cause in the creation of Adam?)

Thus far there is little room for diversity of opinion. But when the question is asked, How long was the universe in passing from its chaotic to its ordered state? such diversity is at once manifested. According to the more obvious interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, this work was accomplished in six days. This therefore has been the common belief of Christians. It is a belief founded on a given interpretation of the Mosaic record, which interpretation, however, must be controlled not only by the laws of language, but by facts. This is at present an open question. The facts necessary for its decision have not yet been duly authenticated. The believer may calmly await the result.

The theistical advocates of the Nebular Hypothesis assume that the universe was an indefinitely long period in coming to its present state.....The same theory of gradual, or mediate creation, has been applied to account for all the phenomena of the vegetable and animal kingdoms. This has been done in different forms. According to all these theories there must be something to begin with. There must be matter and its forces. There must even be life, and living organisms. To account for these we are forced to accept of the Scriptural doctrine of an immediate creation *ex nihilo* by the power of God."

And with this last statement we wholly agree. We shall certainly accept the Scriptural doctrine of an immediate creation by the power of God. Hodge writes that the question of how long the creation of all things was in progress is at present an open question. The facts necessary for its decision have not yet been duly authenticated. And the believer may calmly await the result. However, we believe that this is not an open question. And the believer may calmly await the result? And accept the final conclusion that this universe was brought into existence through a process of thousands and millions of years? and accept this calmly? We believe that the Scriptures have spoken on this matter, and that the language of the Word of God is unmistakably clear. The Lord willing, we will surely call the attention of our readers to this fact, as we continue our discussion of the creation of the heavens and the earth, as held before us in the infallible Scriptures.

BOOK REVIEWS— A Bible Inerrancy Primer

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

"A Bible Inerrancy Primer," John H. Gerstner, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.; 63 pages, paper bound; \$.85.

The author of this little brochure is Professor of Church History and Government at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He is evidently a conservative Presbyterian, loyal to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

It is evident from the very title of the book that the author is committed to the truth of the Bible's inerrancy, or infallibility. This fundamental position of the author becomes abundantly clear in these pages also, and this is to be appreciated.

The purpose of the booklet is apparently to furnish a stringently logical proof for the inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture. In Part One, Mr. Gerstner treats "Some Unsound Bases for Sound Doctrine" (on Bible Inerrancy, of course). He rejects as unsound bases: the Bible's Own Testimony, the Holy Spirit's Testimony, the Believer's Testimony, and the Church's Testimony. All these, while they may be true and valuable in themselves, can, according to the author, not serve as bases for a sound doctrine of Bible inerrancy. In Part Two he attempts to furnish what he calls "A Sound Basis for Sound Doctrine." The main thrust of his argument is the Testimony of Divinely Commissioned Messengers as the Basis for Bible Inerrancy. In this section Mr. Gerstner argues first from Commissioned Messengers to Inspired Bible, and then from Inspired Bible to Inerrant Bible.

It would require another 63-page booklet, perhaps,

to treat all that Prof. Gerstner writes. Briefly put, I do not believe that the inerrancy of Scripture is a subject for logical proof apart from the testimony of Scripture itself. Moreover, I believe there are several links in Mr. Gerstner's chain of proof that he cannot sustain without an appeal to the very Bible whose inerrancy he is trying to prove. This, according to the author is the fallacy, for example, in arguing from the Bible's own testimony to its inerrancy. But it appears to be the fallacy in his own position also.

Scripture's inspiration and infallibility are a matter of faith; and no amount of proofs will satisfy or convince an unbeliever.

Nevertheless, I like this little booklet. My chief reason is that the author is committed to the doctrine of Bible inerrancy. That is fast becoming a rare position in our day. Secondly, the booklet is simply and clearly written. If one remembers that it is intended to be no more than a "primer," then it also cannot be criticized on the score of brevity. In the third place, the appendix on "The Confession of 1967" (of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA) is valuable to those who are interested in that currently much discussed subject. I must confess, however, that I stand aghast at the author's claim that this new Confession "also permits adherents of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* to remain in the church in good conscience." This possibility is based on the ambiguity of the new Confession.

To those interested in this subject of Bible Inerrancy, I recommend this Primer.

IN MEMORIAM

Our Mr. and Mrs. Society hereby desires to express its Christian sympathy with our fellow member, Mrs. Sid Miedema whose sister

GLADYS TILMA

passed away recently.

May our Father in heaven dry her tears.

The Hudsonville Mr. and Mrs. Society;

Mr. Kenneth Schuitema, Vice-Pres.

Mrs. Richard Dykstra, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

We herewith wish to express our condolences to our fellow member, Mrs. Sid Miedema in the loss of her sister

GLADYS TILMA

May our Covenant God comfort the bereaved family.

The Hudsonville Choral Society;

Harold VanOverloop, Pres.

Henry J. Boer, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies Societies of the Holland Protestant Reformed Church express their sincere sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Lanning in the recent passing of his father

MR. JOHN LANNING

May the God of all grace comfort them in this their bereavement.

Mr. E. Cammenga, Sec'y.

Mrs. B. Windemuller, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Hope Men's Society wish to express our Christian sympathy to Mrs. John Lanning and the children in the loss of their husband and father

MR. JOHN LANNING

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

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

("All the saints salute thee . . ." Phil. 4:21)

December 1, 1965

Rev. J. Kortering, of Hull, Iowa, has received the call from Edgerton, Minn.

Rev. D. Engelsma, of Loveland, Colo., is considering a call that came to him from Hudsonville, Mich.

* * *

The speaker on the Reformed Witness Hour for the last two weeks in December is Rev. G. Vos, of Hudsonville. His topics: Dec. 19— "The Wise Men of the East," Matt. 2:9-11; Dec. 26— "A Year of Eternal Beauty," Rev. 21:3-5.

* * *

The Beacon Lights Staff sponsored a Thanksgiving Day Singspiration Nov. 21 in First Church. With Mrs. C. Lubbers at the organ and Miss Mary Kregel at the piano, Mr. C. Jonker led the gathering in some spirited singing. With quotations from Scripture Mr. Jonker directed the singers to the basic reasons for singing songs of thanksgiving; and with references to the instruction in the Heidelberg Catechism, we were led in the contemplation of the art of true and proper thanksgiving. Special music was a solo by Mr. Arnold Dykstra— a prayer especially suited to young people— "Take My Life And Let It Be". Rev. Van Baren, pastor of First Church, led in closing prayer. This was truly an enjoyable and inspirational hour of Christian fellowship!

* * *

The Ladies Aid Society of First Church recently enjoyed the pictures of Jamaica shown and narrated by Mr. Harry Zwak of Hudsonville. An offering was taken for the work in that Caribbean Island in the Atlantic.

* * *

Besides the Reformation Day Rallies held in Grand Rapids and Hull, as reported before, Redlands had a Reformation Day Song Service after the morning service Oct. 31. The Sunday School took a major part in the program and were assisted by individuals of the congregation. And, Rev. D. Engelsma gave a Reformation Day speech in Loveland's Christian School.

* * *

Rev. J. A. Heys, of South Holland, Ill., combined two "travelogue lectures" with a three week classical appointment to Lynden, Wash. On Nov. 4 Rev. Heys showed 230 colored slides, pictorial proof of the work he and Mr. Zwak did in Jamaica last spring, to the congregation of Loveland, Colo. On Nov. 21 this program was repeated in Lynden, with narration accompanying the viewing of the pictures. One can imagine that those color-pictures of that hot tropical island were especially appreciated on a cold November evening. Surely the denuded fields of Colorado and of Washington bore no resemblance to the lush vegetation of the mountain sides in which the Protestant Reformed

Churches of Jamaica are nestled. While in Lynden Rev. Heys conducted the Installation Service of Rev. B. Woudenberg as Lynden's new Pastor.

* * *

A copy of a pamphlet by Rev. Heys has indeed reached a far-off post. In Addanki, India there is a high school whose Headmaster is a man named George Jacob. This Headmaster wrote Rev. Heys that he had received a copy of his "Paid In Full" through a friend in India, who in turn received it from some one in the U.S.A. He made carbon copies of it in longhand, and intends to translate it into the local language for the natives who cannot read English. Mr. Jacob has asked for the complete set which will be sent him, plus a bonus of a year's subscription of the *Standard Bearer*. What a great reason for gratitude that it pleases the King of His Church to use us in His plan to witness to "the ends of the earth" before His return on the clouds of heaven!

* * *

The Western churches' pamphlet ministry still continues to find its way into the mailboxes of the people on the mailing list. The last one, by Rev. B. Woudenberg, was a timely one in that it dealt with The Love of God— whether it is Universal or Particular. May also this ministry continue to be a witness to the Truth of the Sovereignty of God, not only in the realm of Providence, but also, and especially in the realm of Salvation, wherein "the sheep who are of my fold" "hear my voice. . . . and I give unto them Eternal Life".

* * *

The new church going up in South Holland is being watched quite eagerly. The progress has reached the point that inside finishing will soon be started. The completion thereof will be none too soon for them. Last Sunday sixty people had to be seated in the basement to listen to the sermon on the loudspeaker installed there.

* * *

The league of Mr. and Mrs. Societies met Nov. 5 in Southwest Church and scheduled Prof. H. Hanko as speaker. The professor spoke on the topic, "The Intermediate State," finding in the Scriptures the truth regarding this mysterious and little known subject. Prof. Hanko was also the speaker at the recent meeting of the Eastern Ladies League which met in Southwest Church. He spoke on "Racial Rioting and the Signs of the Times". The speaker criticized the activities of the leaders in the American churches in the affairs of the national and secular problems of the day; and especially denounced their sin of participating in civil disobedience.

. . . see you in church

J.M.F.