

The
Standard
Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE:

Meditation: My Lord and My God

Editorial: Covert Evolutionism

Jamaica An Open Door

Love and the Neighbor's Name

David and Abner

Volume XLIV / Number 14 / April 15, 1968

CONTENTS

Meditation -	
My Lord and My God	314
Rev. J. Kortering	
Editorials -	
Editor's Notes	316
Prof. H. C. Hoeksema	
Covert Evolutionism	317
Prof. H. C. Hoeksema	
From Our Mission Board -	
Jamaica An Open Door	319
Rev. J. Kortering	
In His Fear -	
Love and the Neighbor's Name	321
Rev. J. A. Heys	
From Holy Writ -	
The Book of Hebrews	323
Rev. G. Lubbers	
The Church At Worship -	
Worship Order	325
Rev. G. Vanden Berg	
A Cloud of Witnesses -	
David and Abner	328
Rev. B. Woudenberg	
Contending For The Faith -	
The Doctrine of Sin	330
Rev. H. Veldman	
All Around Us -	
The Proof Of It All	
Campus Evangelism	
Separating Presbyterians	332
Prof. H. Hanko	
Book Reviews -	
Assen 1926	335
News From Our Churches -	
Mr. J. M. Faber	336

THE STANDARD BEARER

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

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Rev. David J. Engelsma, Mr. John M. Faber, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Gerald Vanden Berg, Rev. Herman Veldman, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

Editorial Office: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema
1842 Plymouth Terrace, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Church News Editor: Mr. John M. Faber
1123 Cooper Ave., S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Business Office: Mr. James Dykstra, Bus. Mgr.
1326 W. Butler Ave., S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$5.00 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$2.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$2.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 5th or the 20th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

MEDITATION—

My Lord and My God

by Rev. J. Kortering

"Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." John 20:27, 28

The resurrection of Jesus produced many changes. Little wonder that Thomas had difficulty believing it.

One moment we behold Jesus groaning in bitter

agony, His body bruised with welts and torn by nails. At His feet some soldiers idly gambled for His clothing, others joined the taunting multitude of Scribes and Pharisees saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot

save. If thou be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God." Matt. 27:42,43. When the darkness of hell prevailed upon the cross, He cried out of His desolation, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me." But now is Christ risen from the dead! What a change. That corruptible body has put on incorruption, mortality hath been swallowed up in victory. Suddenly He appears to the women and in regal power commands, "All hail!" He tenderly walks beside the travelers whose hearts burn within them and unfolds to them the Scriptures. The glory of it all is summed up in the words, "Peace be unto you."

His enemies were also affected by the resurrection.

At the cross they congratulated themselves on a job well done. They had at last gotten rid of this rebel. The Chief Priest and Elders gazed upon His naked form and heaped upon Him their utter contempt. They observed the sword wound that produced blood and water and sighed in relief. At last this bloody business was over. But early on resurrection Sunday their anguish returned to them. The tomb which they had so meticulously sealed by the decree of Pilate and guarded so carefully by soldiers was rent open by angels from heaven. The latter end had become worse than the beginning. The tales of the frightened guards moved them to calculate hastily what action to take; bribery was the answer! They would fabricate a story that the disciples had come by night and stolen the body. Money would produce that lie from the lips of the soldiers and the pressure of prestige would guarantee their safety before the governor. Defiant mockers have now become calculating liars.

The resurrection made that change.

It also affected the disciples.

Heavy hearts had gone home that dark Friday. The disciples had observed it all from a distance. Their Lord had been crucified. As the minutes passed into hours the reality began to numb their fevered brains. How could this be? The Lord of Life had died at the hands of cruel men. The presence of the risen Lord transformed them. It took awhile, but when Jesus breathed on them the Holy Spirit, they began to see the dawn arise taking away the hellish night of confused unbelief.

It was all so wondrously strange.

Something like this had never happened before.

Unquestionably, they had observed the miraculous work of Christ as He raised the dead to life. They knew the chronicles of the Old Testament which are replete with proof that the Lord of Heaven was also the Lord of life over death. Even Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. Elisha had raised the son of the Shunammite from the dead. These events excited the thoughts of many in Israel as they were passed down in tradition from father to son. The living Lazarus was adequate testimony of the power of Christ as the way, the truth, and the life.

But this was different. No one stood before the

tomb of Jesus and shouted, "Come forth!" No man rolled away the stone of the tomb to let Him out. On the contrary, angels were commissioned by God to come to the earth to roll away the stone to allow the spectators to enter in and find the evidence that Jesus had already arisen. He had not come back to the earth as the others had done. Rather, He had gone through the grave and lived beyond the grasp of that monster death who comes to sting every mortal man.

He arose, that was the difference.

His body was changed from mortal to immortal, from corruption to incorruption. He was on the other side of the grave ready to ascend to His Father's house of many mansions. He had gone from death unto life.

This defies human imagination, for flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Thomas had a problem.

Under the providential direction of God, he had missed the great unveiling. Throughout the first resurrection Sabbath, reports came to the upper room that Jesus had arisen from the dead. The first feeble evidence came early in the morning after Mary had detected trouble and left the company of the women to return immediately to the disciples to report the open tomb. Her report, "They have stolen his body, and we know not where they have laid him." Immediately Peter and John raced to the tomb, witnessed the grave clothes and left convicted by the evidence. While these disciples were away, the women informed the remaining ones that they had seen the risen Lord. Soon their tale was confirmed by Mary who also had received such a visit in the garden. Toward evening the travelers to Emmaus returned with the marvelous tidings that Christ had made Himself known unto them in the breaking of bread. They were greeted by the joyful song, "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon." That same evening, while the disciples were musing on these great wonders, the door being closed, Jesus suddenly stood in their midst. He showed them His hands and feet, He ate broiled fish.

Thomas missed it all.

His reaction? "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

We don't know where Thomas was or why he wasn't there with the other disciples. One thing is sure, God wanted Thomas excluded. It was for our sakes.

For Thomas seeing was believing.

He wasn't convinced by what others told him, he had to see for himself. We read of Thomas in three specific instances. The first was at the time Jesus announced that He was going to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead. Thomas reacted by saying, "Let us go that we may die with Him." The second time involved the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Before going to Gethsemane Jesus told His disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God believe also in me....I will come again and receive

you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also." Thomas reacted to this by saying, "Lord we know not whither thou goest, how can we know the way?" The third event is that recorded in our text.

From this evidence we can easily understand the position Thomas took. He wasn't pessimistic. He wasn't a naive doubter. He simply didn't believe anything he couldn't touch, taste, smell, hear, and see. He was made captive to his senses.

He had to learn that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

God placed Thomas here in the midst of the glory of the resurrection in order to silence the argument of scientism, "Give us proof!" With this incident recorded in the infallible Scriptures God answers human skepticism with the response of the faith of Thomas, "My Lord and My God!"

The marvel of this event is that God comes to each one of us in the way that we need Him. This was true for the women, agitated and perplexed He greeted them with, "All hail!" Mary longed to have her Jesus back in order that she might minister to His needs, so Jesus said to her, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father in heaven." The disciples were confused and terrified and to them He said, "Peace be unto you." He showed them the nail prints and they rejoiced. Peter was troubled at the thought of having denied his Lord three times, to Him Jesus rejoined, "Simon, Son of Jonas lovest thou me more than these?" After the third time he courageously answered not simply, Lord I like you, but Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I *love* thee!

And here we have Thomas who has to see in order to believe.

For his sake Jesus returned the next Sunday.

"Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing."

How merciful of our Father in heaven.

He could have said to Thomas, because thou wouldst not believe except thou didst see, I cannot use you, depart from me, you are not worthy to be my disciple.

No, Christ returned for the benefit of Thomas. He preached the unsearchable riches of His glory to him. Christ produced the evidence which Thomas needed.

To this Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God!" Suddenly the dark veil of unbelief is rolled back. Now he could understand that Christ was Lord. He had indeed descended into the depth of death and hell and now He had come forth triumphantly with a real body, the same one now glorified.

Thomas began to understand what Paul wrote later, "If Christ be not risen ye are yet in your sins." But now is Christ risen from the dead! He is now the Lord of life. Having satisfied the demands of the righteous God and having purchased redemption for His own, Thomas saw the Lordship of Christ. He had conquered all the foes, He had swallowed up death in victory. "O death where is thy sting, o grave thy victory?....Thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." In Christ we are freed from the tyranny of sin and death and brought into the liberty of the children of God.

Hence Thomas added, "My Lord and *my God*." Since Christ is Lord, His lordship is not apart from nor in competition with God; rather His lordship is to direct us to God that we and all His children may abide under the shadow of His wings in perfect peace for time and eternity.

Not just *a* Lord and *a* God, but *my* Lord and *my* God.

The floodgates of peace swelled the heart of Thomas. He saw the glorious truth, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." He was raised for our justification.

You struggle with the problem that besieged the troubled soul of Thomas? You find it difficult to believe all the Scriptures tell us concerning the wonder of God's work of salvation? You are inclined to question God's miracles and say with Thomas, "Unless I see and touch I will not believe?"

"Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

The evidence which Christ provided for Thomas was convincing.

What more need we? The resurrection is real, God tells us so.

Let us say with the church of all ages, "My Lord and my God."

And therein we have the theme of our life that will carry over into all eternity.

Editor's Notes

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Credit to whom credit is due! Through a slip-up on the part of our printer the authors of the several book reviews which appeared in the April 1 issue were not mentioned with the reviews which they wrote. For your information, Prof. H. Hanko wrote all of those reviews except the first one, which was the responsibility of your editor.

* * *

Inflation has hit the Standard Bearer! Recently I was informed by the Board of the Reformed Free Publishing Association that printing costs have increased in the amount of \$75 per issue. This is not the fault of our printer, nor is this written to chide him; it is due to the seemingly inevitable pressures of inflation. I have also been informed that for the time being there will be no increase in subscription

rates. Apparently our Board does not easily give up the battle to hold the line against inflation. To succeed in this determination, however, the Board needs the continued loyal support of the various individuals, organizations, and churches which have always royally subsidized the *Standard Bearer* by means of their gifts. Somehow there must be an increased income of \$1575 per year. The Board depends on YOU to help meet the added expense.

Meanwhile, I respectfully suggest the consideration of two steps toward improving the financial status of our magazine. *Step One* is a modest increase in our subscription price. I have no statistics, but it is several years since our price went up. It could hardly be called a defeat in the battle against inflation to increase the price at long last. Besides, a comparison with the rates of other periodicals will show that our *Standard Bearer* has a low subscription price. *Torch and Trumpet*, for example, offers ten issues at a price of \$3.00 per year. *Step Two* is a concerted campaign to increase the number of subscribers. This makes good sense financially speaking; for as the number of subscribers increases, the law of diminishing costs comes into effect. But it also makes good sense from another, more important point of view, namely, that our *Standard Bearer* has an important and clearly Reformed testimony to bear to the Reformed community at large. It is published not only for our Protestant Reformed people but also for those outside our Protestant Reformed Churches. Here is an area in which I would like to see definite steps taken to increase our readership. I have been encouraged in this thought recently by non-Protestant Reformed brethren who

read the *Standard Bearer*, who appreciate it greatly, and who would like to see its readership extended. How about some concrete proposals and some forward-looking action?

* * *

Your attention is called to the contribution in this issue from our Mission Board about the open door in Jamaica. If our churches are to “live along” with respect to our mission endeavors, it is important that they be kept informed. Undoubtedly the work in Jamaica will be an important subject of discussion and decision at our coming Synod also. An article of this kind should serve to bring home both the accomplishments and some of the acute problems of these labors, and thus serve as reason for thanksgiving to our God but also as occasion for consecrated thinking as to further labors and as to solutions to some of the problems.

* * *

The annual staff meeting will be less than two months off when this issue appears. At that meeting plans are made for the coming volume-year, which begins with the October 1 issue. Your editor suggests that all staff members devote some serious thought to the question of changes which may be made in our magazine, — that is, changes which are also improvements. Come to the staff meeting prepared! We also invite constructive suggestions from our readers. Send such suggestions to the editor’s address, and he will present them to the staff for consideration.

EDITORIALS—

Covert Evolutionism

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Recently there came to my attention from a friend and reader of our *Standard Bearer* a printed leaflet by Prof. Donald Wilson of Calvin College. The leaflet bears the deceptive title: “God’s Revelation — Scripture and Nature.” I call this title deceptive because actually the leaflet is nothing but a plea for the heresy of evolutionism and for tolerance toward what has come to be called “theistic evolutionism.” It is a plea for a kind of peaceful co-existence between those who hold to creation-faith and those who hold to evolutionism under the guise of a belief in creation.

Because this continues to be an issue in Reformed churches, both here and in the Netherlands; because it has sometimes been questioned whether concrete instances of evolutionistic teachings and of tolerance and sympathy toward evolutionism exist in Calvin College

and in Reformed and Christian Reformed circles; because, moreover, our own young people are exposed to this kind of teaching at high school and at college level; and because there is a deceptive line of reasoning exemplified in this leaflet, which sometimes causes our young people to waver, the *Standard Bearer* will examine critically the position set forth in this essay. Incidentally, I recall that the last Christian Reformed Synod rejected the proposal of a study committee on creation and evolution on the ground that there was no specific case in which the Scriptural and confessional teaching was denied. Well, if there are those who are minded to present a specific case, here is evidence; and I have no doubt that more such evidence could be uncovered.

The essay under discussion begins by introducing

a change in problematics. It calls attention to the fact that whereas formerly the question was generally asked, "Which are you going to choose? Creation or evolution?" and was asked in a way that "implied the choices were mutually exclusive," now "an increasing number of evangelical Christians are beginning to take a second look at these questions and to ask themselves 'Are Creation and evolution really diametrically opposed?'" There is a subtle argument here: the argument of the weight of an increasing number of evangelical Christians who are beginning to question the old and tried and definite stand against evolutionism. Along with this argument a favorite ploy is used: ask questions, teach men to question matters which have long been settled for the church, and thus create doubts in the minds of men.

This I call a devilish method. It is the method of the devil's question to Eve, "Yea, hath God said...?"

Then follows the essay's only and very limited attempt to treat the subject expressed in the title, that of God's revelation in Scripture and in nature. Let me quote it:

And what about the question, "What are you going to believe — the Bible or science?" The first thing for us to remember is that both nature and Scripture are revelations from God. Consequently they do not contradict one another. If they appear to do so it is because our *understanding* of these revelations is inaccurate, not because the revelations themselves contradict one another. We call our understanding of nature, *science*. Since we are imperfect, our "science" is imperfect, but so, on the other hand, is our understanding of Scripture. It is true that the Bible is infallible, but our understanding of it is not. So again when the question is asked, "Which are you going to believe — the Bible or science?" one must reply, "I believe both God's revelation in nature and His revelation in Scripture, but I admit that my understanding of both is imperfect and incomplete."

Now what is wrong with the above?

There are many things wrong. There is no exposition of the idea of revelation. There is no maintenance of the unity of God's revelation. There is no explanation of the relation between God's revelation in Scripture and in nature (correctly: in the works of His hands). There is no definition of science. There is no distinction made between believing and unbelieving science; true science and false science. There is an unqualified equating of the imperfection of our science and the imperfection of our understanding of the Bible. And notice that finally there is an evading of the question, "Which are you going to believe — the Bible or science?" The author does not answer this question, but evades it.

But what is basically wrong here?

Analyse this paragraph carefully and you will discover that it is an attack on Scripture. To be sure, the author asserts that he believes both God's revelation in nature and His revelation in Scripture. He even asserts that the Bible is infallible. But he nevertheless denies the sufficiency of Scripture (Article 7, Confession of Faith). For what he utterly fails to make

plain is that the Bible is *normative* for our science. What he utterly fails to make plain is that it is impossible rightly to read God's book of creation except in the light of Holy Scripture. What he utterly fails to point out is that no one can ever arrive at true science (or, if you will: true understanding of God's revelation in nature) except as guided by and in the light of God's infallible Word. Moreover, there is an implicit denial of the perspicuity of Scripture. For what a sad commentary on one's estimate of God's Word it is when one simply says in one breath that his science and his understanding of Scripture are both imperfect and incomplete!

This same implicit attack upon Scripture becomes evident later in the essay, when the author raises the question: "Doesn't Genesis teach us how and when God created the world?"

What is the author's response? Does he give a clear-cut answer, whether affirmative or negative? I would at least have respect for one who came out in the open with a negative answer though I would, of course, violently disagree with him. But what do we get instead? We get evasiveness: neither a *Yes* nor a *No*. We get ambiguity that is certainly far worse than any alleged ambiguity of Harold Dekker. We get the old, worn-out argument that it is all a matter of interpretation, as though the Bible, God's Holy Scripture, is so dark and so dense and so utterly incomprehensible that it is impossible to arrive at a conclusive understanding of it. Just listen to this:

Even here evangelical Christians have differences of opinion. Some believe that the days were 24-hour periods, others believe them to be long periods of time. Some believe that the days of Genesis 1 refer to days of Creation; others believe they refer to days of revelation, that is, the days in the life of Moses. Some believe that there was only one creation; others, two creations separated by a gap of time with the days of Genesis 1 referring to the second creation. Some insist upon interpreting Genesis 1 very literally; others emphasize the hymnodic or liturgical structure of this passage. Each of these interpretations has its strong points and some problems as well. Unfortunately, Christians have so emphasized our areas of disagreement that we have neglected our great areas of agreement.

I am not going to enter into the entire question of the days of creation, nor into the various methods of so-called interpretation of Genesis 1. These subjects have been often treated in the *Standard Bearer*. I may also refer the reader to my booklet, "In the Beginning God..." for a rather detailed treatment of these subjects. My point now is merely that one who writes so evasively and so obviously halts between two opinions has a very poor Bible. Still worse, he has a very poor God, One Who cannot even make His own Word clear to puny little man!

What is the result of such an impoverished view of Scripture? I am reminded of Scripture's own words about "ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth." It is this idea that is really expressed in the concluding words of the author's

essay: "We should seek new insight into both God's revelations in nature and Scripture but at the same time realize that the final answers may still be beyond our grasp."

Now what is the result of such a low view of Scripture as far as creation-faith is concerned?

First of all, belief in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ deteriorates into a general and vague and vapid "Supernaturalism," whatever that may be. After all, even the Mohammedan believes in "Supernaturalism." But this is what the author presents:

The basic question then that separates the Christian from the non-Christian is Supernaturalism vs. some form of non-supernaturalism. Supernaturalism implies a believe in the God of the Bible who is intimately involved in the origin and operation of the world and man. Some of the forms of non-supernaturalism are atheism, agnosticism, and skepticism. Here our stand is definite. We believe that there is no satisfactory explanation for the world and man except that a personal God created and preserves them.

But, secondly, do not be deceived into thinking that the author after all believes in creation.

His Creator is only a God Who is somehow vaguely "intimately involved in the origin and operation of the world and man." But let him speak further:

By saying that we believe that God is the Creator, we reject any idea that the world has had eternal co-existence with God, or that it is the result of chance, or the product of an unknown force. We mean that God was intimately involved in bringing the world into existence and that, apart from God, it would have no existence.

Notice again: creation is vaguely equated with God's being "intimately involved in bringing the world into existence and that, apart from God, it would have no existence."

Compare this, if you will, with any statement which the Bible makes about creation.

And thus, finally, the way is prepared for the theory, presented in this essay only in subtle question form, which substitutes evolution for creation by pouring a different content into the Biblical term and concept of creation. Creation comes to mean then *the divine employment of evolutionary processes*. Here is the presentation of this idea:

The question being asked today in evangelical academic circles is not, "Which do we choose - Creation or evolution?" but rather it is, "To what extent could God have used evolutionary processes to bring about His Creation?"

Thus, covertly the evolutionary theory is introduced under the guise of creation-faith.

In this manner the meaning of almost any Biblical term or concept can be twisted about until it comes to denote its very opposite.

In this same manner the evolutionary hypothesis, for example, can also be applied to the doctrine of Christ's second coming and the truth of the consummation of all things. The "question" then becomes: to what extent will God employ evolutionary processes to bring about the second creation and the final state of things? And by this sleight of hand the worst post-millennialism of the social-gospellers can be smuggled into the church in the name of the Christian faith.

Beware!

FROM OUR MISSION BOARD—

Jamaica An Open Door

by Rev. J. Kortering

What's being done in Jamaica?

This question is being raised very often nowadays both by our office bearers and our congregations. It is a good question; it should be raised and by all means demands an answer.

Jamaica is an open door.

It is a joy to be part of a church that has an open door.

Thus it was in Philadelphia when the Spirit spoke to her, "I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name," Rev. 3:8. Philadelphia was commended for her lively witness.

Since the terminology "open door" is derived from the letter to the church of Philadelphia, we should examine a moment the implications of this designation. Christ knew the works of this church; they consisted in being faithful to her calling to give testimony to those that were round about her. In her official ministry she sounded forth the true preaching, and her members were moved by the Spirit so that they gave testimony of it in their dealings with others in the city. To be sure this brought opposition, for "those of the synagogue of satan" had opposed them. Yet Christ reminded this church, "these things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no

man openeth." The church must not be discouraged in her work, God will surely cause His will to be done through her and therefore she must press on with an eye fixed to the "crown."

It is noteworthy that Philadelphia was small, "Thou hast a little strength." This tells us that we need not be "big" in order to witness. The little persecuted church that is preserved throughout history is in fact the only church that can and does witness.

We must not forget that the open door is of God! True it is that the church must use every means to find a "field of labor." Yet through the means of this searching, God directs His church to such a place where there is a willingness to hear and respond to the ministry of the church. This is true of Jamaica. God has directed us to Jamaica and has placed before us the needs of the people there.

And what are we doing about it?

Looking back, we can say with gratitude to God that we have made a good beginning. We have laid the foundation, which is the preaching of the Word of God. It is the truth of the Scriptures that has drawn us to the Jamaican churches and they to us. This becomes so obvious to all who have any dealing with these people. It is a fact that they desire to learn more about the Scriptures and have the confidence that we bring to them the truths of the Word of God. This has occasioned the open door.

Provision for the spiritual needs has been given in different forms. At three different times during the past years a minister and elder labored on the island for different lengths of time. Besides this we have been instructing the ministers and some of the elders via written correspondence courses accompanied by a discussion recorded on tape. This has been done covering the Old Testament and, presently, the New Testament. Every week the Reformed Witness Hour is being sent to them by tape recording.

These efforts have been directed primarily to the ministers of the churches. When our emissaries labored there, they preached to the congregations to be sure, but their weekly time was spent mostly in schooling the ministers, giving them basic instruction in how to use the Bible concordance, making sermon outlines, order of worship, and preaching. This instruction is being well received and progress is being made daily.

In order to do this work, however, one needs certain tools and materials. Psalters and Bibles have been sent to the different churches enabling the people to have these for worship. The ministers have been provided with concordances, sample sermon outlines, study materials, tape recorders and tape, and also copies of our own printed material such as *Standard Bearers*, *Beacon Lights*, Sunday School materials, pamphlets, etc. Money has been sent to them to facilitate the return of tapes and correspondence.

Some money has been spent on their building improvements, although most of this is still in the planning stage. When our brethren labored in their midst, assistance was given to help with some of the specific needs of the sick and poor.

It is becoming more and more apparent to the Committee that we stand at an important juncture as far as our work in Jamaica is concerned. The spiritual well being of the churches there demands that we put forth a more concerted effort to increase our work on the field.

One important step in this direction was taken at our meeting of February 14. At that time we adopted a long range plan for Jamaica.

Attaining top priority in the set of directives was the need to increase our work by personal contact through men in the field itself. This involves different aspects. In the broadest sense we should give consideration to calling a man to the office of missionary to work exclusively in Jamaica. In the past our calling of a missionary through First Church has never specified where such a man should work. The Mission Committee and eventually Synod will be giving consideration to this aspect of the calling. In a more limited sense it is recognized that until such a man can be sent to Jamaica to labor full-time, something has to be provided in the interim. Here we face different alternatives, either requesting a congregation to release their minister for a shorter time (a few months) or for a longer period (from one half to an entire year). It stands to reason: the longer the stay on the island the more effective the work.

Personal contact assumes top priority for different reasons. Any instruction can best be given by sitting down and discussing the material together. Correspondence, even via tape recorder, is a long and difficult process. The brethren that are engaged in this work know all too well this fact. Besides this, any re-organization into four main congregations, if this is finally approved by the congregations there, will require personal supervision to make this change as smooth and orderly as possible. We know that there is need for the eventual construction of government approved church buildings in these central locations. If we have a man on the field, — and from this point of view it need not be a minister, — he can supervise the purchase of material and the actual construction of these churches. The entire aspect of meeting the material needs of these people revolves around someone being there and giving them assistance in the name of Christ. If we have someone on the island at the time the used clothing would arrive, such a one could inform the customs officers that it is intended for distribution among the poor and thus we could be sure of gaining entrance duty-free. The distribution could be done according to the individual needs of the people without partiality, since it would be handled by one that is not directly involved. By such personal contact the people who are in need of the mercies of Christ, who require medical attention and who are special objects of charity can be provided for properly.

If we take a long range view, we also stand before the need for training young men for the ministry in the Jamaican churches. The present ministerial leaders are advanced in age, and younger men are naturally more receptive to training. Hence, our long

range plan calls for the training of two young men of the island for the ministry. This can be done either by the personal instruction of a missionary working on the island or by taking him to this country and training him in our present grade school along with special training on the side. There presently is such a young man, Uriah Benz who is 15 years old and earnestly desires to come to the states to study for the ministry in order that he can return to the island to labor amongst the churches there. His aged father is failing in health but prays daily that his son may be trained somehow for the ministry. This young man feels he is called and seeks a way to be trained to that end. We have to give sincere consideration to such a young man.

There are other things that have to be considered in our planning. The members of the churches desire to learn the Psalter numbers but are hampered by their inability to either read the words or the music. Already an offer was received from the Hope Heralds to provide tapes of their singing Psalter numbers in such a way that they can be used in leading the Jamaicans in their singing. They are presently taking this project as their own and are raising money for this work.

Since much contact which we have with the Jamaicans is via tape recordings, investigation should be made into the latest portable tape recorders that are on the market, which are reasonably priced, easy to handle since they have cassette tapes, and have battery and A.C. connections, a thing which must be considered since all these groups do not have electricity. The Jamaica committee is also investigating the possibility of broadcasting our Reformed Witness Hour over a radio station on the island. If this could be arranged, there would be need for providing the people with tiny

transistory radios, a project that could well be taken on by our Sunday Schools or other groups.

Specific details on much of this will be worked out before Synod and thus presented to Synod for consideration and decision.

From some of these observations, it is hoped that our people will begin to realize that God has given to us an open door in Jamaica. We stand very really before the calling of God what are we going to do with the brethren and sisters there who have so many needs. As we begin to build upon past labors, we realize only too acutely that God calls us to answer His call, "Come over and help us." God has given to us such a rich heritage of the truth, and others cry out for us to share it with them. God has blessed us materially; just look at our beautiful church buildings and our nicely furnished houses. And what are we going to do for those who seek our help to care for them who are too poor to care for the sick in their own midst?

We have but one answer, we will do all that God enables us to do. We have made a beginning, we must continue to expand in this work. True, we do not have much; we "have a little strength." God calls us to expend even this little strength upon the needs of His people who cry daily for help. Surely there must be some in our midst who feel compelled to go to Jamaica to work; surely there must be some who will give of their time and wealth to meet the needs of these fellow believers. There have been in the past; we must trust in God that He will provide these needs in the future.

How comforting to the church to hear the words directed to the church of Philadelphia, "I have given to thee an open door, *and no man can shut it.*"

May God give us ears to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

IN HIS FEAR—

Love and the Neighbor's Name

by Rev. J. A. Heys

In the ninth commandment, and thus at the end of the law, we find mention of the neighbour for the first time in that law.

The first four commandments speak literally of God. The fifth makes mention of father and mother. Six, seven and eight are quite general in their brief, forceful commands. But nine and ten make mention literally of the neighbour.

We would, in the treatment of the matter of Love and the Neighbor's Name, be inclined at once to try to determine who that neighbour is. That makes good sense apparently. How can we speak of the neighbour's

name unless we know who that neighbour is? And unto whom must we show love? Is it not to that neighbour in his name? But the words of Jesus urge us to go more deeply into the matter and to have another approach. You will recall that a certain lawyer once tried to tempt Jesus with the question, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And when Jesus told him to love God with all his heart, his soul, his mind and, his strength and to love his neighbour as himself, he asked the question, willing to justify himself, "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus then told the parable of the Merciful Samaritan and applied it

with the question, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?" The lawyer answered, "He that shewed mercy on him." Whereupon Jesus said unto him, "Go, and do thou likewise." The plain thrust of Jesus' words is that we are to ask *ourselves* the question, "Whose neighbour am I?" From a practical point of view that must be our approach to the problem. All too quickly we assume the position of the lawyer in order to try to escape our obligation. It removes it a little farther from us to ask the question as to who is our neighbour. It brings it at our own feet and presents us with our own calling more forcefully to ask the question as to whose neighbour *we* are.

We are neighbour, then, to every man, woman and child whom we may meet in one way or another. We may meet them personally and physically upon the street as the priest, the levite and the Samaritan. We may meet them upon the printed page or over the phone, the radio or television. Their needs may be made known to us by the sight of our eyes, by the sound in our ears, by the doleful cry or by the touching letter. They may stand before us in their names only, or they may stand physically before us. They may be there in their names by the printed page or spoken word. And the telephone makes such a convenient means of gossip and lengthens the back fence to stretch it across city limits and state lines, if not continents, to ruin the neighbour's name. Of course, the written letter is also such a powerful tool for widening the scope of backbiting and slander, of gossip and character assassination. Therefore we are neighbour to so many people, because today we can get in contact with so many people near and far.

Our neighbour is the man next to us; and we are neighbours to those who are next to us. We are neighbours to every man that crosses our path and to every man whose life's pathway we cross. However, he is neighbour to us and we are neighbour to him as long as we can remember him. We may have met him but for a few moments, and we may never see him again or even hear of him again. But that does not mean that we may speak evil of him just because he is no longer on the scene. Death does not even take away the fact that he was our neighbour. We may not after the neighbour's decease speak the evil against him that we did not dare to do in his lifetime, any more than we may do so about him in his absence, when we did not dare in his presence.

A man has a name in this life; but we can sin against him after he is dead, if we bear false witness against him in gossip, backbiting, slander and the like. We do not hurt him, as we could while he is alive. But we sin against him nevertheless and against his family as well that is still living. And, of course, we sin against God when we speak evil of the departed, whether they be saints or sinners. Exactly because when a man dies his soul is still in existence (and he is not like the beast whose soul is in its blood and is destroyed when its blood is shed) he still is a person; and when we misuse his name, we do sin.

By the name of the person we mean the revelation of his person. The person stands before us in his name. Mention the name of a man, and you touch his person, you refer to a person, you call the attention of others to a definite person. We sometimes use the word name also in the sense of reputation. A man may have a good name or a bad name. And then we mean a good reputation or an evil one. We need but mention a person's name in connection with a sin, and we have attached sin to that person. Now, there are times when we have to do that. The judge in the courtroom must point out the guilty party by name. He does not simply pronounce that a crime has been committed, but he designates the culprit by the use of his name. However, then that man does not get a bad name. He had that name and deserved that name because of his deed. The judge simply declares that justice demands that this name be known for the protection of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty.

When the law, then, says that we may not bear false witness against the neighbour, it means that we may not give him a bad name. Under NO circumstances may *we* give him a bad name. He may have one — and do we all not have one before God?—but that bad name must not be due to the fact that we have borne false witness against him. When I say, *We* may not give him a bad name, I mean, we as neighbours. The judge in the court room, the elders in the consistory room, the parent in the home stand in a different relation to the one accused of sin than a neighbour does to a neighbour. Sin must be reported to the authorities, and thus a potentially evil name must be given. We say potentially evil because there are times when we must leave the possibility that the accused can defend himself and is not worthy of that evil name, which from our point of view seems just and which we report in concern for truth and righteousness. This does not mean that you quickly rush a matter to the consistory or to the earthly judge. You can sin against the neighbour that way. We better be very sure of our facts before we witness anything *against* the neighbour, whether it is true or false witness. We better be sure when we witness against him that we speak a true witness, and that means that we investigate thoroughly and do not act upon some gossip we heard from a neighbour and which has presented us with only one side of the matter. But it is possible that we are ourselves eye-witnesses of a matter that looks all wrong to us, or which we deem to be a sin against us, that the ruling body, having sifted the evidence and having heard the explanation of the accused, finds not to have been a sin after all.

To prevent such a false witness the witness ought first to contact the party against whom he plans to witness. The explanation given to him might remove the offence or, if a private sin, obtain the confession that would make reporting and witnessing to the authorities unnecessary, and in fact wrong. A minister is seen at one o'clock in the morning riding with a strange woman! His consistory ought to know that! And Sunday we celebrate the Lord's Supper! How can that

man serve? And so the consistory is alerted and witness is brought against him. Had he been approached first, he could have explained the whole matter away to the satisfaction of this "witness." This was simply a former parishioner passing through, who had requested his assistance in transporting her from one depot in a strange, large city to another depot, from the airport to the bus depot or the like. O, it was true witness in as far as the fact goes that he was seen with that woman. But a false construction was placed upon it and it was a witness against his good name unjustly. We better be sure of our facts, and that means, surely, that we contact the neighbour against whom we intend to witness or believe that we must witness. What seems to us a potentially bad name may not be such after all. And then we will obtain the name of not dealing with the neighbour in love.

The ninth commandment implies the right to witness. But we insist then that it must be witness before the proper parties. If it is a private sin, one must first bring it to the attention of the one who has offended. He has a right to that. And, if it is a private sin, no ecclesiastical body will listen to it, unless the offended has first labored with the offender. But how much more evil to witness against the neighbour to those who are not in authority and thus not in a God-ordained position to pass judgment in the case. It may be true witness. It may even be a very grievous evil that has been committed. But it is not love to witness of it in a wider circle than that of the offended and offender and any other eyewitnesses of the deed. The reason for this is obvious. We must do all in our power to deliver from that sin. We must not want that neighbour to continue in his sin any longer. But, therefore, we must not make it hard for him to confess and to turn from his evil way by exposing it to more eyes and to more ears. The more public we make the matter, the more difficult we make it for the offender. Love does not want to make it harder but to bring to re-

pentance as soon as possible.

Gossip, slander, backbiting are seeking revenge and are sinning against the one who sinned against us. All these reveal a heart that is itself not right with the offender. And all these, therefore, also reveal a heart that is not right with God. "Vengeance is Mine, I will recompense, saith the Lord. "Hebrews 10:30. But we deny Him this right when we gossip and slander and backbite. We are going to beat Him to it. We are not satisfied with His slow justice and are not content to wait for the judgment day. We want revenge in this life. We want to get even, rather than to get a confession, and conversion.

The same is true of a public sin when there is gossip, backbiting and slander. When we witness against a neighbour whose sin is known far and wide already, and we do our best to see to it that others also know about it, we sin against God and that neighbour. For a few more to know about it will not now make it more difficult for him to confess. In fact he may know absolutely nothing about your backbiting and gossip. And yet it is a sin against him and against God. For it is not an act of love to that sinner. True as the witness may be, so that in self-righteous defence you may deny slander, it still is not love that speaks of one's evil to a neighbour. That must be done only to the authorities; and, we must add, to the *proper* authorities, to those who have direct rule over that individual in that particular case of sin. If we speak with each other of the sin of another, our heart is not right towards that object of our speech. In His fear we will not want to bear any witness against any man to a neighbour that will cause that man's name to become evil. Love does not rejoice in sin or in relating sin to another. Love will do that only to the proper authorities for the sake of the salvation of that individual. All other reporting, spreading to *neighbours* is sin as well as the sin that is being spread by this gossip, backbiting or slander.

FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Book Of Hebrews

by Rev. G. Lubbers

NOT MILK BUT SOLID FOOD (Hebrews 6:1-3)

As far as the time is concerned the readers should already be teachers of others. But, alas, they are as those who must again be taught the first principles of the oracles of God. They have not yet attained unto "perfection." They are not yet "teleioon," that is, full grown men and women in Christ, who have come to spiritual maturity. They must not go backwards but forwards in their understanding of the truth in Christ!

The latter they have failed to do!

This means that they must not again lay the founda-

tion. Not once more must the word of the beginning of Christ be preached to them and learned by them. Perhaps the "beginning of Christ" refers to the fundamental explanation of the fulfilment of the Messianic promises in Jesus Christ. These are the rudiments of the Christian life which are implied in the teachings of Christ. These lie in the realm of the subjective experience. But there is also the deeper background and divine purpose in this redemption in Christ which must be studied and believed so that we may press on to perfection. The former are the "milk" diet, and the

latter is the "solid food" diet, respectively for "babes" and for the "matured" christian.

The milk diet is continually concerned with what the catechumens had learned and been taught. These truths are indeed the "foundation" and are necessary. However, when once the foundation has been laid, we do not lay it again. Then we must build upon this substructure the further instruction in the faith, and thus continue in the hope, firm to the end. Only when we continue to grow can we be firm to the end!

First of all in this "milk diet" is the foundation of "repentance from dead works." The genitive case "foundation of repentance" is the genitive of identity. Repentance is the foundation in the life of the Christian. That is the beginning. The term "metanoia" is really an after-thought. It is a complete change of the entire conscious life as it proceeds from the heart. It is a new and basic attitude of love for God and for our neighbor and a hatred for sin and godly sorrow that we have sinned against God. It is positively true joy in God and that through Christ, with a delight to do the will of God after the inward man. What a solid foundation of new life in the reborn elect child of God!

That is repentance. It is repentance from dead works. It is leaving these dead works, whether they be those of the legalistic Pharisee or of the moralistic Greek. It is really a turning away from dead works to serve the living God. It is basically a fruit of God's renewal of the mind whereby we are transformed. This is a basic transformation from darkness into God's marvelous light. (Romans 12:1, 2; I Peter 2:9) Dead works are works which are devoid of love and godliness. This is basic. It is the foundation; repentance from dead works of a conscience which is not cleansed from sin.

This cleansing from dead works, by repentance, is the counterpart and fruit of "faith in God." Without this "faith" it is impossible to please God. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1) This is faith in God, His Word and Promise in Christ Jesus, a drawing near in true faith to the throne of grace. It is walking in the new and living way, the blood-sprinkled way in Christ Jesus. These are the basic matters which we learn as the "beginning" in Christ.

Closely connected with the forgoing is the "teaching of baptisms."! Perhaps the phrase here in question does not refer to a simple teaching of the meaning of christian baptism, the New Testament sacrament. The plural seems to point in a different direction. "Baptisms." Calvin interprets the plural as referring to the "solemn rites, or the stated days of baptizing." He would interpret phrases "doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment" in apposition to "repentance from dead works and faith in God." In other words, if one continues in the first principles of Christ then the subjects in which we will ever continue are: doctrine of baptisms, etc. These teachings of baptism perhaps are the instruction concerning the difference between the old Testament "washings" as looking toward the

Christ to come, and the New Testament Baptism as the washing of regeneration in Christ's blood. At any rate this is known to be one of the "fundamentalia" in the Jewish synagogue. This quite likely took in the entire spectrum of the feast days and the special occasions. A great deal of time is absorbed in the teaching concerning *baptisms*. This all belongs to the *rudiments*. This is not solid food, but milk.

But what must we say about the meaning of the rite "laying on of hands" which is here mentioned. There are various passages in the New Testament where the rite in question is referred to. A brief but instructive article can be found on this rite and custom of the imposition of hands from the pen of Dr. James Orr in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. II, page 1335. Writes Dr. Orr, in part,

The act or the ceremony of the imposition of hands appears in the OT in various connections: in the act of blessing (Gen. 48:14 ff); in the ritual of sacrifice (hands of the offerer laid on the head of the victim, Ex. 29: 10,15, 19: Lev. 1:4; 3:2,8,13; 4:4, 24, 29; 8:14; 16:21); in witness-bearing in capital offenses (Lev. 24:14) The tribe of Levi was set apart by solemn imposition of hands (Num. 8:10); Moses appointed Joshua to be his successor by a similar act (Num. 27: 18,23; Dt. 34:9). The idea in these cases varies with the purpose of the act. The primary idea seems to be that of conveyance or transference (cf. Lev. 16:21), but, conjoined with this, in certain instances, are the ideas of identification and of devotion to God.

In the NT Jesus laid hands on the little children (Mt. 19:13,15) and on the sick (Mt. 9:18; Mk. 6:5 etc.) and the apostles laid hands on those whom they baptized that they might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17, 19; 19:6) and in healing (Acts 12:17). Specially the imposition of hands was used in the setting apart of persons to a particular office or work in the church. This is noticed as taking place in the appointment of the Seven (Acts 6:6) in the sending out of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:3) at the ordination of Timothy (I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6), but though not directly mentioned, it seems likely that it accompanied all acts of ordination of presbyters and deacons (Cf. I Tim. 5:22; Heb. 6:2). The presbyters could hardly convey what they had not themselves received (I Tim. 1:14). Here again the fundamental idea is communication. The act of laying on of hands was accompanied by prayer (Acts 6:6; 8:15; 13:3), and the blessing sought was imparted by God Himself. No ground is afforded by this symbolical action for a sacrament of 'orders.'

From the foregoing it is rather clear that the "laying on of hands" here referred to was a symbolical act in connection with the ordination of office bearers in the church. This, too, belongs to the rudiments. This, too, was one of the matters which belonged to the matters which are for those not exercised in the word. It belonged to the simple instruction of the catechumens in the church. It is denominated "milk" and not "solid food." It is for babes!

Furthermore, the writer speaks also of the articles of "resurrection of the dead" and "eternal judgment."

Now these are really important articles of faith. However, when once learned we must not return to them and relearn them, but we must press on. This was taught to the most simple catechumens, prior to their public confession of faith. But the readers are far past this as "for the time!"

Hence, the readers must leave behind these teachings and be "borne along" to perfection. This perfection in Christ, the fuller understanding of the counsel of God in relation to the King-Priesthood of Christ, the writer will set forth. He cannot wait till the audience and readers are ready to receive it, and are no longer dull of hearing. Hence, he writes, "And this we shall do, if indeed God permit." For the writer knows that the outcome and fruitfulness of his writing depends solely upon the will of God. Man can water, and he can plant; but the increase is of the Lord. And so the writer will indeed give the marvelous and profound interpretation of the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, the Son of God of whom David had written "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4)

Hebrews 6:4-8

(Read From Own Bible)

THE PERIL OF APOSTACY CITED AS A WARNING (Hebrews 6:4-8)

The writer states here a great warning which should shock the reader to his senses, including you and me. He is warning the Hebrew Christians against being spiritual dullards, and exciting them to be borne on to perfection. Such warnings form a necessary part of the preaching. This we have repeatedly noticed here in this letter to the Hebrews. (Compare Hebrews 4:7-4:13) We shall have further occasion

to take note of these warnings in this book of Hebrews (See Hebrews 10:26-30) In these warnings we are dealing with the "means of grace," that is, with the preaching of the Word as it is accompanied by the operation of the Holy Spirit. God has connected in His wisdom these warnings and the grace of obedience and the doing the will of Him as our sovereign Lord. And we would tempt God in the church if we were to separate these two, which He has in His wisdom joined together! (Confer Canons of Dort, III, IV Heads of Doctrine, Article 17)

Preaching of the Gospel is such that it is the power of God in those who are saved. This power (*dunamis*) is such that it reveals itself in bringing forth faith in the elect. Thus the elect have revealed to them the righteousness of God out of faith unto faith. There is nothing which can stand in the way of this power. It is the power of God. (Romans 1:16, 17) It ever is the almighty and omnipresent power of God which makes the dead alive, and calls the things which are not as though they were. (Romans 4:17) Thus Abraham, the father of believers, was empowered in faith. There was nothing impossible with God. (Luke 1:37; Gen. 18:14)

Yet, here in the text under consideration, the teaching is that there are certain cases where something is "impossible" (*adunatos*) under the means of grace. It is impossible to "renew" those who were once enlightened and who fell away; it is impossible for such to be renewed unto repentance.

We may not know exactly how to interpret this text. Forsooth it is a knotty text exegetically. However, we do know that this was written for our warning that we shall give heed to the Word and press on unto spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus.

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

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

Worship Order

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

As far as is known to undersigned, our Protestant Reformed Churches have never officially considered the matter of adopting a unified order of worship. Although we do have various synodically adopted liturgical forms, we do not have a synodically prescribed form of worship.

If this matter should ever be brought to the synod in the form of an overture, there are two important questions that will have to be faced. The first is whether or not, according to the Church Order, this matter properly belongs to the synod to decide. Is it something that falls into the category of "things per-

taining to the churches in common" and, therefore, a matter that Article 30 of the Church Order authorizes synod to decide or is it something that belongs strictly to the jurisdiction of the autonomy of each individual church? This matter is not as simple as it may at first appear. One might claim that of all the things that the churches have in common, nothing is more common than their worship and, therefore, it unquestionably falls within the province of synod to decide this. Those who favor this position might also attempt to bolster their stand by uncharitably accusing those who dissent of being congregationalistic. But are we

not somewhat begging the question? Before we can surrender this matter to the province of the synod, it must be established that a uniform order of worship in a given denomination of churches is necessary. Desirability for a certain thing is not to be confused with necessity. Any overture requesting the synod to deal with this matter would have to show that it is mandatory that all our churches worship according to the same established order. Only if this is done may the synod determine for all the churches what that order is to be. If this cannot be done and it must be granted that there is the possibility and allowability of a variety of worship orders in the churches, the synod would have no jurisdiction to act. Should the synod do so nevertheless, it is not difficult to see that this would be but one step in the direction of a synodically-controlled church. One by one the rights of the individual churches could be taken away. The basic problem then is: "Is worship and the order of worship a local affair or a denominational affair?" To ascribe to synod the right to tell each church how it may worship would be, in my opinion, going too far. If synod would assume this prerogative, it could also conceivably tell the church whether worship services were to be held in the morning, afternoon or evening; the time and length of the services; etc.

Let us assume, however, that all of the churches would agree that a unified order of worship is desirable and, therefore, agree to have the synod adopt such a form. Then there is a second problem that must be faced; a problem which now must be faced by each consistory individually. The problem is already an important and difficult one when limited by local considerations but it becomes many times magnified when broadened to denominational scope. It is the problem of what that worship-order shall be? What is to be included and excluded from our worship-order? Must the service begin with a prayer, a song, a confession, or some other way? Must the congregation stand or sit when singing? Likewise this same question may be applied to praying. When is the proper time in worship to read the Scriptures? Should the service end with the benediction or should the closing benediction be followed with the singing of the doxology? At what point in the service should the offerings be received and should this be done during congregational singing or in silence? To these many more questions could be added and it can hardly be expected that all the churches would agree on all these intricate points. Neither is this necessary because, as we wrote in our last article, the important thing is not the chronological order but rather whether all the elements introduced in our worship are contributory to the objective of worship. For this reason, too, it is preferable that these things be regulated consistorially rather than synodically.

Our churches have no synodically prescribed form of worship. As we wrote, this matter has never been before our synod, but it might be of interest to our readers that, at the time of the origin of our churches, this matter was very much under consideration in our

mother church. Since 1857, the date of the origin of the Christian Reformed Church, there had been in use what we will call the "old Order of Worship." This Order had never been officially adopted, but simply had the sanction of time and usage. It was very much like the Order of Worship that is used in most of our churches today.

In 1916 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church took up the matter of the improvement of the liturgy. One of the motives for entering upon this liturgical task was the desire for a uniform liturgy. As the synod embarked upon this work, two important things must be directed to our attention. The first is that it was never questioned that the establishment of a uniform liturgy is the ecclesiastical prerogative of the synod. Failure to determine this question first became the occasion, as we shall see presently, of much trouble later. Secondly, the synod did not move hastily in this task. The various committees of synod worked for twelve years and it was not until 1928 before the synod adopted what we will call the "new Order of Worship."

When this was done in 1928, protests were immediately registered by two Classes (Hudson and Pacific). Already in 1920 when a changed Order of Worship was proposed which was virtually the same as the one finally adopted in 1928, some of the churches objected and urged liturgical congregationalism. It is claimed that they did so, not because they had turned congregational in principle, but for the simple reason that the congregational or consistorial determination of the liturgy afforded an easy escape from a liturgy (Synodical) that was not agreeable to them. It is interesting to note, however, that when the protests came after the synod of 1928, they were not directed against the synodical establishment of a liturgy but rather against certain alleged objectionable features of the Worship-Order that had been adopted. Thus it appears that even those churches that objected did nevertheless concede the right of synod to establish the liturgy.

In spite of this, however, synod did an about-face. In 1930 she repudiated this position. Article 117 of the Acts of Synod reads: "It is not to be sustained upon the grounds of Scripture and Church Order that it lies within the jurisdiction of Synod to prescribe a specific order of worship and to enforce its introduction into the churches. Neither Scripture nor Church Order produce warrant for such action." Upon the advice of its pre-advisory committee, Synod decided to *recommend* a liturgy to the churches, but to leave its introduction to the discretion of each local church. It is argued that it is "the right of the local consistories to consult the best interests of their churches with respect to the introduction of an Order of Worship" and this right synod intends to recognize. And then the synod further declared "that an open way is left for synod to employ means to advise and educate our churches with a view to reaching as great a measure of uniformity as is possible and practicable."

The same synod of 1930 changed somewhat the

adopted Order of Worship of 1928 and then recommended this "Newest Order" to the churches. Synod "urged the consistories not to make any changes in their public worship other than those included in the Order adopted by Synod and impresses upon the consistories the fact that denominational unity and loyalty require that all the churches shall conform to whatever decisions touching this matter have been taken, unless they shall be proved to be contrary to God's Word; and further insists that consistories should refrain from introducing them by independent action, but make known their desires through the regular channels." Though great power of persuasiveness, urging and insistence is employed by the synod, the fact nevertheless remains that no church is *obliged* to adopt Synod's Model Liturgy. Whether all of the churches in the process of time came around to conforming with synod's desire so that there is a uniform order of worship in the Christian Reformed Church today, I am not prepared to say. Neither do I know whether this matter came up again at later synods and whether there is in usage in the churches today a form of worship of a later date. This is not our present concern. Our interest in this matter centers in the question of synodical jurisdiction because, if the matter of a uniform Worship-Order ever comes up in our churches, it is hoped that before any liturgical changes are made, recommended or imposed, this matter is thoroughly explored and decided on the basis of the Word of God.

Perhaps in our churches the anticipated difficulty of obtaining a uniform order of worship is not as acute as we think it is. Maybe our churches already are more uniform in this respect than we suspect. We have no way of knowing this because to date we have received word from only two of our churches as to what order of worship they use and, as we wrote before, this can hardly serve as a basis for comparison. Certainly we cannot draw any denominational conclusions from this scant evidence.

On the other hand, it may also be that the form of worship employed by our various churches is more diversified than we realize. If this should be the case,

it is certainly not our intention to say and neither do we want to leave the impression that we think one particular form is better than others or that all others are wrong. The order of worship cannot and should not be stereotyped. There are many factors that enter in and influence the choice of every church. Among these are such things as traditional background and geography. If, therefore, a synod were going to adopt a particular form and impose it upon all the churches, it is very questionable whether a suitable form could be found that would answer to the particular needs of churches in different localities and with different historical and traditional background. It is very possible that through the imposition of such a worship-order more damage than anything else would be done.

Another factor that must be considered and which may also be regarded as an argument against a synodically imposed unified worship-order is the advisability of allowing for periodic changes in the form of worship. The order of worship ought to have a certain amount of flexibility and not be absolutely stereotyped. By fixing all the parts of worship into a certain mold we tend to become traditionalistic in the bad sense of the word. We then begin to do what we do in our worship out of custom or form and fail to realize the spiritual significance of these acts. We become so attached to a certain form that we begin to think that any deviation from it is *per se* heresy. By allowing changes in the order of worship from time to time we avoid some of this and are kept more alert to the more important matters that concern the essence of worship.

In this same line we should remember not to oppose change just because it is different. The mere fact that our fathers did a certain thing a certain way for a number of years does not mean that this is the only way it can be rightly done. And although all change is not necessarily improvement, we must be open-minded enough to consider the possibility that it might be. Any change that will truly enhance our worship and enable us in some richer way to give expression to our praise of God ought to be welcomed. Such improvements in worship are much easier to enact when these things are regulated by each consistory than they would be if the matter of worship were synodically controlled.

The Scholarship Fund Committee reminds all those interested in applying for the 1968 Scholarship Fund Award to mail their applications to:

Prof. H. Hanko
4665 Ju-Lee-On, S.W.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

Deadline for filing applications is May 1, 1968. Applications may be obtained from your Young People's Society Secretary.

The Federation Board
Ruthellen Bol, Sec'y.

The Student Aid Committee will meet on request before May 12 to process any applications for aid. Please notify Mr. Peter C. Cnossen, 2151 Godfrey Ave., S.W., Wyoming, Mich. 49509.

The Free Christian School of Edgerton is in need of a teacher for the lower room, Grades 1 thru 4. If interested in filling this position, please contact:

Mr. Allen Hendriks
RR II, Box 87
Jasper, Minnesota 56144

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

David and Abner

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.
II Samuel 3:12

There was something within him that would not allow David to try to bring all of Israel under his own rule by the use of force. Even after the decisive victory of his men over Abner's Gibeon, David would not press his advantage. Those of the people who remained with Ishbosheth were also Israelites, and he could not attack his own brethren. The result was that years passed by with nothing more than small but frequent skirmishes that could not in themselves turn the tide one way or the other. Nevertheless, through it all one thing was becoming evident. David was becoming stronger and stronger at the expense of the side of Abner and Ishbosheth.

To no one was this latter state of affairs more evident than to Abner, the power behind the throne of Ishbosheth. His whole plan of approach had been built in the anticipation that he gradually would be able to solidify the loyalty of Israel behind him until finally he would be able to overcome David and then dispose of Ishbosheth. But Abner was no fool, and when it became evident that he was gradually losing out, he recognized that fact. It was only Ishboseth who did not. Weak in mind as he was in body, Ishbosheth continued to act not only as though he were sure to win out against David in the end but as though he were himself self-sufficient in his rule over Israel without any real need of Abner.

Abner had been quite conscious of the weakness and folly of Ishbosheth, of course, from the very first; but as long as he had been able to believe that someday he would be able to dispose of Ishbosheth and take over himself, he was able to endure it. Now, however, it was becoming evident that it was David who was growing in strength and influence, and not he himself. In the realization of his failure, the blundering presumptions of Ishbosheth were more than he could endure. Within him there began to grow a bitter resentment that wanted to expose the hopeless, helpless weakness of this man for what it was. He wanted to hurt him and thereby bring their now futile relationship to a head.

What Abner finally did hit at was one of the most tender, sensitive areas of royal life. He entered into what remained of the harem of king Saul, and taking one of Saul's former concubines, Rizpah by name, he lay with her. It was a cruel, mean, humiliating blow

which could not but strike Saul's son Ishbosheth to the quick. In that day there was no higher symbol of royalty in all of its greatness than in the harem which only a king was able to possess. The larger the harem and the more highly born its members the greater was the reputation of the king; it was the highest and most prized symbol of his office. Thus, when a king died, what happened to his harem was one of the most telling indications of the respect with which his memory was maintained. If the harem was kept intact and unviolated, it was an indication of highest respect for a deceased king by his successor. If, in turn, a king's successor would take his harem to himself and use it at will, it was a way of saying that he was greater and more powerful than his predecessor. While again, if a king's harem was allowed to be broken up and used at will by men of lesser position and status, it was an open mockery scorning the reputation of that king and his memory in the land which once he ruled. There was no more cutting blow at the reputation of a fallen king that could be given. Thus when Abner openly entered and violated the harem of king Saul, it was no mere act of thoughtless lust, it was an open ridicule of the fallen king and of the inability of his son to protect and keep the reputation of his father.

There was something plaintive about the response of Ishbosheth to this stinging action on the part of Abner. If he were king indeed and in his own right, there was no question about what he should do. Such an offense demanded the penalty of death. But Ishbosheth was helpless before the power of Abner and he knew it. The most he could muster the courage to do was to approach the offending captain with a sort of plaintive rebuke in his voice as he said, "Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?"

It was, however, all that Abner wanted. As weak as the rebuke was in its coming, he felt that it was sufficient occasion for him to shout back as though in righteous indignation, "Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do show kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me today with a fault concerning this woman? So do God to Abner, and more also, except as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him; to translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and

to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba." As an argument what Abner said was quite spurious; but to him it didn't matter. He was looking for an excuse to free himself from this futile alliance, and this was enough. Because Ishbosheth had dared to rebuke him, he was now free to practice treachery, or at least, so his conscience would allow him to think.

Before the onrush of Abner's shouting, Ishbosheth was stunned into silence. Cowering he retreated and never dared speak to Abner a word of reproof again. Being the coward that he was, he could only stand by and observe all that was soon to follow in anguished silence.

But as far as Abner was concerned, he now felt himself free. Quickly he called a messenger to him and sent him off to David with this message, "Whose is the land? Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee."

There was one thing about David from which he could not seem to escape, that was, a feeling of deep respect for all those whom he had always looked up to as his elders. Abner was one of these. He had already been an important man in Saul's army when David had first come to be a part of it at the battle of the valley of Elah, even though he was not then yet as all-powerful as he had come to be later on. From that day on, David had come to look upon him with a feeling of utmost respect. When now, therefore, there came to him a message from Abner offering to join forces with him and work together, David was unable to discern the dubious motive that was behind it, and he saw no reason to refuse what Abner offered.

Nevertheless, there was one reservation which David held deep in his soul before any resolution could be arrived at. David too realized the great symbolic importance which a king's harem held for him in that day. In fact, he had himself begun to multiply unto himself many more wives than was good for him or his kingdom or his family. Surely David should have known both from his knowledge of the law of God and of the history of Israel that a multiplicity of wives had never brought less than misery to those who took them. But David was a man of his age with all of the weaknesses of a man. Already he had begun to multiply unto himself many more wives than was good, and so he would continue to do so in the future. He only was bowing to the values of his age which marked many wives as a sign of power and prestige. Moreover, there was one great humiliation in regard to his wives which he could never forget. Michal, his first wife and the daughter of Saul, had been taken after he fled from the royal palace and given to another man. It had been Saul's way of belittling him, and it had hurt. Now before he would consider any peace with Abner and Ishbosheth, this would have to be corrected. Thus he answered Abner, "Well, I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face." In fact,

he even went further and sent another messenger to Ishbosheth with this message, "Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines."

For Abner, of course, there was nothing to be lost by taking Michal from her present husband and restoring her to David. Quickly he sent the command that she should be brought to him. Meanwhile, he called together all of the elders of Israel and said to them, "Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you: now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies." Abner was a clever man and a shrewd manipulator of people. Even as before he had been effective in convincing the people that they should remain with Ishbosheth instead of joining with David, now he was equally effective in telling them to do what had evidently been their first desire. In fact, even the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe from which Saul had come and naturally the most loyal to his family, he convinced that it would be best to join him in uniting with David.

It was a small but impressive company of twenty men that finally accompanied Abner to Hebron where David was. They were a cross section of the kingdom of Israel and representative of how effective Abner could be in gathering the people behind him. Only one thing marred their journey as they went on their way. With them Abner was bringing Michal just as David had demanded; but her second husband was too attached to her to let her go. He followed behind the company weeping and would not desist until Abner himself turned to threaten his life.

Even more impressive than this, however, was the welcome with which David received them. To them was given a reception with a great feast as though they had always been the greatest of friends. David could not look upon a fellow member of the nation of Israel as anything but a brother regardless of how they had treated him in the past. Even though Abner had been the center of Saul's plot to pursue him and destroy him among the hills of Judea, this same man he was willing to receive with the highest honor a man could receive, sharing a feast at the table of the king.

Abner was overjoyed with the reception he received, for he could see visions of himself becoming as important in the kingdom of David as he had been in the kingdom of Saul, only now the kingdom and the honor would be even greater than it had ever been under Saul. Confident and joyful, he stood before David and spoke, "I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth."

Returning without a word of reproach from a man whom he had persecuted relentlessly, it looked as though once again all things were working in Abner's direction. What he hadn't figured, however, was the ways of a man as clever as himself, David's captain Joab.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Doctrine of Sin

The Second Period — 250-730 AD

The Pelagian Controversy

The Augustinian System

by Rev. H. Veldman

Calling attention to the truth as set forth by Augustine in connection with the doctrine of sin, we would make two preliminary observations. First of all, we have already called attention to the life of this church father, to his walk in sin and in immorality and his calling out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Pelagius did not experience this mighty transformation by the grace of God. It does not surprise us, therefore, that Augustine, in harmony with this transformation out of darkness into the Lord's marvellous light, entertains a deep and profound conception of sin and of the grace of God. This is to be expected. And, secondly, the late Rev. H. Hoeksema writes in his notes on the history of doctrine, that Augustine is also noted for his conception of God's sovereign predestination. To this we will call attention later. But also this lies in the very nature of the case. The truths of utter and total depravity and of God's sovereign predestination are inseparably connected and related. If the sinner be not totally depraved, is able of himself to choose the good and to accept the gospel — and the arminian always presents the gospel as an offer of salvation — then he plays a decisive part and role in his salvation, and God is not sovereign. But if the sinner be wholly dead in sins and in trespasses, is unable to do any good, to do anything in his own behalf, then the power that saves him, from the beginning even to the end, is always the Lord's. And then it also must follow that the Lord, Who alone begins and finishes this work of salvation, begins and finishes it in whomsoever He pleases to save. Complete and total depravity and the Lord's sovereign predestination are always inseparably connected and related.

Introducing this subject (the Augustinian System), Philip Schaff, in his *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. III, 816-817, writes as follows:

Augustine (354-430) had already in his *Confessions*, in the year 400, ten years before the commencement of the Pelagian controversy, set forth his deep and rich

experience of human sin and divine grace. This classical autobiography, which every theological student should read, is of universal application, and in it every Christian may bewail his own wanderings, despair of himself, throw himself unconditionally into the arms of God, and lay hold upon unmerited grace. Augustine had in his own life passed through all the earlier stages of the history of the church, and had overcome in theory and in practice the heresy of Manichaeism, before its opposite, Pelagianism, appeared. By his theological refutation of this latter heresy, and by his clear development of the Biblical anthropology, he has won the noblest and most lasting renown. As in the events recorded in his *Confessions* he gives views of the evangelical doctrines of sin and of grace, so in the doctrines of his anti-Pelagian writings he sets forth his personal experience. He teaches nothing which he had not felt. In him the philosopher and the living Christian are everywhere fused. His loftiest metaphysical speculation passes unconsciously into adoration. The living aroma of personal experience imparts to his views a double interest, and an irresistible attraction for all earnest minds.

Yet his system was not always precisely the same; it became perfect only through personal conflict and practical tests. Many of his earlier views — e.g., respecting the freedom of choice, and respecting faith as a work of man — he himself abandoned in his *Retractions*; and hence he is by no means to be taken as an infallible guide. He holds, moreover, the evangelical doctrines of sin and grace not in the Protestant sense, but, like his faithful disciples, the Jansenists, in connection with the sacramental and strict churchly system of Catholicism; he taught the necessity of baptismal regeneration and the damnation of all unbaptized children, and identified justification in substance with sanctification, though he made sanctification throughout a work of free grace, and not of human merit (we must bear in mind that when we read here of Catholicism, this does not mean Catholicism in the Roman Catholic sense of the word — H.V.). It remains the exclusive prerogative of the inspired

apostles to stand above the circumstances of their time, and never, in combating one error, to fall into its opposite. Nevertheless, Augustine is the brightest star in the constellation of the church fathers, and diffuses his light through the darkest periods of the middle ages, and among Catholics and Protestants alike, even to this day.

His anthropology may be exhibited under the three stages of the religious development of mankind, the *status integritatis*, the *status corruptionis*, and the *status redemptionis*, the states of integrity, corruption and of redemption.

THE PRIMITIVE STATE OF MAN

First of all, in distinction from the Pelagian conception, Augustine's conception of paradise is vastly higher and involves a far deeper fall and a far more glorious manifestation of redeeming grace. According to Philip Schaff, the first state of man resembles the state of the blessed in heaven, though it differs from that final state as the undeveloped germ from the perfect fruit. He, Schaff, expresses this as follows:

According to Augustine, man came from the hand of his Maker, his genuine masterpiece, without the slightest fault. He possessed freedom, to do good; reason, to know God; and the grace of God. But by this grace Augustine (not happy in the choice of his term) means only the general supernatural assistance indispensable to a creature, that he may persevere in good. The relation of man to God was that of joyful and perfect obedience. The relation of the body to the soul was the same. The flesh did not yet lust against the spirit; both were in perfect harmony, and the flesh was wholly subject to the spirit. "Tempted and assailed (of himself by no strife against) himself, Adam enjoyed in that place the blessedness of peace with himself." To this inward state, the outward corresponded. The paradise was not only spiritual, but also visible and material, without heat or cold, without weariness or excitement, without sickness, pains, or defects of any kind.

However, according to Schaff, Augustine's conception of the original paradise was that it was only relatively perfect, perfect in its kind. He writes:

It was perfect as a child may be a perfect child, while he is destined to become a man; or as the seed fulfils its idea as seed, though it has yet to become a tree. God alone is immutable and absolutely good; man is subject to development in time, and therefore to change. The primal gifts were bestowed on man simply as powers, to be developed in either one of two ways. Adam could go straight forward, develop himself harmoniously in untroubled unity with God, and thus gradually attain his final perfection; or he could fall away, engender evil by abuse of his free will, and develop himself through discords and contradictions. It was graciously made possible (to this expression, "graciously made possible," we would object — H.V.) that his mind should become incapable of error, his will, of sin, his body, of death; and by a normal growth this possibility would have become actual. But this was mere possibility, involving, in the nature of the case, the opposite possibility of error, sin, and death (hence, according to Augustine, Adam's creation

was of such a nature that it also involved the possibility of error, sin and death — H.V.).

Also, according to Schaff, Augustine makes the important distinction between the possibility of not sinning and the impossibility of sinning. Concerning this he writes as follows:

The former (the possibility of not sinning — H.V.) is conditional or potential freedom from sin, which may turn into its opposite, the bondage of sin. This belonged to man before the fall. The latter is the absolute freedom from sin or the perfected holiness, which belongs to God, to the holy angels who have acceptably passed their probation, and to the redeemed saints in heaven.

In like manner he distinguishes between absolute and relative immortality. The former is the impossibility of dying, founded upon the impossibility of sinning; an attribute of God and of the saints after the resurrection. The latter is the bare pre-conformation for immortality, and implies the opposite possibility of death. This was the immortality of Adam before the fall, and if he had persevered, it would have passed into the impossibility of dying; but it was lost by sin. (this is an interesting statement. Augustine speaks of an absolute immortality, although he also speaks of a relative immortality. We believe that immortality is not simply to be confused with an endless existence, but that it belongs to the life of the resurrection. Augustine seems to have taught this also — H.V.).

FREEDOM, also, Augustine holds to be an original endowment of man; but he distinguishes different kinds of it, and different degrees of its development, which we must observe, or we should charge him with self-contradiction.

By freedom Augustine understands, in the first place, simply *spontaneity* or *self-activity*, as opposed to action under external constraint or from animal instinct. Both sin and holiness are *voluntary*, that is, acts of the will, not motions of natural necessity. This freedom belongs at all times and essentially to the human will, even in the sinful state (in which the will is, strictly speaking, *self-willed*); it is the necessary condition of guilt and punishment, of merit and reward. In this view no thinking man can deny freedom, without destroying the responsibility and the moral nature of man. An involuntary will is as bald a self-contradiction as an unintelligent intelligence.

A second form of freedom is the *liberum arbitrium*, of freedom of choice. Like Pelagius he ascribes freedom of choice to the first man before the fall. God created man with the double capacity of sinning or not sinning, forbidding the former and commanding the latter. But Augustine differs from Pelagius in viewing Adam not as poised in entire indifference between good and evil, obedience and disobedience, but as having a positive constitutional tendency to the good, yet involving, at the same time, a possibility of sinning. Besides, Augustine, in the interest of grace and of true freedom, disparages the freedom of choice, and limits it to the beginning, the transient state of probation. This relative indecision cannot be at all predicated of God or the angels, of the saints or of sinners. (Pelagius, we know, teaches that the sinner retains this freedom of choice; he is inherently good and can choose the good. Augustine, however, maintains that this freedom of choice applies only to Adam before his fall; since his fall, man no longer has this freedom of choice, to be able to choose the good — H.V.).

ALL AROUND US—

The Proof Of It All

Campus Evangelism

Separating Presbyterians

by Prof. H. HANKO

THE PROOF OF IT ALL

It has been repeatedly argued in the *Standard Bearer* that for anyone of our schools to accept federal aid would inevitably result in some form of government control of education. There is sufficient evidence that this is true. But some people, for whatever motives, remain unconvinced. Nevertheless the evidence is growing and leaves the point beyond dispute.

In church-related colleges such as Hope College (related to the Reformed Church in America and located in Holland, Michigan) and Calvin College in Grand Rapids it is required of all students that they attend chapel exercises twice a week. In the March 16, 1968 edition of the *Grand Rapids Press* an item appeared concerning the problems which Hope College is now facing because they receive federal aid. Ninety-nine students have not fulfilled their chapel requirements in the second semester. They are currently being treated for this, with the possibility of suspension from school.

But the West Michigan Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union has entered the picture. How they were brought into the matter (whether by direct request by some disobedient student or students) is not related in the *Press* article. But they have been asked to investigate whether this rule on compulsory chapel attendance does not violate the constitutional separation of church and state. And the issue is precisely that Hope College receives federal and state funds.

In a telling quote from the chairman of the ACLU's Church and State Committee the *Press* says:

(Hope's acceptance of public monies to carry out its programs) raises a serious question as to the propriety of its compulsory religious practices. It would appear that the college cannot have it both ways. It must decide whether it will be a private or a quasi-public institution. It is our hope that a meeting with college officials will assist the college in facing up to its responsibilities under its present changing circumstances.

The point is that the ACLU Board takes the position that because Hope College receives federal and state funds it has become at least partly a publicly-supported institution. If this is so, then the college cannot insist on compulsory chapel exercises in the light of recent Supreme Court rulings which specify that no religious exercises may be performed in public institutions.

This is, of course, not a direct interference of the government itself in an institution to which is given federal aid. But the implications are obvious and identical. Supposing that there would be a court case on the issue — which is not an impossibility. Such a court case would have far-reaching implications. If the courts should decide that any school receiving federal funds is, to that extent, a publicly supported institution, that school would naturally fall under the rulings of the Supreme Court and would have to abandon all semblance of religious education.

The trouble is that it is quite possible that Hope College's very existence as a college is dependent upon these government funds. It is quite possible that the college cannot continue if these funds are cut off. The only alternative then is to abandon the teaching of any religion.

And this could happen to any school receiving government aid. Any time the ACLU would want to bring a case to court against a school receiving public money but teaching religion, it would seem to have a strong case. And federal funds are like a narcotic: once dependent upon them it is impossible to abandon them.

Cannot those who are so eager to obtain funds for Christian Schools see these dangers? They become increasingly clear. And yet the clamor, far from being muted, continues unabated.

CAMPUS EVANGELISM

A reader of the *Standard Bearer* sent me a tract which had been distributed on the campus of Rutgers University which was evidently intended to be a means of carrying on campus evangelism. It was written by Lon Woodrum, entitled "As The Manner Of Some Is" and has a picture of a hippy on the front cover. Its aim, quite obviously, is to bring the gospel to hippies. Since our correspondent asked to have the pamphlet commented on, we quote it here in full.

I was engaged in conversation with my cynical beatnik friend, Harry Angover, when Spinoza Jones, a one-time beatnik, dropped in. Harry was giving me the business about why he didn't attend church, coming up with the old excuses and tossing in a few new ones.

"Too many hypocrites!" muttered Harry. Cold, like zero. A man in the pulpit less excited about his

product than the TV huckster crying that relief is just a gulp away. Men making like bums snoozing on park benches. Money! All they want is the old spondulix! First Church of the Mausoleum! Dead Men's bones..."

"Friend," said Spin Jones, "I at one time indulged in such nonsensical diatribes. But I latched on to the light. You give with excuses why you don't go to church. Attend me while I give with excuses why I do go!"

"Doubtless I have heard them, one and sundry," said Harry.

"Its not like you haven't heard them; it's like you've never heard them from me! Worshipping is for man — the fool has said in his heart there is no God. Where shall he worship? In the beer tavern? Watching TV? Barbecuing hamburgers? Watching the ponies make you a pauper? Sitting at a card table?"

"The vernal wood," grumbled Harry, "the grassy slope, what's wrong with them, man?"

"Vernal woods, grassy slopes, bubbling brooks, meadow larks — all are very fine. Friend, have you considered the ineptitude of a bobolink to grapple with theological truths, or even with the social Gospel? That great teacher who talked about ravens and lilies and rainbows called the temple his father's house, and said it was a house of prayer."

"Prayers I have heard that were pretty dull, chum," said Harry.

"Consider also: like what is the finest institution on this wandering island in the sky? Empires waxed and waned, the church moved on. Man, the church would have folded up ages ago, the sloppy way it's run, if it hadn't been charged with divinity! Try running a business as the church is run and where are you? And why does the church not fold? Because of the Founder, friend! It's his church, not yours, not mine. 'Upon this rock I will build my church.' And attend me further: the church is the only institution he founded. You are reading me?"

"I am reading you, chum. But I am not close to conversion."

"It's not like I'm asking your conversion. It's like I'm giving with my excuses for attending church. The church is the only institution to which the Master promised the dynamic of the Holy Spirit. He didn't promise this power to the American Medical Association, the Manufacturers Association, the labor unions, the Democratic or Republican Parties. The church is still the best institution on this gob of stuff called earth. With all its faults and failures, and they are multitudinous."

"You can say that repeatedly," growled Harry.

"Indubitably, friend. But when my TV makes like crazy, I call for an electrician. Have you any idea how many phony electricians I've met with? But they are not all masquerading! Some of them can fix this TV thing, man! And, observe how many phoney politicians rise up. Still, come election time I grab a ballot. I believe in democracy like mad. Behold, how many phoney wives men take unto themselves! Yet shall we eschew matrimony? Shall we burn the church because it houses a few phonies, friend?"

Harry wagged his head, "Words, words..."

"I make not words, amigo, somebody else made them, I use them. Words express truth — facts. We speak of the church, and my excuses for attending

same. I attend an eternal institution! Recall what the Founder said — "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Consider, only one institution on earth is eternal! Only one shall survive the last crackup. Marriage? Nix! Marriages are not made in heaven, but on earth. They are for this world only; Jesus said so. Consider any other institution you will. All must go. Even the earth must go, and the moon, when the sun makes his supernova. Science says it, man! Only the church shall survive the last biggoings on. Believe me. Shall I flee an institution destined for--?"

"A pressing engagement presses me," said Harry, edging toward the door. Perhaps, at another period..."

"Knock on the door of my pad," said Spin, "or invite me to knock on the door of yours. We have scarcely launched this dialogue regarding excuses for staying away from church or attending same. Nor have we called in the firepower from the old book. Like in Hebrews, where it says like this: 'Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.'"

Harry, at the door, turned. "It's not like I'm utterly hardheaded. It's like I have to be utterly convinced."

Harry went out and Spinoza Jones turned to me, and said, "It's not like I like to argue. It's like I don't like to hear a man giving with excuses for not attending the Lord's house!"

Friend, have you been making with some excuses like Harry? Well, let's knock it off and be a bit honest. Give it a fair try.

I think you'll find the church has a lot to offer for a guy's life who really means business with Jesus Christ.

Do you read me?

Presumably this is an attempt to make the gospel relevant — something one hears a great deal about today. The trouble is (and this is almost inevitable) that in making the gospel "relevant" the gospel itself is lost. The pitch in the pamphlet is low-key. No high pressure salesmanship. It is really only intended to persuade one to try attending church. Nothing more than this is asked of the reader. And this, in itself is quite meaningless. There are thousands who attend church with some regularity who are farther from the kingdom than the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. Nor are the reasons given for attending church very persuasive: the church is, after all, quite an amazing institution with some remarkable features about it; the church will probably do you some good — there are advantages of a personal kind to be gained from going. After all, the Scripturally sanctioned reason for attending church is the divine injunction to worship Jehovah in the company of His people. But this will include a lot more than a general appeal to attend some church. It will surely mean that our solemn obligation is to seek out the people of God and find that church where the truth of Scripture is preached in all its purity.

But however all this may be, it is the language which I find particularly distasteful. I am fully aware of the fact that the gospel has to be brought in language which is understandable to man. But this is not the point. The language of the pamphlet is racy, slangy and the type of speech used by a segment of our society

which lives in constant rebellion against all authority. To adopt this kind of language as a vehicle for conveying the truth of Scripture borders on making basic concessions to the principles of those who have developed it.

But more. It is so often forgotten that the God of the Scriptures revealed in Jesus Christ is transcendently glorious and holy. Before His face even the angels cover their faces. The profane tendencies of our times are to make all that is holy, common; all that is glorious, stained with the evil of our times; all that is transcendent, earthly. It is a profane spirit, a profanity among men which will not go unpunished. Ought not the very language by which the glorious truth of God is conveyed communicate some sense of the greatness of Him Who dwells in the highest heavens? Ought not even the language in which the gospel is preached serve to inspire awe and reverence in those who hear it? Does the slangy, guttery language of a hippy culture provide a proper medium to convey the transcendence of the glory of God? It seems too degrading. Anyone "converted by such an appeal opens himself to the inevitable question: "Converted to what?" We tell our students in school when they preach that the holiness of the Word of God demands the best possible use of language. Nothingless will do.

The impression left with me by this pamphlet is that when the church attempts to adopt the methodology of the world the church inevitably makes a fool of herself — in her own eyes and in the eyes of those whom she is trying to reach.

SEPARATING PRESBYTERIANS

We have reported in the column before of the heresy trials which have recently took place in the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. A recent issue of the *R.E.S. Newsletter* carried excerpts of the charges which were brought against Principal L. G. Geering and his response. The charges read in part:

It is an offence to teach doctrines contrary to the Bible as interpreted by the subordinate standards and the Declaratory Act of the Church. Principal Geering has...been guilty of grave impropriety of conduct and

has taught doctrines as mentioned hereafter and which are clearly doctrinal errors....

(a) The denial of the supernatural and therefore of the Christian doctrine of a transcendent Creator God.

(b) The denial of Holy Scripture as the revelation of God, in written form, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

(c) The denial of the deity and of the supernatural power of Christ.

(d) The denial that Christ was raised from the dead, leaving the tomb empty.

(e) The denial of a life to come.

The reply of Principal Geering was:

Underlying the remarks of my accusers is the premise that faith consists of the holding of certain beliefs. I do not hold this premise, and draw a fairly clear distinction between faith, and a set of beliefs.

Faith is not primarily what you find in creeds, confessions and books of theology. Faith is what exists in people. Christian faith is the response of the whole person to the Word of God that comes to him from the Christian heritage.

Together with a great many others in the church I cannot agree with this view (that the subordinate standards constitute an adequate functional rule wherewith to measure a minister's doctrinal belief, and assess whether he is properly keeping his vows or not) although in constitutional theory it may seem unanswerable.

It is evident from all this double-talk that Geering has not denied the correctness of the charges brought against him. He justifies himself with the utterly contradictory and nonsensical statement that faith is not *what* one believes but *how* one responds to Scripture — whatever that may be.

But the charges were dismissed and evidently the position of Geering was approved by the General Assembly of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church.

As a footnote *Christianity Today* pointed out that some are leaving the church in New Zealand because of these decisions. But other evangelical Presbyterian Churches have not come to the rescue of these people who have left. The result is, much to the chagrin of many, that the I.C.C.C. of Dr. Carl McIntyre has stepped in to fill the vacuum and threatens to pull the separatist movements into its own "radical" orbit.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Junior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church extends its sincere sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. William Oomkes in the recent loss of her mother,

MRS. HERMAN DE VRIES

May the Lord grant to them comfort with His word and Spirit. Ps. 73:26 "My flesh and heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
Mrs. Gordon Vink, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Young Peoples' Society of the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church of Hudsonville, Michigan hereby expresses its sympathy to one of its members, Sheryl Schut, in the loss of her mother

MRS. CHRIS SCHUT

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Revelation 20:4.

Karen Lubbers, Secretary

BOOK REVIEWS—

Assen 1926

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

ASSEN 1926; J. H. Kok, Uitgeversmij, Kampen, The Netherlands; 31 pages; price, f 1,25

This Dutch-language booklet is the Report Concerning the Doctrinal Declaration "Assen 1926" to the General Synod of Amsterdam 1967. Readers of the *Standard Bearer* will recall that the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands recently withdrew the decisions of 1926 in the so-called Geelkerken Case. These decisions concerned the question of the literal historicity of the Scriptural record concerning paradise, the trees, and the serpent in connection with heresy charges brought against Dr. Geelkerken in 1926. Now the decisions are no longer binding, and the door is open to any and every interpretation, supposedly within the confines of the Reformed confessions.

It is not my intention to criticize the recent synodical decision at this time; it is well-known that the *Standard Bearer* looks with complete disfavor upon that decision. Perhaps at a later date I will offer criticism of the contents of this booklet.

It is interesting and disturbing to note the ecclesiastical method by which the Reformed heritage in the Netherlands is gradually (or rapidly?) being destroyed. First some leaders (usually from Amsterdam and Kampen) begin to present divergent views and to agitate against the adopted position of the churches. Next the matter is officially brought to the General Synod, and a study committee is appointed, usually consisting of several doctors of theology, and this committee comes with a liberal report. Then this liberal position is adopted by the Synod

and the official position of the church in the past is nullified, as in the case of Assen 1926. And then, in order to calm people's fears and still the disturbed ecclesiastical waters a booklet is published whose evident intent is to present a bad decision as a good one, to apply a "coat of whitewash" as it were, and to hoodwink the people. By this method the *Gereformeerde Kerken* will fast lose what Reformed character they have left. I can well understand that cries are being raised in the Netherlands for reformation, and that it is claimed that this reformation must come from the laity because it will never come from the doctors. And churches in this country may well take warning, — before it is too late.

Again, for those able to read Dutch and who are interested in learning what is taking place in the Netherlands, I recommend this booklet.

The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a principal for the 1968-1969 school year. If you wish to be considered for this position, please contact:

Mr. Clare Kuiper
2450 Boulevard Dr., S.W.
Wyoming, Michigan 49509
Phone: 534-0098

CALL TO SYNOD

By decision of the last Synod, the Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan notifies the churches that the 1968 Synod will convene on Wednesday, June 5, 9:00 A.M. in the above mentioned church, D.V.

The Pre-synodical service will be held on Tuesday, June 4, at 8:00 P.M. at First Church. Rev. C. Hanko is scheduled to deliver the sermon.

Synodical delegates are requested to gather with the consistory before the service.

Those in need of lodging are asked to contact James Heys, 1432 Giddings Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49504; telephone GL 2-5781.

Consistory of First Protestant Reformed Church
Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
James Heys, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies and Men's Societies of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan herewith express their sincere sympathy to their fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. J. Van Kampen and their family, in their recent sorrow of bereavement of Mrs. Van Kampen's father,

MR. PLEUNE ROOBOL

May our covenant God comfort with His Word and Spirit in the assurance that "All things work together for good to them that love God." Romans 8:28

Rev. John A. Heys, Pres.
Mrs. B. Windemuller, Sec'y.
Mr. E. Cammenga, Sec'y.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

March 11, 1968
Loveland, Colorado

Report of the meeting of Classis West held in South Holland, Illinois on March 6, 1968

Classis West met in South Holland, Illinois on March 6 for one day. All of the twelve churches in Classis West were represented; a total of twenty one delegates attended the meeting. Rev. R. Decker presided over this Classis.

Classis dealt with the problem of the vacancies in the West. It heard reports from two committees which are to distribute reading and taped sermons as the need for them arises. Both committees have a supply of sermons on hand. The Taped Sermon Committee is the consistory of the South Holland Church; the secretary of the Reading Sermon Committee is Mr. G. Broekhouse, Box 393, 341 Maple St. W., Edgerton, Minn. 56128. Classis assigned the ministers in the West the task of writing more sermons for reading. South Holland, Hull, Pella, Isabel and Forbes requested classical appointments. The latter four churches asked for an increase in appointments. Classis granted these requests, which means that the appointments of the ministers in the West are increased and that Classis East is asked to give substantial assistance to the West.

On the Agenda were a protest and two overtures. Classis decided not to sustain the protest of a brother against a previous decision of Classis. It did adopt an overture that the sermon preached by a candidate in the classical exam be a full sermon, and that the candidate preach this sermon in a special worship service of the church that hosts the Classis. When such an occasion arises, the special worship service is to be held the evening before Classis is scheduled to convene. The other overture requests Synod to express definitely the mandate of the Liturgy Committee of Synod. Classis decided to send this overture to Synod with its approval.

A consistory asked and received Classis' advice to proceed with the discipline of an impenitent member.

Classis heard the annual report of the Church Visitors, Rev. C. Hanco and Rev. G. Lanting. It considered subsidy requests. And it did the necessary voting. Results of the voting were as follows:

- 1) Classical Committee - Rev. R. Decker for a three year term and Elder H. Huisken for a one year term.
- 2) Delegates ad examina - Rev. G. Vanden Berg as a primus delegate for a three year term and Rev. B. Woudenberg as a secundus delegate for a three year term.
- 3) Church Visitors - Rev. C. Hanco and Rev. G. Vanden Berg for a one year term.
- 4) Delegates to Synod - Ministers: D. Engelsma,

C. Hanco, G. Lanting and G. Vanden Berg. Elders: G. Broekhouse, E. Gritters, H. Huisken and P. A. Poortenga. Alternates - Ministers: R. Decker, D. Kuiper and B. Woudenberg. Elders: R. Bruinsma, F. Schwarz, Andrew Vanden Top and C. C. Van Soelen.

The next meeting of Classis West will be held in Edgerton, Minnesota on September 4, 1968, Lord willing.

David Engelsma, Stated Clerk
Classis West

* * *

On Sunday Morning, March 24, in First Church of Grand Rapids, "the minister and rulers of the church of God, being assembled in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ" under the disagreeable necessity of being further grieved for members of their congregation, came to the "last remedy" of excommunicating the impenitent "to the end that they might not put the whole body of the church in danger, and that God's name might not be blasphemed." Let every one of us, besides those who heard the Form read that morning, "take warning by this and such like examples; to fear the Lord and diligently take heed unto himself, if he thinketh that he standeth, lest he fall, but having fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, together with all faithful Christians remain steadfast to the end, and so obtain eternal salvation."

* * *

The *Beacon Lights* Hymnsing drew a capacity crowd in Hudsonville Church March 17. With Mrs. Bert Maring at the organ, Mary Ann Holstege at the piano, and Mr. Clare Kuiper on the director's stand, those in attendance enjoyed the "sing" immensely. Mr. Kuiper chose all the songs from the Psalter featuring the praises of God the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, especially as the Lifegiver of the plants which provide the food for mankind. Special numbers included a male quartet from Adams St. School staff, a cornet duet by John Knoper and Larry Looyenga, and a thrilling organ solo by Mrs. Bernie Lubbers which was a variation of "Master the Tempest is Raging." Without straining the imagination one could hear the thunder of the approaching storm, the wind whistling through the rigging of the ship in which the Master lay fast asleep, and the still calm called down upon the lake by the aroused Jesus, "master of ocean and earth and skies." Kalamazoo's church scheduled a vesper service to allow Rev. and Mrs. Harbach to join their young people at the hymnsing. It was an evening of praise and fellowship giving encouragement to the staff of *Beacon Lights* to plan the next one.

...see you in church

J.M.F.