

The
Standard
Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Christ, Tasting But Not Drinking

by Rev. J. Kortering

"They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink."

Matt. 27:34

When He had tasted, He would not drink.
Strange!
It would have made dying so much easier. Yet He refused.
And heaven was weighed in the balance. So serious.

The soldiers smirked with indignation as they reached for the hammer and nails. This enmity was the culmination of a veritable sea of wrath that swelled upon our Savior, one billow after another.

The contrary winds began to disturb the placid sea

of unbelief when Judas delivered Jesus into their midst earlier than anticipated. Under the cloak of darkness, the workers of iniquity taunted their "victim." In the presence of Annas, a soldier in an act of idle contempt smote Christ and no one deemed it unjust. Becoming more bold and incensed with greater rage these same soldiers, assured that Caiaphas cared little for justice, began to spit in His face and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands saying, "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is it that smote thee?" Even Pilate, the Roman judge, realizing that the multitude was bent on forcing him to choose between Caesar of Rome or Jesus the King of the Jews, cast his lot with the people. He knew that Jesus was innocent, he was afraid. His wife had warned him of her disturbing dream, he had done all that was humanly possible, he had told the Jews to judge Him for themselves, he had offered the people the choice of Barabbas or Jesus, he had sent Christ to Herod, and yet Christ stood before him. Finally he resorted to the basest form of human capriciousness. Thinking that man basically had pity for a victim, he instructed his soldiers to beat Jesus by giving Him the allotted stripes. The bits of bone dug into his flesh and the blood flowed from His tortured back. Yet they screamed the louder, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" The soldiers made sport of Christ, they placed the crown of thorns upon His head, put a reed in His hands, decked Him with a purple robe and in sarcastic humor defiantly cried, "Hail King of the Jews."

Pilate washed his hands.

That was all this mob needed.

The soldiers led Him to Calvary. What humiliation! Jesus walked at the head of this strange procession. Upon his shoulders were the cross beams. Around His neck was suspended the piece of wood containing the charge which made Him worthy of death, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Soon it would be nailed as a superscription, claiming in bitter irony the truth. Behind Him followed the 2 malefactors, surrounded by the soldiers. On their heels came the daughters of Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin, and the mob. It was time for satiating their barbaric thirst for blood. What sport, what a parade. Interspersed in the midst of this drive for vengeance we hear the words of Christ to the weeping women, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Simon of Cyrene took His cross, together they walked up Golgotha and awaited word from the centurion.

All was in order. The morning sun shone upon the scene. The walls of Jerusalem lay shrouded in the shadows. Around the base of the hill the throng assembled. The vertical beam was already fixed in the earth, the soldiers directed Christ to the cross-beam lying upon the ground. They stripped Him of His garment and paused a moment. One of the soldiers reached across and handed Jesus a drink. Jesus accepted it, but as soon as He tasted it, He refused it and returned it to the giver.

This seemingly insignificant event carries an eternal weight.

According to Roman custom, the drink offered was that of crude wine mixed with myrrh or gall. This combination had the effect of drugging the victim, much like an anesthetic. This custom was not of Jewish origin as some suppose; rather crucifixion was a Roman form of death and with it this offering of a drink. We should also understand that the purpose of this drink was not that of mercy for the poor victim. The Romans were not of a mind to be touched with pity for one they willed to murder by so torturous a death. The motive was far more selfish, it expedited the whole bloody business by yielding the victim more manageable. The Romans were efficient in everything they aimed to do, it was no different in the execution of their prisoners.

Christ refused this drink.

He had a reason. We may be sure that His reason was not grounded upon the whims of human nature. From the point of view of human desires, it would have been advantageous to do much more than taste, He would have drunk deeply and found sweet relief. The very thought of death by crucifixion evokes deep human emotions — outstretched hands being torn by crude nails that tear nerves, muscles and veins make even the hardest wince. We can only imagine what this must have meant to the one being crucified. Even though Rome intended it not as mercy, yet for the victim it would give him escape from the consciousness of pain and the stinging sensations as the executioner would nail his hands to the horizontal beam and then lift it up so that it could in turn be fixed to the vertical one and the feet nailed to the post.

His reason for not drinking had to be more than human.

Indeed it was. It was rooted in His divine calling as the obedient servant of Jehovah.

This He understood.

He had set His face to Jerusalem knowing that His hour was about to strike. In deepest submission He uttered these words, "Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." He knew that the way of that glory lay in the deep shadows that gradually overtook Him. Prostrate upon the ground He groaned thrice amidst bloody sweat, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." Strengthened by an angel He was once again assured that the way of the cross would lead Him to that glory.

The Father had willed that He would glorify Himself in the way of the salvation of His people through His Only Begotten Son. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve the promise of the Savior elicited a song of hope from the lips of the covenant people. This culminated in the stirring song of Zacharias, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." This prophet of the highest soon stood in the midst of the people and

said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

This was the purpose of His coming.

Christ was fully aware of this during His entire life upon earth. He was keenly aware of this as He climbed the hill of the skull. How the love of the Father throbbed within His perfect heart. Before His mind He contemplated the wonder of the Father's electing love. He knew that it was in this love that His heavenly Father had sent Him to these terrible depths. To consummate this perfect union of love He had come to do what those whom the Father had given Him could never do. He had come into the flesh to make perfect satisfaction before the bar of divine justice. His Father had said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The only way to escape death was that He should pass through it.

It was time for Him to drink the cup of divine wrath.

Only in this way could there ever be expiation for the sins of His own.

This He could never have done if He had tasted and drunk deeply. Divine expiation of sin demanded that the Mediator of the covenant had to undo what sin had done. The first Adam *willingly* walked in the way of sin. The last Adam must *willingly* give Himself a ransom for many. Jesus understood this. He said, "No man taketh my life, I lay down my life for my sheep." To satisfy the justice of the holy God, Christ had to subject Himself freely as the obedient servant to the accursed death of the cross. From this point of view we may look upon the offered drink as an attempt of His arch-enemy the devil to strip Christ of the Mediatorial office. If Christ had done more than tasted, He would have become a victim of the wine and gall and the limp form of Christ would have been fixed to the beams without His being conscious of it. If this had happened, Christ could never have said as the obedient servant, "I lay down my life." To make perfect satisfaction, our Lord Jesus Christ had to willingly give Himself to the cross. He had to literally stretch out His arms and open the palms of his hands and bear the anguish and pain as an act of obedience to the Father.

This He did. He gave Himself to the hellish torments.

But there is more. Expiation demanded more than

a willing act, it required a willing act of *love*. Sin is an act of hatred against the holy God. Thus it was from the beginning. Adam and Eve willingly hated God and chose the friendship of the devil over against the friendship of God. The Mediator had to undo this. His work of the reconciliation of His own to the Father demanded that He love the Father. This love was so profound that He had to love the Father while the Father in righteous vindication visited Him with His infinite wrath. Satisfaction of the divine law demanded of Christ that He willingly give Himself to death not only, but that as an act of love for the Father and His own.

This He could never have done if He was sublimely asleep, drugged.

He tasted, but He would not drink!

He entered the threshold of suffering, a willing obedient servant Who loved His own even unto death.

O, what love. To spare us the suffering of wrath and judgment, He bore it all to the full. He refused the least relief in order that He might drink the bitter cup to the very last dreg. Active in His suffering He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Even then we see the wonder of divine love; alone in hell, writhing under the pains of punishment, Christ suffered this willingly in love. In love the Father had sent His Own Son to such depths of suffering. All this, that we might be spared the heavy hand of judgment.

He tasted, but would not drink.

He performed a perfect work. He satisfied for the sins of those whom His Father had sovereignly given unto Him. He merited the perfect accounting so that we may now gaze in wondrous faith at the victorious death of the Son of God and say, "Surely this was the Son of God."

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The wrath of God is gone forever. He removed it by carrying it away. No longer does it touch His own, not in our diseases, not in our sufferings, not in our perplexities, not in our struggles in life, not in the hour of death.

There is only the smile of divine favor upon the children of God. And that is everything, it is heaven in our souls.

We have reason to live to the glory of God.

Think what it will be by and by.

Thanks be to God, "He tasted, but would not drink."

NOTICE

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

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

EDITORIALS—

Unambiguously Ambiguous

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The infamous Dekker Case Decision of the Christian Reformed Synod of 1967 has been followed, for the most part, by journalistic silence on the part of Christian Reformed writers. Apart from a couple of mildly critical articles in *Torch and Trumpet* there has been little journalistic opposition voiced to the decision. And from the *Reformed Journal* there has been a rather strange silence about the entire subject. Are the men of the *Reformed Journal* perhaps still stunned from their rather total victory in the recent controversy? Even Professor Dekker seems to maintain a rather sphinx-like silence. I had rather expected that by this time he would have recognized the fact that the Synod did not condemn his doctrine, but only his alleged ambiguity, and that therefore he would have stated his doctrinal position with respect to the love of God and the death of Christ in still more unambiguous language than heretofore, if that were possible. In fact, I am still hopeful that he will break his silence; after all, there should be liberty of theological expression under the decision of 1967! If only one is not ambiguous and abstract!

It appears, therefore, that the said decision is thus far having its intended effect, namely, to calm the troubled waters without removing the cause of the trouble.

But that the cause of the trouble has not actually been removed, and that here and there are souls who are troubled about this issue, and that the decision in question has produced the pathetic situation in which such troubled souls cannot be satisfied, — all this is plain from a question and answer which appeared in the department "The Reader Asks" in *The Banner* of February 23, 1968. In the interest of fairness I will quote the question and answer *in toto* before I comment on Dr. John Bratt's answer.

Here is the question:

A Westerner who is a firm believer in brevity writes: "Dear Dr. Bratt: I have three questions that I would like answered in your column. It is not that I do not know the answers (every believer does), but because men talk and write about them as if they do not know. That it may be clear to everyone, I desire a simple *Yes* or *No* answer. First, did Jesus die and pay the penalty for every man's sin? Second, Does anyone for whom Jesus suffered and died go to hell? And third, If anyone answers the first two questions affirmatively is he a believer or is he a heretic?"

And here is the answer. It should be kept in mind, by the way, that the author of this answer was a member of the Doctrinal Committee which proposed that Synod declare Prof. Dekker's statements contrary to Scripture and the confessions.

If I were pressed for a simple answer to question number one I might say *Yes*, and for proof quote among other texts I Timothy 2:5-6: "Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all."

Or I might say *No* and quote Matthew 1:21, "He... shall save *his people* from their sins," in conjunction with Matthew 20:28, "The Son of man came ... to give his life a ransom for *many*."

If I were pressed for a simple answer to question number two I might say *Yes* and cite II Peter 2:1, "False teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even *the Master that bought them*."

Or I might say *No* and quote the Lord's words in John 10:28-29, "I give unto them eternal life... and *no one* shall snatch them out of my hand."

Arminian and Lutheran Christians answer these two questions affirmatively; we Reformed answer them negatively.

I do not mean to be facetious in the aforestated remarks. I mean to emphasize the truth that there is a body of *particularistic* teachings about redemption in the Bible, but also a body of *universalistic* teachings on it. And we need to do justice to both and place the proper qualifications on each one. We may not overdo the particularistic passages so as to obscure Christ as cosmic Savior, and on the other hand we may not overwork the universalistic ones so as to lose the biblical teachings of election and reprobation. There is a tension here and when the correspondent, whose request for a clear and unambiguous answer is perfectly understandable, asks for a simple affirmative or negative answer, he is asking for the impossible.

Let us not forget that the Bible contains the thoughts of God. As such it is a deeply profound book. True enough, its basic message is simple and clear. The way of salvation is plain to all. The Bible's fundamental redemptive message is: "Christ died to save sinners." But at the same time, God's thoughts — imbedded as they are in the Scriptures — are vastly superior to ours (Isa. 55:9). This will mean problems and questions that do not lend themselves to easy solution. Our recent discussion on the atonement and the love of God was eloquent illustration of this fact. We did not resolve the particularistic-universalistic tension. But we were driven back to the Scriptures for reexamination and restudy. We asked once again: What does God's Word really say? And that can only be for the good.

PATHETIC AND FRUSTRATING

Thus I would characterize the situation when a questioner and the readers of the *Banner* cannot get a straightforward answer to a simple and direct question concerning the truth of the Word of God.

Consider that this questioner asks three very

simple and clear questions. Consider that his questions concern the very essence of Reformed doctrine. Consider, moreover, that these are questions which are not only of dogmatic importance, but that they are very intimately connected with the Christian comfort, with the believer's assurance of salvation: this is very evident from the second question, "Does anyone for whom Jesus suffered and died go to hell?" Consider, further, that this questioner specifically asks for a *Yes* or *No* answer to his questions. Consider, too, that he furnishes a reason for his questions: "because men talk and write about them as if they do not know (the answers)." Consider, besides, that this questioner expected that Dr. Bratt and the *Banner* would not "talk and write...as if they do not know" the answers to these questions.

And then consider the answers given. "I might say *Yes*. . . Or I might say *No*." And mark you well: Dr. Bratt does not intend to be facetious when he says this!

True, he also states that "we Reformed answer them negatively." But he immediately contradicts this faint note of certainty by claiming that there is a body of particularistic teachings and a body of universalistic teachings in the Bible, and that justice must be done to both. While he can understand the desire for a simple affirmative or negative answer, such an answer, he claims, is an impossibility. Moreover, he ultimately attributes the impossibility of a clear simple affirmative or negative answer to God and His Word. True, he employs many words to make this point; but that is the point, nevertheless: God Himself does not give us a simple affirmative or negative answer in His Word!

This I characterize as frustrating, first of all. For is it not the purpose of "The Reader Asks" Department to furnish answers to questions, to furnish solutions to problems? And may not a member of a church rightfully expect that his church will answer questions concerning fundamentals of the faith? And is it not the duty of the church to spell out what is orthodox and what is heterodox, what is the faith and what is heresy? And is it not as clear as the sun in the heavens that the answers to these questions cannot be both *Yes* and *No*? And especially in the light of the fact that the Synod itself took cognizance of the fact that there was "considerable misunderstanding and confusion within the (Christian Reformed) churches concerning the doctrine of the atonement," and "widespread uncertainty concerning his (Professor Dekker's) adherence to the creeds," due to the alleged ambiguity of one of its seminary professors on this very subject, might not a church member expect of an official ecclesiastical paper like the *Banner* some clear-cut and unambiguous answers to burning questions? And more especially still, when the questioner himself mentions that the very reason for his questions at such a time of "considerable misunderstanding and confusion" is the fact that men talk and write about these questions as if they do not know the answers, might this questioner not expect that surely the *Banner*

would step into the breach and furnish some unequivocal answers?

Would a reply like this not make one rub his eyes in disbelief?

Would it not almost cause a questioner to tear his hair out in frustration and to exclaim: "That is not what I sought! I told you that the very reason for my question was the fact that men talk and write as if they do not know the answers. And now you are exactly like these other men. You say neither *Yes* nor *No*. You try to say both *Yes* and *No*. Where, where, can I get answers to my questions? What is truth and what is heresy? Did, or did not, Jesus die and pay the penalty for every man's sin? Does, or does not, anyone for whom Jesus suffered and died go to hell? Answer me!"

But the situation is pathetic, besides.

For make no mistake about it: this reply reflects the situation in the Christian Reformed Church today, — the official situation. It has become impossible with respect to the questions put by Dr. Bratt's questioner to furnish a firm, binding, official, ecclesiastical answer to these questions. In this respect Dr. Bratt is not to be blamed personally for his frustrating reply: he is writing as a faithful son of the Christian Reformed Church. For the Synod of 1967 was unwilling to affirm the doctrine of definite atonement, but also unwilling expressly to deny it. It was unwilling to condemn the doctrine of universal atonement, but also unwilling expressly to affirm it. Though thrice confronted by the issue of what was orthodox and what was heretical, the Synod deliberately sought to avoid that issue. And thus the situation obtains today that there is no firm, unequivocal, yes-or-no answers to the questions put.

This is very really the situation.

Prof. Dekker can answer and can teach in the seminary that the answers to these questions are *Yes*. And remember: nothing was decided at last year's synod to prevent him from teaching universal atonement! Only, he must not be ambiguous!

Dr. Stob is free to say that we must not even ask such questions, and then by some legerdemain to agree with Prof. Dekker's position after all.

Dr. Bratt is free to say that the answer must be *Yes-No*, and that a simple affirmative or negative answer is impossible, but that we must be ambiguous in our answer.

Others are free to say that the answer must be *No*, but they are not really free to say that an affirmative answer is heretical: they may only say with synod that an affirmative answer is ambiguous and abstract!

And in this day of many and fierce winds of doctrine the ordinary member of the church who seeks real answers to his questions is simply set adrift by his own church!

This is pathetic! It is lamentable!

Oh, if it were a question of some minor difference, if it were a question of some dark exegetical problem, or if it were a question of some practical problem about which there was room for difference of judgment,

then a reply like this could be understood. But here is a question of the fundamentals of the Reformed faith, the truth of the gospel, a question about which Scripture itself is exceedingly clear, and a question which was decided in the Reformed churches three hundred fifty years ago!

And today the Christian Reformed Church is impotent to give an unequivocal answer!

This is nothing less than pathetic!

From whence did this pathetic situation grow?

From 1924 and its First Point and its well-meant offer of grace!

UNAMBIGUOUSLY AMBIGUOUS

To be ambiguous is to express one's self in such a way that what he says has a double meaning. It is to talk out of two sides of your mouth. It is to express one's self in such a way that you leave two different impressions and rule out neither of the two.

And to be unambiguously ambiguous is to be straightforward and clear and unequivocal about one's ambiguity.

This characterizes Dr. Bratt's reply.

If pressed for a simple answer to these questions, he might answer *Yes*; or he might answer *No*. In other words, the answer is *Yes-No*.

There is a body of *particularistic* teachings; but there is also a body of *universalistic* teachings. Both are Scriptural. And there is a "tension" between the two! In other words, Scripture pulls one in the direction of universalism; but it also pulls one in the direction of particularism. The teachings of Scripture are particularistic-universalistic. Or in other words, they are ambiguous.

Or again, "The Bible's fundamental redemptive message is 'Christ died to save sinners.'" Do not be fooled by this apparently Biblical-sounding expression. In this connection, that statement is ambiguous. It may mean: Christ died to save elect sinners, His people, from their sins. But it may also mean: Christ died to save all sinners.

But why question the matter? Dr. Bratt himself says in plain language that it is impossible to give clear and unambiguous answers to the questions put to him: "There is a tension here and when the correspondent, whose request for a clear and unambiguous answer is perfectly understandable, asks for a simple affirmative or negative answer, he is asking for the impossible." Now it is plain that if a clear and unambiguous answer is impossible, then the only possibility left is an unclear and ambiguous answer.

And by the same token, it is plain that Dr. Bratt is deliberately and unambiguously ambiguous!

And it is also plain that Dr. Bratt flatly contradicts himself. For in the last paragraph of his reply, when he philosophizes about the deeply profound character of the Bible in order to cover up his ambiguity, he makes this statement, "The way of salvation is plain to all." Yet the very questions asked by his correspondent are questions concerning

the way of salvation. It would be difficult to imagine questions which more deeply concern the way of salvation. Is this not a question which goes to the heart of this way of salvation: "Did Jesus die and pay the penalty for every man's sin?" And is this not a question also which is very seriously concerned with the way of salvation: "Does anyone for whom Jesus suffered and died go to hell?" Especially when you consider the latter question, it seems to me, it becomes plain that these are real questions, life-and-death questions, about the way of salvation! And yet Dr. Bratt plainly states that the answers to these questions are not clear: an unambiguous answer is an impossibility! How then can he at the same time say that the way of salvation is plain to all?

Again, he is unambiguously ambiguous!

And this ambiguity is devastating with respect to the truth of the gospel.

ECCELESIASTICAL HYPOCRISY

These words constitute my final comment on Dr. Bratt's reply.

In August of 1967 the Synod decided to admonish its professor of missions for the ambiguous and abstract way in which he expressed himself when he said, "The atonement itself is inherently universal" and "there is neither need nor warrant for retaining the concept of limited atonement..." Now I do not believe that Prof. Dekker was ambiguous. Certainly he was far less ambiguous than the editor of "The Reader Asks." For Prof. Dekker gave an affirmative answer to these questions. It was the wrong answer; it was Arminian. But it was not ambiguous. Nevertheless, Synod declared that he was ambiguous and said that it was wrong to be ambiguous: Prof. Dekker was admonished for this.

In February of 1968 the official journalistic voice of the Christian Reformed Church is with respect to the very same question of the atonement deliberately ambiguous. It is even maintained that it is impossible to be unambiguous in answering two pointed questions concerning the atonement. It would seem to me that Dr. Bratt could not help being reminded of Synod's admonition to Prof. Dekker when he penned the words "unambiguous" and "impossible."

In effect, therefore, the *Banner* is stating that Synod demanded the impossible of its seminary professor.

And if this is true, it is sheer hypocrisy.

Or will the 1968 Synod perhaps admonish the professor of Bible at Calvin College for the unambiguously ambiguous way in which he expressed himself in his writing on the atonement?

If only the concluding words of Dr. Bratt's reply were true! If only the Synod had asked or will still ask, "What does God's Word really say?" If that question is asked in truth and sincerity, there are surely answers; and the answers are unambiguous! "And that can only be for the good."

But God is not mocked!

An Anti-War Ad

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

A recent Saturday issue of the *Grand Rapids Press* carried an advertisement on the religion-page entitled "A Statement On Vietnam." Since the subject of the war is a burning issue of the day, one's attention is quite naturally drawn to such an ad. The statement read as follows:

Recently a group of military men, now retired, issued a call for cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam. Included are General David Shoup, former Marine Corps Commandant; Rear Admiral Arnold E. True (wounded at the Battle of Midway in World War II); Brigadier General R. L. Hughes (on MacArthur's staff in World War II); Brigadier General W. W. Ford (commanded a division in Europe during World War II); and Brigadier General S. B. Griffith (a leading expert on Communist China). A similar statement, urgently calling for an end to the war, was recently issued by the Catholic bishops of South Vietnam.

We, the undersigned, college teachers in the Grand Rapids area, hereby affirm our support of these appeals for action towards peace.

Appended to this statement was a list of 48 names, 47 of which were the names of college teachers at Calvin College.

Now it is quite conceivable that one might argue on the basis of Reformed and Christian moral principles in favor of one position or the other with respect to the present war, although it is very difficult for me personally to assess the rights and wrongs of either side in the war from a Christian point of view: I can hardly imagine, for example, that the nations of this world (pro-communist or anti-communist) could sit down and read the Ten Commandments to one another. Besides, I hardly think that the question of the morality or immorality of modern wars and of this war in particular is the chief point of interest for the believer. There is a great ado about these questions; but there is little attention to today's war and rumor of war as one of the signs of the times. There is much ado about the morality of the war and the individual conscience with respect to the war and military service, but very little ado about the Christian's duty to obey his government, — not out of patriotism and national loyalty, mind you, but for God's sake. Nevertheless, it is at least conceivable that one might choose a position on the subject concerned, whether for or against ending the war.

It is also conceivable that a group of Christian citizens would formulate a statement and would publish that statement as some kind of Christian testimony in the daily newspaper. In itself, of course, there is nothing wrong with such a testimony.

But this is indeed a strange statement. In fact, Calvin College ought to be ashamed of its teachers for

making such a statement, and the Christian Reformed Church should call its faculty members to account for affixing their names to such a statement.

For one thing, the statement has no real content. It does not produce a single substantive reason for "action toward peace." It refers to a group of retired military men. On a military basis, I suppose it might be argued that since these men are retired, they are out of touch with the situation and therefore cannot qualify as experts on the issue. It also cites a statement made by the Catholic bishops of South Vietnam. One might ask: are these Catholic bishops experts on the subject? Or is this some kind of indication of ecumenical thinking? The simple fact is that this statement has no substance; it mentions not a single reason for action to end the war. It engages in name-dropping, apparently.

For another thing, the reference to the fact that the signers of this statement are "college teachers in the Grand Rapids area" makes a strange impression. If they had mentioned the name of their college, the statement would at least make known how part of the faculty of Calvin College feels on the subject. But perhaps the statement means to express that "college teachers" are in a class all by themselves; sometimes I think they are. Perhaps the idea is that college teachers are a notch or two above the hoi polloi and therefore have some special claim upon the attention of the general citizenry, I know not. I would suggest that they are college teachers only in their proper domain, their college; but evidently their being college teachers is supposed to have something to do with the weight of their statement on Vietnam, whether they are teachers of history or of philosophy or of mathematics or of English or of religion, or of whatever subject. I am really surprised that they did not list their degrees behind their names. But what value or weight this adds to their substance-less statement is a conundrum to me.

But what is especially disturbing about this statement is the fact that it does not even purport to be or give any evidence of being a *Christian*, let alone a *Reformed*, testimony.

I suppose this is supposed to be an instance of not being isolated in what some choose to call a Christian Reformed ghetto, an instance of getting involved in the social and political issues of the day. And I suppose that the signers of this statement were aware, too, that many readers of the *Grand Rapids Press* would recognize their names as members of the faculty of Calvin College. Again, I say, there is nothing wrong with a group of Christian citizens publicly making known their Christian position on a given subject. And it is not my purpose to argue the question what would

be the Christian position on this particular question. My point is that there is absolutely nothing Christian about this testimony. It agrees with military men; it agrees with Catholic bishops; but does it agree with Christian principles? There is not a hint of it. It is a statement utterly lacking in any kind of Christian distinctiveness. It lays no claim to being Christian. It is purely secular in character. It could as well be a statement by a number of faculty members of any

worldly university or college. No one could distinguish whether these are Christian, Calvinistic, Reformed college teachers.

As such, regardless of the pros and cons of the issue, it is a bad testimony. It is not commendable. It is not neutral. It is bad; principally carnal. And it reflects shamefully on a college which bears the name of John Calvin.

The Social Gospel!

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

It stands to reason that as the church becomes "involved" in the affairs of the community and of society in general, it creates a certain public image of itself. That image is either the image of the church as the true church of Christ, or it is the image of the modernistic church and its social gospel. One might gain some idea of the image which the Christian Reformed Church is creating of itself from an in-depth article about the Eastern Avenue Community Center which appeared in the *Grand Rapids Press* on March 9, 1968.

That image is not a good one.

It is, I do not hesitate to say, the image of a church addicted to a social gospel.

And those who are concerned to keep the "image" of the church what it ought to be, according to Scripture, should be deeply disturbed about the reflection of this image in the public press.

The Eastern Avenue Community Center was started in 1966 by the Eastern Ave. Christian Reformed Church, and it is now supported by nine inner city Christian Reformed Churches. This center is described as not having been set up to conduct mission activity, though it has a religious tone. But here are some snatches of the description furnished in the newspaper article:

Two men and a woman, students at Calvin College, are giving new meaning to the term "Black Power" in Grand Rapids. For distrust, they are substituting concern; for violence, patience, and for ignorance, the power of understanding.

Established as a neutral ground where members of the white and black communities might meet, the center is building a degree of trust between the two. Its programs include tutoring for grade school youngsters, cooking and sewing classes for girls and recreation programs. A basketball program directed by Harris is held Tuesday nights at Baxter School. A Christian group, the center holds devotional services once a week.

"The center's function," White says, "is to provide a sort of focus point for those in need and those desiring to help. Unlike a government program, we can go out in the street and find people, people who would not contact a bureaucrat. If our own resources can't

answer their needs, we are able to direct them to other kinds of help that are available. We act as a kind of clearing house."

I ask: what does all this have to do with the calling of the church to preach the gospel? This is so-called social action. But where is the Christian character of this social action?

But the rationale behind this movement becomes abundantly clear from the following paragraph:

"The Church has not been active enough in the past," says White, a seminarian, "but rightfully Christianity should be leading in the struggle for a better life. Christ did not preach 'pie in the sky', but said: 'Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to Me.' Black Power, in the sense of giving a man control over his own life and destiny can be a Christian Power."

This is the "gospel" behind this project. It is the social gospel, pure and simple.

I ask: is it the calling of Christianity to be "leading in the struggle for a better life?" Can a Reformed man refer disparagingly in this way to Christ not preaching "pie in the sky?" Though a text is partially quoted, and jerked out of context, is that indeed the gospel, that Christ said, "Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these..." rather than preaching "pie in the sky?" Is Black Power capable of being converted into Christian Power, and does that Christian Power consist in "giving a man control over his own life and destiny?"

All this kind of talk smacks, on the very surface of it, of the same social gospel being proclaimed by so many churches today.

I had not imagined that the Christian Reformed Church was so deeply "involved" in the same sort of thing.

And it seems to me that anyone with a remnant of Reformed sensitivity must be disturbed, deeply disturbed, about something like this, — so disturbed that he must rise up in protest and express radical disagreement. What, in Christ's name, is becoming of the church?

"My Brethren!"

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

I had first thought to leave it to the alertness of the reader to detect in what respect the text quoted in the preceding editorial was only partially quoted. But then I thought better of this, because the omission of part of that text really goes to the heart of the issue, namely, *universalism*. It is, after all, universalism which forms one of the key principles of the adherents of the social gospel.

The text, of course, occurs in the context of the parable of the sheep and the goats, a parable of the final judgment, in Matthew 25. There, in response to the question of the righteous, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" the King replies: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

You see, the key words "my brethren" were omitted in the quotation cited in the preceding editorial. And this omission points to a tacit universalism.

But lest anyone imagine that this omission and this universalism were the mistaken expression of an immature and over-enthusiastic seminarian, or were perhaps due to the inaccurate reporting of a newsman, let me correct such an impression. This sort of thing is openly preached, — not merely by seminarians, but by mature ministers, — and it can be preached with impunity.

Essentially, of course, this is the same universalism maintained by Prof. Dekker and tacitly approved by the Synod of 1967.

But I have documentary evidence that this idea was

preached by a Christian Reformed minister from the pulpit of one of the Grand Rapids churches on this very passage of Matthew 25:31-46. You will recall that in this passage a separation is made between the "sheep" and the "goats." But in this sermon the separation is denied, as follows:

"It is at this point that we are ready for the climax of the whole picture — climax of this powerful picture of triumph and tragedy which is sketched in terms of cosmic judgment. The Judge waves His hand toward *the entire group present* (italics mine, HCH). He announces softly to the blessed — To whomever of these, — these least my brethren, you did it, you did it to me..."

You see, this preacher did not omit the words "my brethren." He explained them away by making "my brethren" the entire group present, that is, the sheep and the goats!

And a concrete instance of what this means is expressed in the following quotation:

"Jesus, however, embraced them. We may be repelled by Castro, and Krushchev, by the late Marilyn Monroe, and Sophia (Loren), by Billie Sol Estes, and Bobby Baker, by Soekarno, and Nkrumah. The Son of Man, however, says concerning them one and all — To whichever these least my brothers you did it, you did it to me. And to whomever of these least you did it NOT, you did it not to me."

I could quote more. But this is sufficient to show what kind of principle is at the basis of the social gospel that is proclaimed and practiced in the Christian Reformed Church.

It is later than many think!

IN HIS FEAR—

Sanctified Freedom of Speech

by Rev. J. A. Heys

"Silence is Golden."

Someone said that, and as far as human wisdom goes, it is a commendable statement. Silence certainly is golden when compared with the sounds that an unsanctified tongue is able to produce.

We said last time that speech was a means for fellowship. Through speech we get to know each other and to know each other better. By speech we convey

to each other our thoughts, and by speech we are able to plant our inmost thoughts in the minds and hearts of others. A good orator makes contact with his audience through his words and is able to move them to laughter or to tears. Radio and television as means of communication have power to mold man's thinking. And by our speech we may attract others to ourselves and our viewpoint and position.

However, there is another side. The tongue is also a potent weapon for causing enmity and for feeding the flame of hatred. Who was it that said, "The pen is mightier than the sword." So very often we have by a careless word destroyed a friendship and terminated fellowship. How often have we not by a deliberate word thrown others into a rage and into a tirade against us? We do well to listen to James when he tells us that the tongue is like a little spark that is able to set the whole world on fire, that it is a world of iniquity, and that it is set on fire of hell! Very soberly we ought to consider that this is the hardest of all our members to control, so much so that James declares that the man who is able to control that tongue is a perfect man and able to bridle the whole body. That is a mighty strong statement, but every word in it is true.

Words cause trouble because words express ideas. Words reveal what is in the heart. Jesus said, "O generation of vipers, how can ye being evil speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Matthew 12:34 There are especially two matters in this statement of Jesus to which we would direct your attention at the moment. First of all, notice that the heart determines what the mouth will speak. The tongue, so to speak, is connected directly to the heart, from a spiritual point of view. It is the sounding board of the heart. It is the faucet out of which what is in the heart issues forth. And it is for that reason that evil speaking is an act of hatred.

Speaking the lie or speaking a lie, gossip, backbiting and slander reveal what is in the heart. And they also reveal then to all who are present when such speaking begins what is in the heart of the speaker. Listening to it wilfully and with joy indicates also to the gossip what is in the heart of the listener. If we listen to instead of stop the slander and backbiting, it indicates that our heart is not right either towards the victim of such speech.

When Satan began to speak through the tongue of the serpent he revealed to Eve what was in his heart. And that which he revealed was that he had no use for God and hated Him with all his being. The words of the serpent, as sweet as they may have sounded, and pronounced with a sweet compassionate note of pretended friendship, showed the abundance of hatred against God that was in the heart of Satan. And what he spoke through the serpent condemned him as an enemy of God. Remember that Jesus also said, "Do ye not understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile a man." Matthew 15:17, 18. They reveal what is in the heart and brand man to be an enemy of God. And we do well to be more careful of what comes out of our mouths than what we put into our mouths. What comes out is far more dangerous than what goes into the mouth.

And when she listened to these defiling words from Satan's heart, Eve defiled and corrupted her own

heart. And the longer she listened to such filth, the more her heart became filled with the abundance of hatred against God. From out of Satan's heart through the tongue of the serpent, his hatred of God flowed into Eve's. And that continues every day as men speak evil of God, teach their children the lie concerning Him, feed them the poison of heresy and false doctrine. In fact whenever the natural man speaks, he shows that his heart is filled with hatred against God. He never confesses God but ignores Him in all his speech. He never praises Him and thanks Him but boasts of what he will do without God and of what he has done without Him. And one generation presents the next with words of hatred against the holy God!

Therefore it is that when we speak, we incite and feed hatred among ourselves. The natural heart has no love of God but only hatred of Him. It has therefore likewise no love toward man but only hatred. And out of the abundance of that hatred toward God and man the natural man speaks; and the tongue becomes a world of iniquity, a spark that sets the whole world on fire. Therefore it is that in that quotation of Jesus to the effect that this "generation of vipers" cannot speak good things, being evil in the heart, that we would note exactly that He calls the natural man offspring of the devil. "Generation of vipers" or "Viper's brood" is the same as "Children of the devil." And that is what we are by nature. By speech, by unsanctified speech, Satan begot us to be his spiritual children. He drove a wedge between us and God by his lie. And we as exact images of him drive wedges between each other by the things we say and write. Our hearts are like Satan's heart because through the lie in paradise the hatred of his heart was allowed to flow into our hearts to be a well in us and a power that controls our tongues. Our first sin against the ninth commandment was listening to Satan's slander. And let us not forget that Satan's words were chosen and designed exactly to get Eve to listen. His first words were, therefore, a question. Thus far Eve had to listen. But she did not need to go on from there. She did not even need to answer *that* question. She did have to answer the serpent. But then her answer should have been that her husband was the head of the house, that God had given him the instruction and that the serpent should ask Adam, if he wanted an answer. But, be that as it may, and in this connection we might also read I Timothy 2:12-15, we are by nature a generation of vipers, offspring of Satan, and our hearts are now filled with hatred against God and the neighbor, and we only speak what is in the heart. Therefore there is so much bitterness and hatred and evil speaking among men, so much backbiting and slander, so much falsification of words and of lying, of judging unjustly and of condemning without a hearing.

Let a man like that go free, let his tongue wag with liberty, and you can understand what a world we have today. And that is not freedom of speech but captivity of tongue! What then our Country promises us, and in a sense tries even to protect for us, is not freedom of speech. It is only freedom to talk as a generation

of vipers. O, yes, there are some curbs. Even the world will accept a case in court of libel, defamation of character, lying and thereby cheating, falsification of weights, shortchanging, counterfeiting of money and the like. That is, the world will to a degree *punish* these. But the world cannot prevent these. Man is free to speak all his evil; and then will be punished if proven guilty.

True freedom of speech is sanctified freedom of speech.

And by sanctified freedom of speech we mean that on the basis of the cross of Christ and by the power of the Spirit of Christ our hearts are cleansed. We get a *new* heart wherein the love of God is shed abroad. And then we speak out of the abundance of that heart!

In that sense we need a "heart transplant." There is no other way. But then it cannot be the transplant of the heart of another one among the generations of vipers. We would simply have our old heart trouble back again. It cannot even be the heart of Adam before he fell. For as wonderful as man was in that state of righteousness, he did not have full freedom. Adam was capable of falling. He was able not to sin, but also able to sin; and in fact he did sin. The human race became "not able not to sin." But sanctified freedom of speech means that we receive a new heart and a new life whereby we are not able to sin and are completely freed from the dominion of sin. This happens when the old heart is stopped, never to beat again with that hatred against God, and the new heart is there alone to beat with the love of God.

You have freedom of speech?

Then you have complete control of your tongue so that no evil is ever committed by it. Freedom of speech is not that men allow you to say what you want. Freedom of speech is not even that God grants you the

right to speak what you want. Freedom of speech is the power to speak only what is good in God's sight. Freedom of speech is being so set free from Satan's heart and Satan's lie that we are incapable of uttering it except to condemn it thoroughly. Freedom of speech is to be incapable of committing gossip, slander, back-biting, lying, falsifying another's words. Freedom of speech is to be able to speak the truth in love. And if you can do all this, then you are a perfect man and capable of serving God with all the members and faculties of your body. For then your new heart, completely, freed from the old heart of sin, will move your other members even as it moves your tongue in His fear.

"Silence is Golden."

No one can say that who has this true freedom of speech because of a new heart. Heaven will not be silent, although living there will be "golden"; and the street upon which we shall walk in the new Jerusalem shall be golden. But heaven will be filled with God's praise. And true or sanctified freedom of speech is the ability to praise God from Whom all blessings flow, to thank Him for every gift and to confess His name in love. If you can do that, and when you can do that, you have freedom of speech. When you glory in nothing save the cross of Christ and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, when you give thanks unto Him in everything, when your tongue extols Him and the theme of your song is, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing," then you have freedom of speech.

Silence is golden?

O, no! But to be able to use the tongue freely to sing and speak God's praises and to reveal a heart full of the love of God.

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

The Faith of Christ

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

By the words of the above title, reference is not had to "the faith of Christ" mentioned in such passages as Gal. 2:16 (twice), 2:20; 3:22 and Phil. 3:9. There we have the objective genitive, as in "the fear of God," which is obviously not the fear God experiences, but the fear He instills. So here "faith" is the object on which trust rests, which is Jesus Christ. It is the object and the content of faith which Paul is

treating. We are justified by means of a faith and on the principle of a faith that is filled with Christ and produced by Christ. Indicated is the object trusted, not the subject trusting.

But the idea we have in mind is the latter; not the object of faith, but the subject of faith; not the faith resting on Christ, but the faith exercised by Christ. Nevertheless, at the outset we must avoid the idea that

Jesus presented himself merely as an example of faith, not as the object of faith; as though He called men to have faith in God like the faith He had in God. No, He did something much more fundamental. He commanded men to have faith in Him. He was not, as modern religion views Him, a "Christian." Liberal theology teaches that just as Buddha was the founder of Buddhism because he was the first to propound and demonstrate its principles, so Jesus became the Founder of Christianity because He was the first to live the Christian life. To Him must go the honor of being the first Christian. But Jesus was no more a Christian than He was a penitent. It was His redeeming work which opened the way so that a given man would become a penitent, and so, a Christian. But a Christian is a man of a certain class called *sinners*, and Christianity is a way of ridding man of his sin. Therefore Jesus could be no Christian, for the very idea denies both His sinlessness and His impeccability. Jesus is not a Christian. He is *the Christ* who bids us have faith in Him. We are Christians, not because we imitate Jesus' faith in God, but because we have faith in Him!

"Without controversy, great is the mystery of... God... manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16). Such a great mystery is too dazzling to attempt to gaze at even for the eye of faith. "The Word became flesh, and we beheld His glory." But the sight is blinding. We are unable to stare for long at any one part of His aspect any more than we can at the sun. For the head and hair of the Son of Man shine as sunlight on snow. His eyes are as the blazing prominences of the solar orb; His feet as gold-bronze heated to incandescence. His whole appearance (the word used in John 7:24) is as the sun shining to its greatest intensity (Rev. 1:14-16). It was this person of the Son of God who made himself of no reputation, taking upon himself the form of a servant and veiling His glory under holy humanity. So the divine person and the human nature were united, the latter never having a separate existence but possessing the qualities of human personality. In the second person of the trinity, the true God was true man, with a human spirit, a rational soul and a physical body. In every way He was perfect man. He lived in unbroken fellowship with God, never for a moment wandering from His presence. He said, "I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved (Ps. 16:8)."

It was the purpose of the Son of God to bring many sons to glory. The means He took to accomplish this purpose was "to be made like unto His brethren," so that He who was rich for our sakes became poor. He who was Creator took the frame of a creature. He who was sovereign became subject to the Almighty Father. He who upholds all things by the word of His power, had to be supported through weariness, hunger and thirst.

The human nature of the Mediator was dependent upon the divine, so that in all His earthly ministry He lived a life of faith in the Father. Speaking from the eternal counsel of God, He prophesied His incarnation

and righteous life. "Mine ears hast Thou opened.... Then said I, 'Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation'" (Ps. 40:7-10). From birth our Lord lived by faith. Again He spoke from His counsel to the old covenant church: "Thou art He that took Me out of the womb: Thou didst make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art My God from My mother's belly (Ps. 22:9f)." In infancy, childhood and manhood He lived unto and trusted in the triune God.

All through His earthly life the Lord lived by faith. In childhood He was always about His Father's business. He prayed without ceasing. He was praying during His baptism (Luke 3:21). Before He called His twelve apostles, He spent all night in prayer to God on a mountain-side (6:12). It was on the Mount of Transfiguration that "as He prayed" He was transfigured, metamorphosed in glory (9:29). The adversary, Satan, continually opposed Him, but was always repulsed and overcome. Again, the Psalmist, who richly portrayed the experiences of Christ in conception, birth, life and death, records these words of His mouth: "By the word of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer... Hold up My goings in Thy paths, that My footsteps slip not (17:4, 5)."

Often during His ministry, "the Jews marvelled, saying, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned (John 7:15)?'" Jesus had never studied in the rabbinical schools. The Jews knew this and were offended that one without formal education should stand forth as a teacher. They therefore sought to belittle and embarrass Him. But they were ignorant of how He received His training. The prophet Isaiah informs us with His word, "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned (50:4)." The Father instructed Him, not in dreams and visions but, when sleep was over, every morning. Thus God taught the Christ the holy Scriptures, so that He joyfully affirmed, "I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things (John 8:28)."

Jesus was not counselled in His work by "common sense," by the "common consciousness," public opinion, pragmatic thinking, the latest political compromise or the policies of negotiation. He always saw Him who is invisible, saw eye to eye with His Father: "I speak that which I have seen with My Father (8:38)." He was never left without good counsel, as was King Saul (I Sam. 28:6). He was always doing the will of God, and always His prayers were heard. "I am not alone... He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him (John 8:16, 29). He prayed, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always (11:41f)." There were times when He suffered intense distress of mind. Then He

"offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard, in that He feared (Heb. 5:7) — for He prayed in godly fear, in reverential trust in God. In every pressing moment, He relied on His God. "Preserve Me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust (Ps. 16:1)." His whole life had its ground and reason in God. "As the living Father hath sent Me, I also live because of the Father; and he that eateth Me, he also shall live because of Me" (John 6:57, Gk.). As the Son of Man, His human nature is full of divine life. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily (Col. 2:9)," and that because of the Father whom it pleased that in Christ all the fulness should dwell (1:19). "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself (John 5:26)." In all His life He suffered, but in every adversity He "committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:23)." When men neither believed on Him, nor repented, He was neither vindictive, disappointed nor frustrated. In fact, He took comfort in the sovereign will of God and in His divine double predestination. For He "rejoiced in spirit, and said, 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight (Luke 10:21).'"

Even on the cross where His sufferings are sometimes referred to as His passive obedience, He was active in turning to His God. Even when God had forsaken Him, He clung to His God. "My God, My God! Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaveth to My jaws; and Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed Me... They pierced My hands and My feet. Be

not Thou far from Me, O Lord: O My strength, haste Thee to help Me (Ps. 22:1, 11, 15, 16, 19)." He was confident, too, that God was *not* far from Him. "He is near that justifieth Me... Behold, the Lord God will help Me (Isa. 50:8f)." Though He was dying a criminal's death, He knew He would be exonerated. Under-score in the last passage the word "justifieth."

Complete trust in God is evident in His death. His last words were in faith: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit (Luke 23:46)." So was His last act: "He bowed His head, and gave up the spirit (John 19:30)." He died in hope of resurrection, as His cry of victory, "It is finished!" implies. For the finish included His exodus, the way out, through resurrection. His prophetic hope was, though brought down into the dust of death (the grave), "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee. For He hath not despised... the affliction of the Afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from Him; but when He cried unto Him, He heard. My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation (Ps. 22:15; Heb. 2:12; Ps. 22:24f)." He was full of the resurrection hope. "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show Me the path of (resurrection) life! In Thy presence is fulness of joy! At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Ps. 16:9-11)" — the latter including a view of His ascension and session. His faith was open and undeniable. Even His enemies bore witness to it. "He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him!" (22:8). No wonder Christ Jesus is not only the example of our faith and life, our righteousness and peace, but also the central object of our faith!

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

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

Worship Order

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

The principal function of the worship of the church is indisputably the ministry of the Word of God. Prayers, offerings, singing, and whatever else may be properly included as acts of worship must be considered as subordinate to that primary function. In fact, a careful analysis of the whole structure of our worship will disclose that all these other relevant functions of worship are actually fruits of the ministry of the Word. In the measure that the ministry of the Word accom-

plishes its positive or redemptive purpose in the individual can there be prayer, singing and offerings made as true acts of worship. It is characteristic of the modern church service to crowd into it all kinds of incidental practices and to crowd out the preaching of the Gospel. This is demonstrably contrary to the principles of the Reformation and is but one of many evidences of the apostasy and decline of the church. Always we must insist upon and maintain the primacy

of the preaching in worship. As one author put it, "In worship the word of Christ, His Gospel, His prophetic testimony, is central, pivotal and dominant. In that Word inscripturate the Logos incarnate reveals the Father whom we worship, teaches us true self-knowledge and discovers to us His own mediatorial identity. That Word of Christ is the light that is the indispensable condition of approach to God and fellowship with Him. Hence no worship is truly deserving of the name in which the administration of the Word is lacking, or even denied spiritual primacy."

Before we can then understand the various functions in our order of worship and see how these individually relate to the whole, it is of paramount importance that we consider the function of the ministry of the Word. It is, of course, true that the ultimate aim of the ministry is the glorification of God, the Almighty Creator of the universe and the Sovereign Redeemer of His people. His whole counsel as revealed to us in the Scriptures must be preached in order that we, through such preaching, may behold the beauty and glory of His Being and Works. However, the question remains concerning the manner in which this is accomplished. In attempting to shed some light on this important matter, we would first point out that preaching the Word is not the same as lecturing on some theological or religious subject. Going to church to worship does not consist in spending a couple of hours a week listening to a verbal dissertation of the catechism or a given text of the Bible. Perhaps even more than we realize or are willing to admit, we in practice regard it that way. Our life is divisible into two main categories, the secular and the spiritual. Because we are earthly, we are preoccupied most of the time with non-spiritual or earthly things. We do not consider this occupation to be sinful, but it is of necessity laid upon us. However, being religious creatures and, more particularly, saints in Christ, we need some diversification, and so on the Sabbath we lay aside these secular activities and devote ourselves to spiritual matters. The result is that we go to church, listen to a sermon or two, and perhaps even conclude that it was very nice and instructive, but the day is soon over, and with it we lay these things aside and return again to our secular preoccupation.

Although there is a considerable amount of truth in the following quotation, it seems to lend itself to this same basic error. We quote, "Life today is in danger of becoming thoroughly secular; the tremendous speed at which mind and matter move; the monopoly upon our interest and attention which the many and marvelous inventions of our age and day are calculated to exercise; the pre-occupation of the human mind with the things of matter at a time when the natural sciences far outrun the sciences of the spirit in popular appeal; and the intensely humanistic spirit that has entrenched itself in public opinion, in a word, the manifest and dominant situation today renders it imperatively necessary, indeed, to habituate ourselves to pause in the mad rush of modern life, to compose our spirits in the midst of prevailing turmoil and to

transcend the world in which we live as we fix our mind meditatively, devotionally, upon God and dwell upon His greatness, goodness and glory."

A fundamental element of truth is lacking here. This becomes very evident when the author adds to the above quote the following sentence: "This should be done, notably, when the set season of worship approaches." Worship is considered to be a "momentary" thing. Gathering in God's house consists of a "set time" in which we "compose our spirits in the midst of prevailing turmoil and transcend the world in which we live as we fix our mind meditatively, devotionally, upon God and dwell upon His greatness, goodness and glory." Clearly the implication is that we do not do this and do not have to do this as we are carried along by this present world during the six days of each week. The sabbath becomes a sort of spiritual oasis and the aim of the preaching of the word is then to give us a bit of "spiritual science" to off-set the over dosage of "natural science" which unavoidably we imbibe every day. The glory of God does not come to visible expression through preaching in this way, as is abundantly evident in the church today. There is something vital that is lacking.

The preaching of the Word through the instituted church is directed primarily to the saints that are in Christ Jesus. It is certainly true that this preaching is also a savor of death unto death in the unbeliever and disobedient but this aspect of the preaching is not our present concern. Positively the preaching is directed to the people of God and aims to re-direct their entire life to His service in obedience to the heavenly calling. The Gospel of Christ, according to Romans 1:16, "IS the POWER OF GOD unto salvation to everyone that believeth." By the power of that Word a new creation is formed, the body of Christ which is the church. Dr. Ridderbos said, "Jesus, as the Messiah, as the Son of Man and the Servant of the Lord, is the great Representative of the people of God. What He creates is not a new religion or a new morality, but a new people of God, a New Covenant, the ecclesia of the Messiah. Christ is the second Adam; the church is the new mankind and is as such the body of which Christ is the head. Belonging to Christ means belonging to His body."

"The Church," according to Dr. A. Kuyper, "is not a new creation, but the re-constitution of mankind in Jesus Christ. And as such, as the new humanity, the Church comes to expression everywhere. The believers, united in their common faith, constitute a people, a community. They do not only function as such within and as members of the institutional church, but they are the people of God and the body of Christ, which must necessarily come to expression in all the activities of the community of believers and not only in their church-life. Wherever there are people of God, there the Church is to be found." Dr. Kuyper was constantly aware of the danger and the far-reaching consequences of limiting the ecclesia to the institutional church. Over against this tendency he posed the radical unity of life and the absolute kingship of Jesus

Christ over all of creation. Christ's rule in the hearts of His people must come to expression in all that they do in every area of life.

We cite all of this to establish the point that the worship of the church, centering in the preaching of the Word and the administering of the sacraments, must serve to give direction from the Word of God to the whole life of the worshippers. There is a unity of believers, a communion of saints, that must come to manifestation not simply in the gathering together in worship on the Lord's Day but in every sphere, phase and facet of life in this world. They are called of God to live and to work together, not as the world, but as a distinctive and peculiar people. And the preaching of the Word must give forceful and proper directive to the realization and the way of realization of this calling exactly because when this life of the church comes to manifestation, God will be glorified in it. It is certainly true that when this comes to pass, the unbelieving and ungodly world is going to manifest its hatred of that life, for this is unavoidable. As long as the members of the church will conform to the world's way of life six days and will do no more than isolate themselves in worship on the seventh day, the world will be content to leave them pretty much alone. But if the Word preached on that seventh day directs us to a communal life as believers that involves world-fight, we will need the encouragement of I Peter 4:12-16, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, *but on your part He is glorified*. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but *let him glorify God on this behalf*."

We see then how this all relates to our worship. When we go to church we do not do this to be entertained, to listen to a few stories containing humorous moral lessons, to listen to trained choirs, or in some way to placate a god of superstition. Neither is the motivation of our worship the mere hearing of well-formulated expositions of the various doctrines of the

Christian faith. We worship in order that under the lively preaching of God's Word we may be directed to live in harmony with our calling as saints to the glory of the God of our salvation. The desire to seek that way moves us in the spirit of worship to go up to the house of God. It is as we sing, "They come to learn the will of God." All the various functions of our worship must be conducive to that end, and in this the preaching is central. Furthermore, if then we speak of an "order of worship," the important thing is not the chronological arrangement of the various functions of worship but rather the inclusion in worship only of those practices that are contributory to that end and the exclusion of all else. And, of course, that necessitates exclusion of all preaching that, explicitly or implicitly, fails to proclaim the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ over all of life and, therefore, demands the re-direction of all living in His service and to His praise.

We conclude this article by pointing out briefly how this is all demonstrated by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4. Firstly, he calls the saints to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called." He then shows that they are a united body to which has been given the gifts of the Spirit. To that body is given the ministry of the Word "for the edifying of the body of Christ." Hence, under that ministry the saints are not to be "as children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive." They are not *to walk* "as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind....." but they are to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Then, from verse 25 ff. he tells us specifically how this is to be done, concluding the fourth chapter with these words: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

When worship then fails to realize these fruits in a re-directed, God-glorifying life, it too, belongs to the things that are characterized by "Vanity of vanities and vexation of spirit."

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RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to Mr. William Buys and Mr. Allen Hendricks in the passing of their brother and brother-in-law,

MR. EVERT BUYS.

May the Lord comfort these brethren and their families in their sorrow.

Rev. G. Lanting, President
Tom De Vries, Secretary

ALL AROUND US—

An Obstacle on the Road to Rome Removed

Strange Prophets

The Reformed Churches and the World Council

by Prof. H. Hanko

AN OBSTACLE ON THE ROAD TO ROME REMOVED

In the March 1 issue of the *Standard Bearer* Prof. H. C. Hoeksema spoke of events in the Netherlands which indicate that the Reformed Churches there are increasingly interested in walking the ecumenical road that leads back to Roman Catholicism. In the last issue of the *Standard Bearer* there was another remainder of this in our column. These articles, however, spoke rather generally about the advisability of such an ecumenical endeavor. In a recent issue of the news bulletin from the Theological school of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in Kampen appears a more specific treatment of this problem and an attempt to remove one big obstacle, the obstacle of Roman Catholic episcopal church polity.

At the time in which he was appointed to the chair of Church History and Church Polity in the Kampen Seminary, Dr. J. Plomp gave an inaugural address on the subject "Presbyterian-Episcopal?" According to the review of the speech appearing in the news bulletin Dr. Plomp raised the question whether the "Presbyterian-Synodical" system of church government is really completely incompatible with the "Episcopal" system.

The Reformed Churches have always maintained a Presbyterian-Synodical system of church government. By this the Reformed Churches have meant that the authority to rule in the church, coming from Christ, is vested in the local congregation and exercised through the appointed and called officebearers in the church — officebearers who, while holding different offices, are nevertheless equal in authority. The addition of the word "Synodical" to this kind of church government refers to the fact that autonomous congregations nevertheless join in church fellowship and meet in classes and synods in order to solve their mutual problems and perform the work of Christ's Church in cooperation with each other. The term "episcopal" on the other hand, is a description of the type of church government found in the Roman Catholic Church where the authority of rule is vested in a hierarchy of church officers beginning with the pope and continuing on down through cardinals, archbishops, bishops and priests.

Prof. Plomp wanted to examine the question whether these two types of church government were so incompatible that they could not exist together in one denomination.

His point of departure was the question of the advisability of a denomination having a "*pastor pastorum*" (i.e., a pastor of pastors). The Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* had faced this question in 1961 and 1962. It had been rejected on the grounds that it tended towards an episcopal system of church government. This, of course, implies that any kind of episcopacy is bad.

Dr. Plomp turned to the examination of the question whether the Presbyterian-Synodical system is really so Scriptural and Calvinistic as it has been claimed. In answer to this question he discovered that while indeed there were Scriptural elements in our type of church government, there were also elements which were not Scriptural. At this point he introduced the observation, however, that even if it should be that our entire system was firmly grounded in Scripture, the question would still need to be answered whether Scripture is a rule of faith and practice on matters of church polity. He seemed to suggest that this was not necessarily so.

He also found evidence lacking to prove that our system as used in the Reformed Churches was really Calvinistic to the extent that it is usually claimed. He pointed out that in his opinion Calvin himself, as well as his fellow reformers and successors and many churches standing in the tradition of Calvin, at least did not oppose episcopal elements in church government and often favored an introduction of them.

Turning to the practical implications of the question, Prof. Plomp found that the Presbyterian system has serious drawbacks. Among others, it is inefficient and, as appears from history, is conducive to schism in the church and a proliferation of denominations.

He found therefore that it would not be contrary to Scripture or the genius of the Calvin Reformation to introduce an episcopal element in our church polity. And from a practical point of view it would have all sorts of advantages.

This is quite a major concession.

There is no doubt but that Plomp is wrong on several important counts. Surely Scripture is a rule of faith and practice also in matters of church polity. And surely our Presbyterian-Synodical system is scriptural throughout. It is a perversion of Scripture to say that it is not.

But what disgusts me is the fact that Church History can be so badly mauled to prove an erroneous contention. And that by a professor of church history. Anyone with even a passing acquaintance with the Reformation knows how violently Calvin and his successors opposed the whole episcopal system of Rome. Anyone who has done even cursory reading concerning the Reformation under Calvin knows that part of its genius was a complete break with this episcopal system of Rome and the re-establishment of the Scriptural form of church government which has continued in the Reformed churches till now. One cannot help but think that Prof. Plomp either does not know his church history (which he is going to teach) or that he deliberately perverts it. This is disturbing.

And it is not an isolated instance. I recall that during the August session of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church the same thing was done in a different context. The Dekker case was being debated. The professor of Church History at Calvin Seminary, Dr. Zwaanstra, made a long speech in which he attempted to prove that the fathers of Dordrecht were themselves men who held to the very position which Dekker occupies and for which he was being criticized. How is it possible that a man could take such a position when the whole Canons were written *against* views similar to those propounded by Dekker? It is a wonder that such a thorough twisting of church history can escape unscathed and uncriticized.

But to return to Dr. Plomp. The trouble is that this is really a major concession to Rome. One of the chief obstacles in the path of ecumenical unity with Rome is the episcopal system of church government and the position of supreme authority in the church with which the pope has presumptuously clothed himself. It is increasingly apparent that the Roman Catholic Church will never surrender this position. (Pope Paul recently re-affirmed it in an encyclical). So those who will bring the Reformed Churches into Rome's embrace will have to accommodate themselves to it. This apparently they are getting ready to do. This speech was laying the groundwork.

And this is what is so sad. The speech was not an honest investigation of these problems of church polity. The conclusions would then have been quite different. It was a determined attempt to introduce into Presbyterian church government elements of Romanism to prepare the way for return.

STRANGE PROPHETS

An interesting magazine called "The Plain Truth" and edited by Herbert W. Armstrong (well known for his radio broadcast "The World Tomorrow") has

recently come to my attention. It seems to be the purpose of this magazine to demonstrate how Scripture is being fulfilled in the current events of our day and to give to these current events their true Scriptural interpretation. This is, of course, a laudable enterprise, although fraught with grave dangers.

But apparently the editor and writers of this magazine are quite oblivious of these dangers. They plunge ahead. And the result is some very strange interpretations of God's Word which are also exceedingly dangerous. We pick out some random illustrations in the January, 1968 issue.

In a long article the paper discusses the recent devaluation of the British pound and the near bankruptcy of the British nation. In speaking of the great economic, military and political power Great Britain once exercised, the magazine writes:

While her sailors ruled the seas, her soldiers manned the forts guarding the major strategic gateways of the whole earth. Britain gained a stranglehold on most of the strategic areas of the world. Long ago, God Almighty promised that our people would possess these vital sea gates of the Gentiles. (Genesis 22:17.)

Although the text is not even quoted and no explanation is offered in the article as to its meaning, we quote it here. It is part of the blessing of God spoken to Abraham in the establishment of His covenant. "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." Exactly how this is supposed to predict the rise of the British Empire is impossible to see.

The economic trouble in which Britain found herself after World War II is supposed to be predicted in Hosea 5:13. Once again the text is not even quoted, much less explained. It reads: "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." One wonders whether America to whom Britain turned for help is supposed to be Assyria.

Along another line the magazine contains an article about the terrible effects of the foot-and-mouth disease recently plaguing Great Britain. This inspires the author to say:

God, knowing what is in the heart of man, inspired His Prophets to record today's tragedies — and the blessings of the world tomorrow — for us to read with our own eyes in this 20th Century.

The reference is to Deuteronomy 28. The magazine continues:

Here God plainly tells us a curse such as this foot-in-mouth epidemic results from disobedience to His laws.

Turning then to the great economic and industrial advance of Japan since World War II, the magazine also finds several prophecies fulfilled. One has to do

with the place which Japan occupies in world history. The magazine claims that Japan, in Bible prophecy, is "The 'Tarshish' of the Orient."

But all this is in preparation of the people for the realization of the kingdom of heaven here upon earth.

In an article dealing with present problems of science the magazine affirms:

And, true to what most world leaders have recognized, the answer is ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT! But, not knowing God, these same world leaders have not remotely suspected HOW any world government could successfully RULE this earth, and bring it peace, at last!

But Jesus Christ of Nazareth proclaims a world-ruling government, taken out of the hands of man....

And in its article on Japan:

Before the dawn of the 21st century *all nations* will be experiencing an unparalleled time of peace and prosperity. By then, however, a totally new and different world — the wonderful World Tomorrow — will have replaced this world's present political, social, economic and religious structure. The entire world will be reaping the abundant blessings of living under the rulership of the kingdom of God.....

The writers of the magazine are really the only ones who understand all this, of course. Garner Ted Armstrong writes:

We, of The WORLD TOMORROW program both on radio and television, of this PLAIN TRUTH magazine, and the many books, booklets, and articles on various subjects concerning this wonderful GOOD NEWS which Jesus brought, are your WATCHMEN to proclaim the impending disasters which are going to strike mankind, and which are SURE — and also to proclaim the good news to you and to anyone who will listen or read that there IS a way out — that there is hope of a solution in the years ahead.

These are false prophets who deny Scripture and

lead multitudes away into unbelief. There are also false prophets who come with their Bibles under their arms but use it to twist God's Word and lead people into false utopias of heaven here on earth. One wonders who are the most dangerous. There are always some shouting: "Lo, here is Christ," or "Lo, there." The people of God must not go after them.

THE REFORMED CHURCHES AND THE WORLD COUNCIL

In a nearly unanimous decision, according to the *RES Newsletter*, the General Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* decided not to join the World Council of Churches just yet. They have already decided that there are no principle objections to joining, and they recently reaffirmed this decision. But actual joining must wait. The reason given is that the opinion of the church is divided on the matter. Hence Synod will send out a pamphlet providing clear information on the decision.

This is becoming increasingly the practice. An ecclesiastical assembly wants to go the way of false doctrine or false ecumenicity. They decided to do this, but have to reckon with a certain amount of protest by those who want to maintain the historic faith. So they wait in the execution of the decision until some soothing and blithe pamphlet can still the protest, lull the people to sleep and give time for the opposition to disappear.

This is the case once again with the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. After all, if the calling of the Church is to participate in the ecumenical movement, if this calling comes from Christ Himself, if there are no principle objections to joining the World Council, the *Gereformeerde Kerken* had better get on with fulfilling their calling in spite of any objections. But it's not all that simple. The W.C.C. is false ecumenicity. Would that rather than trying to soothe the objectors they would instead listen to them.

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CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Doctrine of Sin

The Second Period — 250-730 AD

The Pelagian Controversy

Pelagianism

Primitive State and Freedom of Man

by Rev. H. Veldman

In our preceding article we quoted from Philip Schaff in connection with the fall of Adam and its consequences. Pelagius, it was noted, destitute of all idea of the organic wholeness of the race or of human nature, viewed Adam merely as an isolated individual; he gave him no representative place, and therefore his acts no bearing beyond himself. In this article we continue with Philip Schaff, as he now sets forth the Pelagian system with respect to the doctrine of human ability and divine grace. Writing on Pelagius' doctrine of human ability, Vol. III, 808 f.f., he writes as follows:

The PRESENT MORAL CONDITION of man is, according to the Pelagian system, in all respects the same as that of Adam before the fall. Every child is born with the same moral powers and capabilities with which the first man was created by God. For the freedom of choice, as we have already seen, is not lost by abuse, and is altogether the same in heathens, Jews, and Christians, except that in Christians it is aided by grace (how similar Pelagianism is to the theory of Common Grace; also this theory sets forth that the heathens were groping for the light, were seeking after God, and were aided by the gospel of Jesus Christ when it was proclaimed to them — H.V.). Pelagius was a creationist, holding that the body alone is derived from the parents, and that every soul is created directly by God, and is therefore sinless. The sin of the father, inasmuch as it consists in isolated acts of will, and does not inhere in the nature, has no influence upon the child. The only difference is, that, in the first place, Adam's posterity are born children, and not, like him, created full-grown; and secondly, they have before them the bad example of his disobedience, which tempts them more or less to imitation, and to the influence of which by far the most — but not all — succumb.

Julian often appeals to the virtues of the heathen, such as valor, chastity, and temperance, in proof of the natural goodness of human nature (does this not sound very much like Common Grace? — H.V.).

He looked at the matter of moral action as such, and judged it accordingly. "If the chastity of the

heathen," he objects to Augustine's view of the corrupt nature of heathen virtue, "were no chastity, then it might be said with the same propriety that the bodies of unbelievers are no bodies; that the eyes of the heathen could not see; that grain which grew in their fields was no grain."

Augustine justly ascribed the value of a moral act to the inward disposition or the direction of the will, and judged it from the unity of the whole life and according to the standard of love to God, which is the soul of all true virtue, and is bestowed upon us only through grace. He did not deny altogether the existence of natural virtues, such as moderation, lenity, benevolence, generosity, which proceed from the Creator, and also constitute a certain merit among men; but he drew a broad line of distinction between them and the specific Christian graces, which alone are good in the proper sense of the word, and alone have value before God (this, I believe, is a striking statement as far as Augustine's view of the natural man is concerned — H.V.).

The Holy Scripture, history, and Christian experience, by no means warrant such a favorable view of the natural moral condition of man as the Pelagian system teaches. On the contrary, they draw a most gloomy picture of fearful corruption and universal inclination to all evil, which can only be overcome by the intervention of divine grace (to this we say Amen — H.V.). Yet Augustine also touches an extreme, when, on a false application of the passage of St. Paul: "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin," (Rom. 14:23) he ascribes all the virtues of the heathen to ambition and love of honor, and so stigmatizes them as vices (this may be the conclusion of Philip Schaff, but we would like to know what interpretation he would give of Rom. 14:23 — H.V.). And in fact he is in this inconsistent with himself. For, according to his view, the nature which God created, remains, as to its substance, good; the divine image is not wholly lost, but only defaced; and even man's sorrow in his loss reveals a remaining trace of good.

Pelagius distinguishes three elements in the idea of good: power, will, and act (*posse, velle, and esse*). The first appertains to man's nature, the second to his

free will, the third to his conduct. The power or ability to do good, the ethical constitution, is grace, and comes therefore from God, as an original endowment of the nature of man. It is the condition of volition and action, though it does not necessarily produce them. Willing and acting belong exclusively to man himself. The power of speech, of thought, of sight, is God's gift; but whether we shall really think, speak, or see, and whether we shall think, speak, or see well or ill, depends upon ourselves.

Here the nature of man is mechanically sundered from his will and act; and the one is referred exclusively to God, the others to man. Moral ability does not exist over and above the will and its acts, but in them, and is increased by exercise; and thus its growth depends upon man himself. On the other hand, the divine help is indispensable even to the willing and doing of good; for God works in us both to will and to do. The Pelagian system is founded unconsciously upon the deistic conception of the world as a clock, made and wound up by God, and then running of itself, and needing at most some subsequent repairs. God, in this system, is not the omnipresent and everywhere working Upholder and Governor of the world, in whom the creation lives and moves and has its being, but a more or less passive spectator of the operation of the universe. Jerome therefore fairly accuses the Pelagians (without naming them) of denying the absolute dependence of man on God, and cites against them the declaration of Christ, John 5:17, concerning the uninterrupted activity of God.

IV. The doctrine of the GRACE of God.

The sufficiency of the natural reason and will of man would seem to make supernatural revelation and grace superfluous. But this Pelagius does not admit. Besides the *natural* grace, as we may call his con-created ability, he assumes also a *supernatural* grace, which through revelation enlightens the understanding, and assists man to will and to do what is good (here, where we read of the word, "assists" we are reminded of the arminians who use the same language in their Five Points of the Remonstrants — H.V.). This grace confers the negative benefit of the forgiveness of past sins, or justification, which Pelagius understands in the Protestant sense of *declaring* righteous, and not (like Augustine) in the Catholic sense of *making* righteous; and the positive benefit of a strengthening of the will by the power of instruction and example. As we have been followers of Adam in sin, so should we become imitators of Christ in virtue. "In those not Christians," says Pelagius, "good exists in a condition of nakedness and helplessness; but in Christians it acquires vigor through the assistance of Christ." He distinguishes different stages of development in grace corresponding to the increasing corruption of mankind. At first, he says, men lived righteous by nature, then righteous under the law, and finally righteous under grace, or the gospel (we may do well to compare this to the arminian conception of various decrees in God, as set forth in our Canons -- H.V.). When the inner law, or the conscience, no longer sufficed, the outward or Mosaic law came in; and when this failed, through the overmastering habit of sinning, it had to be assisted by the view and imitation of Christ, as set forth in his example. Julian of Eclanum also makes kinds and degrees of the grace of God. The first gift of grace is our creation out of nothing; the second, our rational soul; the third, the written law; the

fourth, the gospel, with all its benefits. In the gift of the Son of God grace is completed (Is not the similarity striking between this conception and arminianism? Heresy, also of the modern day, is not so new after all! — H.V.).

Grace is therefore a useful external help to the development of the powers of nature, but is not absolutely necessary. Coelestius laid down the proposition, that grace is not given for single acts. Pelagius, it is true, condemned those who deny that the grace of God in Christ is necessary for every moment and every act; but this point was a concession wrung from him in the controversy, and does not follow logically from his premises.

Grace moreover, according to Pelagius, is intended for all men (not, as Augustine taught, for the elect few only), but it must first be deserved. This, however, really destroys its freedom. "The heathen," he says, "are liable to judgment and damnation, because they, notwithstanding their free will, by which they are able to attain unto faith and to deserve God's grace, make an evil use of the freedom bestowed upon them; Christians, on the other hand, are worthy of reward, because they through good use of freedom deserve the grace of God, and keep his commandments."

Pelagianism, therefore, unduly restricts the specifically Christian grace to the force of instruction and example. Christ is indeed the Supreme Teacher, and the Perfect Example, but He is also High-priest and King, and the Author of a new spiritual creation. Had He been merely a teacher, He would not have been specifically distinct from Moses and Socrates, and could not have redeemed mankind from the guilt and bondage of sin. Moreover, He does not merely influence believers from without, but lives and works in them through the Holy Ghost, as the principle of their spiritual life. Hence, Augustine's wish for his opponent: "Would that Pelagius might confess that grace which not merely promises us the excellence of future glory, but also brings forth in us the faith and hope of it; a grace, which not merely admonishes to all good, but also from within inclines us thereto; not merely reveals wisdom, but also inspires us with the love of wisdom. (This superficial conception of grace is inevitable, with the Pelagian conception of sin.—H.V.).

Pelagianism is a fundamental anthropological heresy, denying man's *need* of redemption, and answering to the Ebionistic Christology, which rejects the divinity of Christ. It is the opposite of Manichaeism, which denies man's *capability* of redemption, and which corresponds to the Gnostic denial of the true humanity of Christ.

Pelagianism, as we know, was never rooted out and is rampant today. In our following article, the Lord willing, we will begin to call attention to the Augustinian system.

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.

BOOK REVIEWS—

Het Laatste Woord**Famous Biblical Hoaxes
or Modern Apocrypha****The American Far Right****Creative Questions
on Christian Living**

HET LAATSTE WOORD (The Last Word), Prof. Dr. J. L. Koole; J. H. Kok, Uitgeverij, Kampen, The Netherlands; 19 pages; price, f 2, 75

This is No. 5 in a series of booklets issued by the Theological School of Kampen under the general heading *Kamper Cahiers* (Kampen Exercise-books). I have not received the first three of these, which have been rather severely criticized, as not Reformed.

This booklet is on the subject of the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:22-27. While it contains many interesting exegetical insights into this passage of Scripture, I am nevertheless not greatly impressed by the main thrust of this essay. My reasons are two: 1) The author is, to say the least, uncritical with respect to literary criticism of this passage which roots in the higher critical documentary hypothesis concerning the Pentateuch, (page 5, footnote 11). 2) The funda-

mental idea of this blessing as the efficacious and distinctive word of favor of the covenant God over His elect and covenant people in Christ Jesus does not come to the fore.

For those who can follow the Dutch, however, it is worthwhile to read material of this kind, if only to keep one's self informed as to what is being produced in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* nowadays.

FAMOUS BIBLICAL HOAXES OR MODERN APOCRYPHA; by Edgar J. Goodspeed; Baker Book House; \$1.95, 124 pp. (paper).

The author treats the genuineness of various documents which have appeared from time to time which claim to be very old and to give light or incidents related to Scripture but not included in Scripture. Such documents are, e.g., "The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ," "The Report of Pilate," "The Confession of Pontius Pilate," "The Letter From Heaven," "The Book of Jasher," and others. The

At The Lord's Table**Job, Our Contemporary****The Vietnam War: Christian Perspectives****Guiding Your Son or Daughter
Toward Successful Marriage****Letters To An American Lady****Jerusalem Through The Ages**

author briefly sketches their contents and demonstrates that they are forgeries, "pious frauds" or not so pious frauds. Interesting to anyone liking this kind of study.

THE AMERICAN FAR RIGHT (A Study of Billy James Hargis and Christian Crusade), by John H. Redekop; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 232 pp., \$4.50.

This book gives a detailed, scholarly, dispassionate and honest evaluation of Billy Hargis' Christian Crusade. And in doing so it gives an evaluation of much of the Far Right which is formed in different organizations. It is one of the most objective studies which I have seen and accordingly carries considerable weight. Its strength lies particularly in its evaluation of the odd mixture between religion and politics which characterizes many of these organizations. It points out that the Christian Crusade in particular and most rightwing organizations in general hold that the American people occupy a special place in God's purpose similar to the place held by Israel; that this country is uniquely of divine origin, with special favor shown to it by God; that our Republic is the highest expression of God's will for government, the Constitution being almost of divine origin. It demonstrates that while, as conservatives claim, it is true that America has always been Christian, this has been true only in a formal and external sense. The weakness of the book is that it presents no proper evaluation either from the Scriptural or political point of view of the whole role of government. It offers no alternative to the right wing nor spells out the Christian's calling in relation to government. It is, from this point of view, wholly negative.

CREATIVE QUESTIONS ON CHRISTIAN LIVING (A Guidebook for Group Discussions), by Ralph Heyen; Baker Book House, 1967; 111 pp., \$1.50 (paper).

The book is composed of 103 different lessons on such subjects as "Old Testament Characters," "The Psalms and Proverbs," "The Sermon On The Mount," "New Testament Parables," "Gospel Characters," "Characters From Acts" and "The Epistles." Each lesson is a series of questions suggested by the title. Some of the questions are silly, some thought-provoking, some based on misinterpretations of Scripture; many are written from the viewpoint of mental health (the author is chaplain at Pine Rest Christian Hospital); all are of a very practical nature. The purpose of the book, suggested in the subtitle, is to stimulate group discussions. The book may be of some value to society leaders casting about for subjects to treat in after-recess programs.

AT THE LORD'S TABLE, by Ralph G. Turnbull; Baker Book House, 1967; 141 pp., \$2.50.

A large number of books have recently been published by book houses specializing in religious publications on the subject of the Lord's Supper. Evidently this gives indication of increased interest in this important sacrament. This book, written by an "evangelical" is part of "The New Minister's Handbook Series" currently being published by Baker. It contains sermons the author preached and includes such subjects as "The Lord's Supper: A Stewardship, A Witness, A Forecast, A Legacy, A Chorus, A Tryst, A Service, A Season." It does not add anything of a doctrinal nature to recent discussions on the meaning and significance of the Lord's Supper. It is more a devotional book. Recommended to anyone interested in this subject from a devotional point of view.

JOB, OUR CONTEMPORARY, by H. Harold Kent; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968; 65 pp., \$1.25 (paper).

Many men have struggled with the problem of affliction. Those who have

struggled with it within the context of faith have turned to the book of Job to seek answers to their questions. This is also what the author does in this short book. In many ways this is a nice book, and it is surely worth reading. It contains a brief survey of the discussions between Job and his three "friends"; between Job and Elihu; and between Job and God. It gives some valuable insights into these discussions and attempts to expose the basic argument. From this point of view, the book is really too brief. Its value lies in the concise survey it makes of the whole book. But it does attempt to answer the problems of suffering faced by saints even today in the light of this book of Scripture. And it concludes correctly that the ways of God are past finding out and that Jehovah is under no obligation to puny man to reveal His purposes. Perhaps the author is too severe with Job, and surely the author mistakes the intent of the speech of Elihu when he puts Elihu in the same camp as the "friends." The price may be a little steep, but it makes good devotional reading.

THE VIETNAM WAR: CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES, edited by Michael P. Hamilton; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967; 140 pp., \$3.50 (paper edition, \$1.65).

Most of the chapters in this book were originally sermons preached in the Spring of this year in Washington Cathedral. The authors of these sermons range from Dr. R. Paul Ramsey through Rev. Martin Luther King to Rev. Eugene Carson Blake. They present the "hawks," the "doves" and various positions in between. While the book attempts to put the distasteful war in Vietnam in Christian perspective, it does not attempt to discuss the problem of war in general for the Christian. This is an important omission because a correct Scriptural presentation of the Christian's obli-

gation towards his government in times of war would, no doubt, have shed light also upon the present conflict. The trouble is that the general perspective of the book (as one might well expect from these authors) is not the Christian perspective, but rather the perspective of those who seek a kind of heaven here upon earth. While interesting reading, it is of little help in the solution of the problem of the Christian and war.

GUIDING YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER TOWARD SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE, by Leslie E. Moser and Ruth Small Moser; Baker Book House, 1967, 110 pp., \$2.50.

The book is just what the title suggests. The chapter titles give some idea of its contents: "Happy Marriages: A Matter for Christian Concern"; "Keeping Communication Lines Open"; "Guiding Your Young Person toward Marriage"; "Religious Influences on Successful Marriages"; "Preparing Your Young Person for the Roles of Marriage" among others.

Written by a husband and wife team who had children of their own, it contains many practical and helpful ideas on the difficult task of giving covenant instruction to children in this area of their life. It is not as Scripturally orientated as one would like, but the references to Scripture are many and the suggestions worthwhile. We cannot agree with all that is written; but the book is highly recommended nonetheless to our covenant parents.

LETTERS TO AN AMERICAN LADY, by C. S. Lewis; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967; 121 pp., \$3.95 (published posthumously).

It is a sad mistake which modern publishers make when they think that because an author's writings sell well, everything that author has ever written has to be published — even his

most intimate correspondence. This book is a mistake. It would be well that publishers learn from it. The book contains a large number of letters which C. S. Lewis had written to an American woman from 1950 to the time of his death but whom he never met. The letters were not intended to be for publication, as is pretty obvious from their contents. They ought not to have been made public. They shed no new light on Lewis's thought. They make no contribution to Christian doctrine. They are filled with references which have meaning only in the light of the American woman's letters — which are not included. This American woman comes out in the letters as being little else than a cantankerous hypochondriac — although she consented to their publication and furnished the manuscripts. They can all be read in a few hours. The book is not worth the steep price of \$3.95.

JERUSALEM THROUGH THE AGES, by Charles F. Pfeiffer; Baker Book House, 1967, 94 pp., \$1.95 (paper).

This book is one of a series published by Baker under the general heading "Baker Studies in Biblical Archaeology." Making use of the latest archeological studies, the author traces the history of the holy city from the time of its founding prior to the days of Abraham through the recent conquest of the city of the Israeli armies. It is an interesting book, filled with photographs containing a great deal of important information. The section dealing with Jerusalem during Bible times is relatively small while most of the material is concentrated on the history of the city after the crucifixion of Christ. Recommended to those interested in archeological studies and to those who wish to increase their knowledge of Scripture. It is particularly valuable to teachers and ministers, but can easily be read by Junior High School children.

REJOICE, THE LAMB REIGNETH

is the theme for the annual all-school program of the HOPE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL. You are invited to attend this presentation which is based on the book of Revelation, chapters 4-6:1-8, in the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Thursday, April 11, 8:00 P.M.

Miss Agatha Lubbers
Principal

EASTERN LADIES LEAGUE

Ladies, be sure to attend our Spring League Meeting to be held, D.V., Thursday, April 25, 1968 at 8:00 p.m. at Holland Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. John Heys will speak on "That Wonderful Gift of Memory". We are looking forward to an evening of Christian fellowship.

Elsie Kuiper, Vice Sec'y.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

March 11, 1968

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

January 3, 4 - February 7-12, 1968

At Southeast Church

Rev. H. Veldman, who presided over the October Classis, led in the opening devotions. All the churches of Classis East were represented by a full delegation.

After the Classis was declared properly constituted, the Rev. J. A. Heys presided, while the Rev. H. Veldman recorded the minutes. Later Rev. Veldman was excused, and the Rev. R. C. Harbach took his place.

The routine reports of the Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee were read and filed.

Elders G. Pipe and P. Koole were appointed to serve on the Finance Committee for this session.

The Committee appointed to prepare a proposed Classical Appointment Schedule was the Rev. J. Kortering, and Elders J. H. Kortering and W. Kamps. The schedule later adopted was as follows:

SOUTH HOLLAND: Jan. 14, M. Schipper; Jan. 21, G. Van Baren; Jan. 28, J. Heys; Feb. 4, H. Veldman; Feb. 18, G. Van Baren; Feb. 25, M. Schipper; Mar. 3, J. Heys; Mar. 10, H. Veldman; Mar. 17, G. Van Baren; Mar. 24, M. Schipper; Mar. 31, J. Heys; Apr. 7, H. Veldman.

HULL: Jan. 14, 21, G. C. Lubbers; Feb. 11, 18, J. Kortering.

DAKOTAS: Jan. 14, 21, R. C. Harbach.

Classis received and read several protests, and committed these to two committees for study and advice. The reports of these committees were treated in executive session in the extended meeting of February.

Classis voted for Synodical Delegates, and chose the following:

Ministers: Primi - J. Heys, J. Kortering, M. Schipper, and H. Veldman.

Secundi - R. C. Harbach, G. C. Lubbers, and G. Van Baren.

Elders: Primi - P. Cnossen, T. Engelsma, J. M. Faber, and G. Pipe.

Secundi - D. Langeland, H. Meulenberg, R. Teitsma, H. Zwak.

Rev. J. Heys and Rev. G. C. Lubbers were chosen Delegates ad examina primus and secundus respectively.

The Subsidy Requests of Holland and Kalamazoo were approved and sent on to Synod for approval.

An overture from Southwest Church to Synod was approved, requesting that elder working delegates be remunerated at \$20.00 per day.

Another overture of First Church was approved that Synod make assessments based on the number of families on the church rolls as of January of the payable year.

Elder T. Engelsma and later Elder P. Cnossen

were appointed to thank the ladies of Southeast Church for their long and excellent catering service.

Classis decided to hold its next regular meeting the first Wednesday of April in First Church, Grand Rapids.

Article 41 Questions of the Church Order were asked and answered satisfactorily. With the approval of the concept minutes, the longest and most wearisome sessions of Classis in recent times came to an end.

Rev. M. Schipper was called upon to offer the closing prayer.

M. Schipper, S.C.

* * *

If our denomination should ever adopt the custom of the Christian Science churches who usually read a designated sermon in all their churches on the same Sunday, we would favor one preached in First Church March 10 to be read in our churches for a "preparatory sermon" before one of the quarterly celebrations of The Lord's Supper. The text was James 3:5, 6. and the theme was, "Examining the Tongue." The Holy Spirit here clearly outlines one of the approaches we may well take in our "self-examination," realizing that as a bridle turns about a horse and a small helm a large ship, so our tongue defileth our whole body in a given direction "whithersoever the governor listeth." And, should our custom be such, not one of us would dare excuse himself from this examination, but would be pressed to confess "that we do not come to the supper of the Lord to testify that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves" but that our righteousness is only in the sacrifice once offered on the cross — the sacrifice we so poignantly and thankfully remember in this celebration.

* * *

The Society for Prot. Ref. Secondary Education met in Southwest Church in annual meeting March 7, and made many important decisions regarding tuition rates and plans, building cost and financial arrangements, as well as the election of three new board members. The dream is now reaching for reality!

* * *

Loveland's bulletin carries an announcement concerning a Casserole Supper to be held in their school, but what piqued our curiosity (was that its design?) was the mention of an unusual after-dinner program that had been planned. We wonder what was its unusual character.

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In order to spur his people on to purchase the booklet, "The Five Points of Calvinism" — the '66-'67 winter lecture series — Rev. Schipper, in his bulletin, reported that South Holland's congregation of 59 families had ordered 50 copies!

..... See you in church.....

J.M.F.