

**The  
Standard  
Bearer**

**A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION—

## Casting All Our Care Upon God

by Rev. M. Schipper

*"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."*  
I Peter 5:7

Not to the world, but to the elect strangers and pilgrims is this exhortation addressed!

Strangers and pilgrims they are because they were chosen by God to be such. That they are pilgrims means that they are foreigners sojourning in a strange land. And that they are strangers indicates that they are not citizens of this world, but of heaven. They

are children of God whose homeland is heaven, but who are temporarily traveling in this world which is not their permanent address. They are not only estranged to this world, having been loosed from it by the Spirit and grace of Christ, but they also are reckoned as strangers by that world in which they temporarily sojourn.



To these strangers God sends many trials and cares!

The trials and cares experienced by the people of God in this life and in this world are not only the persecutions and sufferings imposed on them by the world in which they dwell, but also the common sorrows, anxieties, and cares which in the providence of God are laid upon them by God Himself. They often are cast upon a bed of affliction and pain. They suffer the loss of dear ones. They are required to suffer the pain of hunger, deprivation, and want. Such, no doubt, was also the experience of those to whom Peter is writing.

All your care! Or, all your anxiety, as the term may be translated!

It means: to be drawn in different directions. It signifies that one has more debt than capital. Our care refers to that which divides our heart, fills us with conflicting thoughts. It is that unnameable experience which makes our foreheads wrinkle, turns our hair gray, stoops our shoulders, presses out of us deep sighs and groans.

O, how many are our cares! How varied are their manifestations!

They are over our daily needs: such as, food and clothing; warmth in winter; medicine when we are sick; health when we are well. They are the anxieties over our work: the farmer over his planting and harvesting; the workman in the shop over his job; the minister in his church. There are the anxieties over our families: parents over their children, husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands. There are anxieties over the war as it affects our loved ones. Will our sons have to go? If they go, will they return? If they return, will they be well? If they do not return, what of their wives and children? Anxieties these are also over spiritual matters: our care with respect to God's church. Will she remain true to the faith? Will she stand in the evil day? If she already shows signs of weakness, what will happen when all the hosts of evil are marshalled against her? There are also often anxieties over our own spiritual life and development. Why is it that I so often seem to make such little or slow spiritual progress? How can God still love me when daily I seem to increase my debt by transgressing all His good commandments?

Anxiety generally occasioned by that over which we have no control!

The farmer plants his seed, and there is no rain, or no market. The laborer desires work to provide for his family, and there is none; or, he is hindered from working because he is a Christian with principles that forbid him to join with ungodly unions. The minister labors diligently for the welfare and growth of his congregation, but the truth he preaches is too hard, and the people leave, or refuse to come in, or there are trouble-makers that seek to disrupt the work and life of the church. There are the father and mother whose children will not walk in the fear of the Lord despite all the faithful instruction and admonitions given. There is the loved one who lies on a bed of languishing, who

does not respond no matter how much care is expended. The angel of death takes away a loved one who to all intents was most necessary to the well-being of the home. O, there is no end to the perplexities, and anxieties which are the common lot of the children of God!

Casting all your care upon Him!

Implied, of course, is the fact that you cannot carry your cares alone. O, this does not mean that we should be insensible to the responsibility of carrying our anxieties, nor that we should be indifferent towards them when they come upon us. Nor does the Word of God here imply that we should live superficially, that we should just laugh our troubles away; nor that we should steel our faces as flint, or assume the attitude of the cynic or stoic. Indeed, when the Lord our God in His providence lays upon us grievous burdens, He wants us to feel the weight of these burdens. He desires that we cope with the various situations in life. He desires greatly that we walk in His fear, that we struggle in the battle of faith. Even though we may stumble and fall and become too weak to walk, we are called to seek the city which hath foundations; while at the same time we are to discover that we cannot walk alone or stand alone.

But what are we to do when we realize that we cannot stand alone? Should we seek for an arm of flesh to support us? Should we, as the children of this world, look for our help in horses and chariots? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek!

The worldly farmer looks to his subsidies for relief when his crop fails. The laborer of the world looks to his union to provide. The government looks to its armaments or its security councils. The sick look to their physicians for cure, and the sorrowful to man for comfort. And to these worldly we belong by nature. We should not forget this. This factor plays a great part in our lives, even when we become regenerated children of God. And there always seems to be just enough "common grace" in the world that wants us to believe that the world is pretty good after all. When a child has leukemia, and is sentenced to death by the doctor, the world gives it an early Christmas. When a family is burned out, the world in one day builds a new home with all the furnishings. When there is an epidemic or a tornado, the world under the symbol of a cross that is red stands by to ease your pain and loss. But how empty and vain are all these objects of trust! And how often the Scriptures point us to the truth that God puts His people to shame when they rely on these objects!

Casting all your care upon Him!

Upon Him Who is the mighty God of Jacob!

It is under His mighty hand that you are humbled, that He may exalt you in due time, when you cast all your care upon Him!

Upon Him, the Almighty, the All-Wise, the Ever-Living God!

In Whose wisdom your way was so directed that you are burdened with anxious care! According to Whose



counsel your life is so filled with anxiety that you must seek His face! Under Whose mighty hand you are humbled that all your strength is gone, and all your carnal desire for human assistance loses all its attraction, and He drives you to cry out after Him Who would carry all your burden and remove all your anxiety and fear!

Can you conceive of a more worthy object of trust? Indeed, there is none! He Who knows the end from the beginning, shall He not know your need? He Who is almighty, shall He not be able to make all things work for your salvation? He Who loved you eternally, shall He unto all eternity ever stop loving you? He Whose compassions fail not, shall He ever faint in showing unto you His mercy?

O, indeed, you may safely cast all your care upon Him!

For He careth for you!

That makes this Word of God so reassuring, so very personal, doesn't it?

And how do you know that He cares for you?

Behold how He cared for you when He sent into this world His only begotten Son to unite Himself so completely to our nature that in it He could bear away forever the wrath of the Almighty over against your sin. See how He cared for you when that Mediator, bearing your guilt, descended into the abyss of hell, as it were representing you in the judgment of God's justice and causing the eternal wrath of God to be burned out so you would never have to bear it, and in its place meriting everlasting righteousness that is so perfect that you now appear before God as if you had never committed one sin. See how He cared for you when He raised up His Son from the dead and gave unto Him the Spirit of the resurrection and life so that He could impart that resurrection and life to you. Observe how He loved you when He caused Him Who is the Prince of life, your Head and Representative, to ascend into the highest heavens, to be seated at His own right hand, where He gives unto Him the Spirit without measure which He in turn may give unto you applying unto you all the salvation He merited, and where He is even now making continual intercession for you, and preparing a place for you. Behold His love for you

as it is expressed in so many exceeding precious promises, all of them infallibly inspired and written in the Holy Scriptures. Do not fail to behold His love for you as it is expressed in the lively preaching of His Word which intends to stir up that faith which He has implanted in your heart that believes all His promises, that understands how all things work together for good to them who love God and are called according to His purpose; which understands, too, that all the care which is brought upon us is directed to us by a loving Father Whose only desire it is that we turn with all our care to Him, trusting that His will be best for us, and believing that His, not our will, must be done.

Observing all that, there can be no doubt that He cares for you!

Would it not then be sheer folly to turn to another than the God of your salvation with all your care?

Here then, the Word of God, all ye who are burdened with anxious care! Cease then from seeking for an arm of flesh to come to your aid. Cast all your care upon Him Whom you know as the One Who never ceases to care for you!

And how shall we do this?

There is no other way than through faith and prayer!

They who put their trust in an arm of flesh shall surely come to shame! But they who put all their trust in Jehovah, shall experience a peace that is so wonderful that it goes beyond your comprehension!

Open your mouth wide, and pray unto Him, and in that prayer lay all your care at His feet, and leave it there! Ask for grace to abide in His will and to run the race set before you with patience!

That prayer cannot fail!

For it is designed by the Living God Himself to be the very vehicle upon which He removes all your care; which, when it is removed, makes room for that tranquility that will allow you to lie down in peace and sleep when the darkest night hangs over your head and the storms of life lower.

Then yours will be the peace and safety of the Psalmist, who said: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety."

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Priscilla Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. J. Oomkes, in the loss of her father,  
MR. JOHN HELDER

May the God of all grace comfort the bereaved family.

Mrs. R. Meyer, President  
Mrs. R. Kamminga, Secretary

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church express their sincere sympathy to Mr. Gise Van Baren in the recent passing of his father-in-law,

MR. EUGENE DEUR

May our God comfort him and the bereaved family and sustain them in their sorrow.

Garret Flikkema, Secretary



## EDITORIALS—

# Next Stop Rome?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

That there is a determined movement afoot to swing churches of the Reformed community into the mainstream of modern, antichristian ecumenism is a fact which no one can deny. Evidence of this is the fact that in the Netherlands the *Gereformeerde Kerken* have already officially declared that there is no obstacle in the path of membership in the World Council. Evidence of this is in the fact that in our own country voices are raised in the Reformed community in favor of the WCC and in favor of such movements as COCU.

But there is also an alarming trend toward favoring a return to Rome.

One comes to expect this, of course, from churches and church leaders who have long since forsaken the principles of the Reformation and who have come to despise in their hearts really everything for which the Reformation ever stood. Moreover, once a church has forsaken the truths of the Reformation, there is not only no principal reason why that church should not return to Rome; but also it may be argued that honesty, — if indeed one may speak of a certain honesty, or frankness, in wickedness, — demands such a return. Such a church, in all honesty, should not only arrange a reunion with Rome in the modern fashion of ecumenical arrangements; but it ought to crawl back to Rome on hands and knees with humble apologies and confessions and beg to be taken back into "The Church."

But let it be said again: one comes to expect such pleas for return to Rome from modernistic ecumenism. It is the logical and inevitable outgrowth of the principles of false ecumenicity which govern such movements. And it ought not to surprise any discerning Christian that in those ecclesiastical circles where this false ecumenism reigns supreme there are increasingly numerous attempts at contact with Rome in both the lower and the higher echelons of the churches. So numerous are such attempts and so uncritically do those of the supposedly Protestant camp curry Rome's favor and friendship that sometimes it begins to seem not impossible that when the false prophet of the book of Revelation shall be finally realized in history, he will have a distinctly Roman Catholic character. There was a time, of course, when leaders of the Reformation did not hesitate to identify the pope and the papacy with the Antichrist. In later times, Protestantism discerned that while indeed Rome and its pope could

hardly be denominated *the* Antichrist, they could be characterized as Antichristian, that is, as being principally Antichristian in their manifestation and as moving toward and helping toward the final realization of the beast and the false prophet. But today again, when one takes note of the unholy alliance that is being attempted between modernistic Protestantism and Rome, the thought at least flits across one's mind that in the ultimate realization of Antichristendom's false prophet Rome may indeed have a very definite place.

All this is not written in order to attempt to prophesy concerning the *future*; but it is indeed written by way of warning that we ought to be alert and ought seriously to discern the spirits in the *present*. It is written in the awareness of the truth of the proverb, "*in 't verleden ligt het heden, in 't nu wat worden zal.*" That is: "In the past lies the present, in the 'now' the 'what-shall-be.'"

In this light, it is doubly alarming when also in the Reformed community the cry begins to be heard for a return to Rome. Yet this is the case. And this cry is arising in none other than the same *Gereformeerde Kerken* who have declared that there is no obstacle in the path of membership in the World Council of Churches!

In the Dutch paper, *Tot Vrijheid Geroepen*, (Dec., 1967), there appears an article from the pen of a J. R. Van Oordt which pleads almost plaintively for a new reformation. In order to enforce this plea Van Oordt points to the deformation which is permeating the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. He speaks, and not without reason and proof, of an attempt to "liquidate the Reformation." One of the instances of this deformation and this attempt to liquidate the Reformation cited by Van Oordt is this cry for a return to Rome. He writes (translation mine):

It is alarming that in this framework from the protestant side an already familiar view of Rome with respect to ecumenicity is established. One of the men of learning in the protestant camp of today, one of the present-day Reformed leaders, Dr. H. M. Kuitert, has declared as his conviction that protestants would have to return to Rome in order to be able to come to what he has called: "the unity of the total christian church." As motive for this Dr. Kuitert adduced: "Rome is the



church with the oldest rights." The professor added to this that according to his conviction the institution of the papacy would not be the greatest obstacle. "If it would concern Pope John XXIII, he could easily be our boss and then we would also indeed view him as God's representative on earth."

An alarming expression from a man who according to his ecclesiastical "visitor's card" presents himself as a descendant of Calvin.

Dr. Kuitert is the spokesman of that protestantism which, having set its sights toward Rome, is today busy liquidating the Reformation.

There you have it!

This is a voice from the theological faculty of the Free University of Amsterdam. And it is more than coincidental that from the same quarter from which emanates much of the criticism of Scripture and the so-called new exegesis, which is fundamentally a denial of the Reformational "Sola Scriptura," there also emanates this cry for a return to Rome.

It may seem almost unbelievable, but here is the evidence.

Mark you well, this is a voice which comes from the sister denomination of the Christian Reformed Church in this country, the same sister denomination concerning which *The Banner* recently refused to pub-

lish criticism from the pen of Dr. Louis Praamsma.

The *Standard Bearer* can certainly agree with Mr. Van Oordt, however, that it is time not only for criticism but for a new reformation in the Netherlands. If the Reformed faith in the Netherlands is to survive, it is high time that some begin to heed Van Oordt's poignant plea for such a new reformation.

And there must be more than articles. There must be reformatory action!

Meanwhile, let us watch the situation in our own country very carefully. It is well known that the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, and especially the Free University, have had a strong influence in Reformed circles here. Sometimes it is suggested that the churches in this country are about ten years behind the trends in the Netherlands. I doubt this; at any rate, this time-gap is fast closing. But there are here, as well as in the Netherlands, many of the same disturbing efforts which indeed amount to a striving to liquidate the Reformation. And its time, high time, here also that those who keep watch over the heritage of the Reformation must more than ever stand shoulder to shoulder, praying for the renewing operation of the Holy Spirit.

Reformation is an on-going calling!

## "And The Beat Goes On...."

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Anyone who listens to radio or watches television (I don't have it) must, I think, inevitably have heard the above words of a frequently repeated commercial of a certain automobile manufacturer. Supposedly, the psychology behind this commercial ditty is such that it purposes to have the public join "the beat" and be moved to purchase that certain brand of automobile. Thus, at least, I interpret it. And it must be admitted, willy-nilly, that this commercial ditty has a catching "beat"—much as I despise commercials in general and the songstress and the kind of music (?) of this commercial in particular.

It is not my purpose, however, to write about radio or TV commercials.

The simple fact is that I was reminded of the above words by the flood of propaganda in behalf of the proposed Michigan legislation to provide financial support for "non-public schools." Three times in less than a week such propaganda has entered my home: once by way of a full-page advertisement in the *Grand Rapids*

*Press*, and twice by way of a letter and a flyer from the local Christian High School. Obviously they have begun to beat the drums to gain support for this project and to exert pressure on elected state officials to get the proposed legislation passed. And when the third piece of propaganda came to my attention, I rather spontaneously thought to myself, "And the beat goes on..."

I am angry about this.

I dissent.

And I warn Reformed Christians, who are motivated by *principle*, not to be fooled by this flood of propaganda and not to be moved to support this project, but to dissent.

I dissent BECAUSE the entire project is motivated by and appeals to covetousness, the love of money, the root of all evil. The various appeals to supporters of Christian schools are geared to covetousness. *Money, money, money* is the theme. One cannot escape this impression in even a casual reading of the propaganda. One piece starts out with the title, "HAVING TROUBLE



**WITH HIGH TUITION?"** The opening statement is: "More financial support for non-public schools is the most important current need, if the present American educational system is to continue." It closes with the statement: "Unless supporters of Christian schools exert united effort, any programs which provide fair distribution of public funds are almost impossible to achieve." Another letter contains this statement, in an appeal to write state officials which is entirely geared to getting money: "Currently a revenue crisis faces many of the non-public schools in Michigan. The cost of education continues to mount, and even heavier financial burdens will be placed upon our parents..." The public appeal in the *Grand Rapids Press* is aimed at the same covetousness of the general tax-paying public. True, it talks about alleged tax savings to the public which accrue through the existence of "non-public" schools; and it points at the alleged \$205 million annual cost and the \$700 million building-cost which the taxpayer would have to meet if the "non-public" schools would close. It holds before the public the tempting plum of paying off the non-public schools to keep them open rather than paying the entire cost if they had to be absorbed into the public school system. All this I characterize as nothing but covetousness, — the more so because it involves the sacrifice of the very principle of Christian education.

I dissent BECAUSE this entire project is sponsored by an unholy alliance, a coalition, of what are euphemistically called "non-public" schools. Earlier I reported, on the basis of a news dispatch, that the proposed legislation has the backing of CEF (Citizens — not Christians, as I recently heard it called in a radio broadcast — for Educational Freedom). Perhaps this is true; and perhaps there is a connection between the two organizations. But the current propaganda is coming from an organization which calls itself "Michigan Association Non-Public Schools," An Association of Michigan Catholic, Missouri Lutheran, Jewish Day and National Union of Christian Schools." I know not what the constitution of this organization may or may not contain; nor need I know. The very name is a dead give-away. It betrays ecumenicity in the sphere of education. It is an association on the basis of a lowest common denominator, and that too, a negative one: the fact that all these schools are non-public. I ask: can Christian, *parental* schools make common cause with *parochial* schools, except at the sacrifice of a sacred principle, that it is the parents' calling to educate their children, not the church's or the state's? I ask: can Christian schools and Christian parents, who are supposedly devoted to Reformed principles, make common cause, even for money, with those devoted to Roman Catholic and Lutheran and even Jewish principles? I ask: can Christian schools and Christian parents, who are supposed to be devoted to Reformed educational principles, allow themselves to make propaganda for and to be propagandized by a Jesuit priest, a Rev. Virgil Blum, S.J., as is proposed in one of these pieces of propaganda? I ask: can Christian schools and Christian parents, who are supposed to be devoted

to Reformed principles of education, be "interested in quality education in the non-public schools" in general, or can they recognize that there is any other truly quality education than a *Reformed* education? I warn: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers!"

I dissent BECAUSE in this propaganda there is the tacit assumption that "non-public" schools, *including Christian schools*, could and would close if state aid is not forth-coming. This betrays a lack of dedication to the cause of Christian education and a lack of willingness to sacrifice, if need be, out of dedication to this cause. It is a shame before the world that Christian schools even can suggest that they consider this a possibility. Has it indeed come to this? Would not genuine devotion, arising out of deep-seated principle, speak altogether different language? Would it not bespeak a willingness to sacrifice, to give up our late model cars, our new homes, our expensive vacations, our latest appliances, our television sets, our hi-fi's, and all the other symbols of our affluent society before we would ever begin to think of denying our covenant children a covenant education? Would not devotion to Christian education testify that though we may believe that there is injustice in our being taxed to pay for the world's schools, nevertheless the closing of our own covenantal schools for economic reasons is for us not a possibility to be considered?

I dissent, above all, BECAUSE in this propaganda which seeks to drum up support from Christian parents there is no mention of the fact that acceptance of such aid, should it be legislated, *will indeed involve the denial of the very principle of Reformed Christian education*. The aid sought in the proposed legislation is aid based on "reimbursable courses," that is, courses in which religion is not taught, that is, courses which are not permeated by the principles of the Word of God. Either Christian parents must lie in accepting aid for such courses, or they must allow that courses are taught in their schools which have nothing to do with their Reformed Christian view of all of life. Neither is permissible. If the former is done, that is, if we do teach "religion" in these supposed reimbursable courses (such as English and science and mathematics) and say that we do not teach it, this is unethical. But if Christian schools have arrived at the point that their religious outlook does not affect the courses that are taught, they could better close their doors and send their children to the public school. Let us not sacrifice the basic principle of Reformed Christian education for a mess of pottage, a pile of filthy lucre.

I dissent, finally, BECAUSE in all this proposed political action there is not the hint of a Christian testimony. Political action is not wrong *per se*; but our political action must be *Christian* political action. Of this there is not so much as a hint in the literature I have read. What is proposed is a well-engineered, high pressure, political lobby, — not worthy of the name Christian.

I dissent.

And I urge you to dissent.



# Tacit Advocacy of Violence?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

One becomes more or less accustomed to expect the *Reformed Journal* to emit strange and rather "liberal" sounds for a paper which calls itself "Reformed." Although, therefore, I was not surprised at the general tenor of the January issue of this magazine, with its "Statement on Fair Housing" and its "Supplement on Poverty in America," I was indeed rather shocked, however, at the passive permissiveness, toward, if not tacit advocacy of, violence in the racially tense situation in our country today.

It is not my purpose to discuss Dr. Henry Stob's position on open housing, although I have my serious reservations with respect to his premises and conclusions on this subject and can find little Scriptural reasoning in his article. There is much talk in his article. There is much talk in his editorial about "the rights and freedoms of men" about which I have many questions, but especially one basic question, namely: what rights and freedoms does the natural man have, be he black or white or yellow or red? Is not natural man, — again, be he black or white or yellow or red, — a usurper, a rebel, in God's creation? Or does this fundamental truth have nothing to do with the matter of "rights and freedoms of men" when we would discuss that subject Christianly?

What especially perturbs me, however, apart from Dr. Stob's position on open housing is the following passage at the conclusion of his article:

...Let no one discount the threat that hangs over us. If a society will not give a man what is his due, he will eventually seize what is his due. A man must, in the name of God, assert his freedom. If society does not assert it with him, he must at length assert it on his own.

Let society then act. Violence is waiting in the wings. It ought to be averted. What will avert it is justice. And justice demands that an Open Housing Law be enacted — without delay.

These statements are made in the context of a statement which speaks of the fact that some are beginning "to turn to extra-legal means to secure their freedom and dignity." The statement which immediately precedes the above quotation is this:

What it (an Open Housing Law, HCH) also does is this: it gives legal recognition to the fact that the Negro, like everyone else, is a free man under God,

that his rights are presently nullified or restricted by a social prejudice which works intolerable evil, that the Negro's patience is running out, and that some among them are beginning to turn to extra-legal means to secure their freedom and dignity.

Now it may be true that in these quotations Dr. Stob does not openly and forthrightly condone and advocate violence on the part of those who are supposedly trying to secure their freedom and dignity. But, in the first place, it is equally true that he does not condemn and warn against it. Nor, in the second place, does he warn that the threat of violence is nothing but attempted blackmail of the government, and the use of violence nothing but revolution. Nor, in the third place, does he warn that it is the calling and the authority of the government to employ the sword in the maintenance of law and order. Nor, in the fourth place, does he point out that it is the duty of the citizen to be in subjection to the higher powers, Romans 13:1, ff.

Instead, what do we get? In the first place, Dr. Stob employs the euphemism: "extra-legal means." Why does he not speak forthrightly of "unlawful" or of "lawless" means? In the second place, Dr. Stob speaks of the "threat that hangs over us" and in the same breath, without a word of condemnation, of the fact that a man "will...seize what is his due." Does he not realize that when men "seize" what they think is their "due," you have revolution, anarchy? In the third place, in the same breath and in the very next sentence, he opines that "A man must, in the name of God, assert his freedom." And he goes on to speak of a man asserting his freedom "on his own." Now if words in their connection have meaning, then these statements mean to me that Dr. Stob equates *seizing* what is a man's due by "extra-legal" (that is: lawless) means with *asserting* one's freedom; and this a man *must* do, and he must do it, mind you, *in the name of God*. In brief, I can read nothing else in these statements but this, that Dr. Stob is telling us that it is a must, a necessity, an obligation before God that a man seize his freedom and what is his "due" by unlawful means if he cannot do so by lawful means.

Moreover, it seems to be the position of Dr. Stob that "society" (does he not mean the government?) must cater to this lawlessness or the threat of it, in



order to *avert* it. Not a word is said about punishing it. Not a word is said about thwarting it. No word is breathed about the fact that he that takes the sword shall perish by the sword. I can overlook the fact that even from a practical point of view Dr. Stob's remedy is not a remedy at all: for catering to lawlessness indeed will only *avert* it temporarily, but will eventually beget more lawlessness; and let no one think that an Open Housing Law will be the end of these demands that are backed by the threat of violence. But I cannot overlook what appears to me to be total ignoring of the government's responsibility to use the sword in the punishment of those who take the law into their own hands, and of the citizen's calling to be in subjection.

All this, it seems to me, is blatantly contrary to Romans 13 and its well-known demand that every soul shall be in subjection to the higher powers, — a demand that was penned, mind you, when there were much worse "social injustices" under the Roman tyrants than there are today. And all this I cannot harmonize with Article 36 of the Confession of Faith, which says, among other things, the following:

"We believe that our gracious God, because of the depravity of mankind, hath appointed kings, princes and magistrates, willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies; to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among them with good order and decency. For this purpose he hath invested the magistracy with the sword, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the protection of them that do well...Moreover, it is the bounden duty of every one, of what state, quality, or condition soever he may be, to subject himself to the magistrates; to pay tribute, to show due honor and respect to them, and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the Word of God...Wherefore we detest the Anabaptists and other seditious people, and in general all those who reject the higher powers and magistrates, and would subvert justice, introduce community of goods, and confound that decency and good order, which God hath established among men."

This, to me, is language with which the conclusion of Dr. Stob's article can hardly be harmonized. And it is language which can stand to be emphasized strongly in this age of rioting and lawlessness.

## A New "Anti-Abstract" Theological Method

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Closely connected with what we have already observed concerning the new method of theology which Dr. Henry Stob has proposed and defended in connection with the Dekker Case, and which he obviously considered to be one of the most important matters connected with the Dekker Case, is our next point of criticism, namely: this new method is *rationalistic*.

This criticism may seem rather amazing, inasmuch as it is exactly Dr. Stob's claim that the old theological method is rationalistic. This is what he said in the article which has led to this series of articles (cf. *Reformed Journal*, May-June, 1967, p. 5): "...all of us have in the past been victimized by what increasingly appears to be an abstract and *rationalistic* method of doing theology..." (italics mine)

But I am claiming that the method proposed by Dr. Stob, and, in fact, used by him, is itself rationalistic, and that Dr. Stob's assertion that the old theological method is rationalistic is a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

A few introductory remarks are not out of place in this connection.

In the first place, let me call attention to the fact that it is not at all unusual in the course of doctrinal conflict that the pot calls the kettle black. On the contrary, it has been a favorite device of heretics to accuse those who are orthodox of the very wrongs of which they themselves are guilty. A study of the history of dogma reveals this abundantly. This is true in more than one respect, for example, of the Arminian controversy. Arminianism loved, and still loves, to charge that the Reformed doctrine is deep and involved, while the Arminian gospel is supposed to be simple and easy to understand. Is this true? No, it is, on the contrary, an instance of the pot calling the kettle black. A casual study of the Arminian doctrine of conditional election reveals that there could hardly be any more complex presentation of this doctrine. The Arminians taught "that there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive and absolute. Likewise: that there is one election unto faith,



and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith, without being a decisive election unto salvation." (Canons I, B, 2). The Reformed, on the other hand, maintained (Canons I, A, 8): "There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those, who shall be saved, both under the Old and New Testament: since the scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which he hath chosen us from eternity, both to grace and glory, to salvation and the way of salvation, which he hath ordained that we should walk therein." The latter doctrine is so simple that a child can understand it; the former is complex and involved. But Arminians love to boast of a "simple gospel" and to castigate the Reformed faith as being "deep." Examples of this kind can be multiplied. And they are all examples of the pot calling the kettle black, that is, of heresy charging orthodoxy with exactly those sins of which heresy is guilty.

A classic example of this from our own history is this same charge of rationalism. Anyone acquainted at all intimately with the history of the polemics concerning the Three Points will recall that often we of the Protestant Reformed Churches have been charged with rationalism. In truth, however, the entire view that is embodied in the Three Points of Common Grace is the product of rationalism, while the Reformed view which we have always maintained is the product of exegesis.

In the second place, when I speak in this connection of the old theological method as not being rationalistic, as Stob charges, then I do not mean specifically the method followed in the Christian Reformed Church during the past forty or fifty years: for I do not believe that Christian Reformed theology has been free from rationalism. As indicated above, I exactly believe that to the extent that Christian Reformed theology has been common grace theology, it has also been rationalistic. But I mean by the old theology and the old theological method the main line of Reformed theology and its method as these are represented in the Reformed faith as set forth in our Reformed confessions.

In the third place, let me remind the reader that it is just at this point that this entire question of method assumes such great importance. The question of method is of importance with respect to the Dekker Case, it is true. But the larger importance of this question, — and Dr. Stob recognizes this also in his comments on the Dekker Case and the Report of the Doctrinal Committee, — the larger importance of this question lies in the fact that it concerns all of Reformed theology today, not merely the more specific questions of the Dekker Case. What we are concerned about is a *trend*, a *movement*, in Reformed theology, and that too, both in this country and in the Netherlands. One hears comments not only that both Prof. Dekker and the Doctrinal Committee were guilty of a certain abstractness and rationalistic approach, but also that the theology embodied in our Canons, for example, is the product of a certain scholasticism and rationalism

which is really foreign to the theology and method of the Reformers (especially Calvin) and which arose under the influence more of a man like Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva. And especially under the influence of that eminent scholar, Dr. G. C. Berkouwer, of the Free University of Amsterdam, the new trend is toward considering all of theology in terms of a tension between "kerugma" and faith.

Finally, we should consider the meaning of the term *rationalism*.

Rationalism is not to be equated with being reasonable and logical. This mistake is often made. The result is that a theology that is thoroughly logical and which is a harmonious, systematic, unified whole is accused of being rationalistic. And the theologian who insists that a theology must not be self-contradictory, — not even under the guise of an appeal to the "mystery," — is charged with rationalism.

We must be careful, however, to distinguish between that which is *rational* and that which is *rationalistic*. If Scriptural truth were not rational, reasonable, then man as a rational creature would never be able to understand it, much less formulate a dogmatics or systematic theology. There is no antithesis, remember, between faith and reason.

*Rationalism*, is something different. It is the exaltation of reason above the Word of God. It is the exercise of reason apart from and not subject to the Word of God. It is the theory of knowledge according to which the source and the criterion of man's knowledge of God, of man, and of all things is man's own mind, his own reason. It involves a process of reasoning and an arriving at conclusions which are not based upon the Word of God. It exactly is not characterized by a careful, reasonable, logical exegesis of Scripture. The latter is not only legitimate, but mandatory for the Reformed theologian. It is characterized by a process of reasoning and an arriving at theological conclusions apart from, and, therefore, necessarily also contrary to, the Word of God.

With this in mind, let us test Dr. Stob's method as exemplified in his comments on the issues in the Dekker Case.

First of all, he rules out the question, "Did Christ die for everybody?" On what basis?

A rationalistic basis. Notice that he comes with not a word of Scriptural proof that this question is not a legitimate one and that it cannot be given a Biblical answer. Stob rules out the question as an "insoluble" question by impaling it rationalistically on the horns of a dilemma. Writes he: "If you answer Yes!, how is then that not all men are saved?" This part of his dilemma can be demonstrated indeed to be thoroughly Scriptural. But in the second part of the dilemma Stob demonstrates that he himself is caught in the toils of the very rationalistic method that led to the pronouncement of the First Point of 1924 and that has led to the inability of the Christian Reformed Church to deal conclusively with the Dekker Case. For he writes: "If you answer No!, how is it then that the crucified



and risen Christ can be genuinely and unreservedly offered to all?" This is the rationalistic horn of the dilemma, the one which makes Stob's dilemma-poising itself rationalistic. The First Point itself—which Stob here reconstrues in terms of a genuine and unreserved general offer—was the product not of exegesis, but of a rationalistic theology. And following that same rationalistic theology, Stob runs his rationalistic colleagues (Prof. Dekker and the Doctrinal Committee) stuck.

Secondly, Dr. Stob writes that "to avoid this impasse...we must descend from the cold heights of abstract 'truth' and ask the biblical question: What is every man who hears the preached Gospel—every such man without exception—called upon to *believe*?"

This also is rationalism.

Notice, in the first place, that while Dr. Stob speaks of "the biblical question," again he offers no iota of proof that this is indeed *the* Biblical question or indeed that it is *a* Biblical question. If Stob wants to proceed Biblically, and not rationalistically, he ought to do so, especially when he is criticizing the rationalism of others' methodology.

Now I have no doubt that it is *a* Biblical question to ask under certain circumstances and in a certain context, "What must everyone who hears the preached Gospel believe?" Moreover, this question can also be given a Biblical (and confessional) answer. This, however, is not the issue. The issue is: *What, in the context of the Dekker Case and its related controversy, is the Biblical question that must be asked?* Now by what right does Dr. Stob say, in effect, "You are all a bunch of abstract rationalists. You ask the wrong questions, and that is why you cannot come up with the

right answers. Here is the question that you ought to ask. This is the Biblical question for this situation: what must every man who hears the preached Gospel believe?" This is merely a matter of Dr. Stob's say-so,—something for which he offers no Biblical proof, though he claims it is the Biblical question.

But notice, in the second place, that if we really take Dr. Stob's "biblical question" seriously, we get right back to the question which he says we must not ask and which he claims is an insoluble question. For the answer to Stob's question is right in the question itself. What must every man who hears the preached Gospel believe? Obviously, he must believe the *Gospel* that is preached to him. And what is that Gospel? It is the Gospel of Christ crucified! "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." I Cor. 1:23, 24. But then the question becomes: Who is Christ crucified? Is He Christ crucified for all men? Or is He Christ crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God, only for some, that is, the called, that is, the elect? And then we are back to the original question: Did Christ die for everybody, or not?

In the third place, however, Dr. Stob's commitment to a rationalistic method becomes thoroughly evident in the answer which he himself proposes to his "biblical question." And caught in the toils of his own rationalism, he betrays himself as being guilty of begging the question also; and thus he betrays the fallacy of his own rationalistic method. To this I must call attention next time, D.V.

## A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

# David At Hebron

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

*And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go Up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.*

*So David went up thither....and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.*

*And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah....*  
II Samuel 2:1-4

There was something heart-rending for David about the defeat of the army of Israel at Gilboa. There was the humiliation of seeing his own countrymen routed completely by the armies of the Philistines and the land which he loved overrun by these uncircumcised men. There was the fact that Jonathan, the closest friend he had ever had, had been killed by these heathen hordes. There was the fact that Saul had died and, though David had suffered so sorely at his hand,

there was still in his heart sufficient respect and love for this man, whom he could only look upon as the anointed of the Lord, that he could only grieve deeply and feel the sadness of the day. But hardest of all for David to bear was the fact that in this hour of Israel's greatest defeat he had been aligned on the side of the enemy. True, the distrust of the Philistine lords, or rather, the providence of God had prevented him from actually taking part in the battle on the side of Israel's



enemy; but the fact was that he was now living in the Philistines' land as a friend of theirs. Now suddenly David saw more forcibly than ever before how very wrong it had been to leave the land of his fathers to dwell here among the heathen. Had he only remained in the hills of Engedi, he could even now sally forth to punish the Philistines for what they had done to the armies of Israel and to Israel's king. But now he was helpless. Having aligned himself as a friend of the Philistines it was impossible; to turn upon them would be only treachery of the most despicable sort. Here he was, caught in his own sin, ensnared by his own lack of faith, identified with Israel's enemy in the hour of its need. David knew with a surety, of course, that he had been anointed to be the next of the kings in Israel; but could it not be that he had in reality forfeited his right by this sin? David did not so much as dare to move without first consulting with God because of the guilt that rested on his soul.

It is the amazing wonder of divine grace, however, that God does not deal with us after our sins nor reward us according to our iniquity, if only we turn unto Him in repentance. And so it was that when David turned to him again, as he should have long before, God was there to answer him. David asked, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" and God answered, "Go up."

But David had lost all confidence in his own discretion, and even this clear word was not enough. Again he returned to God for more explicit directions as asked, "Whither shall I go up?" and again the answer came back, "Unto Hebron."

Humbled as he was, it was for David a great joy to leave the borders of the Philistines and to pass again into his own land and his own country. Moreover, no longer did he have to travel secretly so as to escape the surveillance of Saul. This was his own tribe and his own people. They knew David and welcomed him as he traveled. It seemed to the men of Judah that at last they were about to receive their rightful recognition. They had always remembered so fondly the last parting promise that Jacob had left with the father of their tribe, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Gen. 49:10. It had seemed to them a gross injustice and a sad mistake from the moment that Samuel had announced that from the tribe of Benjamin Israel's first king was to be taken. Had it not been for the fact that Samuel was so evidently a prophet of God, they perhaps would never have given to Saul any recognition at all. It had accordingly not taken them long to take note of the rise of David from that final day of Goliath on. They had been careful, indeed, and not overstepped their bounds when Saul had turned against them. But they had understood. Saul had only been trying to protect his own family and his own tribe. Now, however, Saul was out of the way, and nothing any longer prevented them from receiving David as the representative and favorite son

of their tribe. His return was for them a march of triumph.

For David, fond as he was of the history of his nation, it must have seemed significant that God had directed him to go to Hebron. Here was a city and a district that had formed the focal point of the history of Israel from its very beginning. Hebron itself was one of the oldest inhabited cities in the whole area, and to its vicinity Abraham had returned again and again to make his camp. Near here was where Isaac had spent most of his days, and here was the cave of Machpelah which Abraham had bought for Sarah and in which all of the patriarchs had been buried. It was from here that the spies had taken samples of the richest fruit of Canaan, and it had been given to Caleb as a reward for his faithfulness. One could go on and on pointing out the details; somehow this district always seemed to be the focal point of the history of grace, and now David himself was directed to it by the very hand of God. Hardly could any place be more appropriate and significant to him.

In accord with the desire of David, the coronation itself was not elaborate or ostentatious. He did not want it to appear in any way that he was returning as a conquering hero. His mourning for Saul and Jonathan was sincere, and he wanted the people to know this. He was satisfied, therefore, not to make any demands of choice or loyalty upon the whole of the nation of Israel; it was enough merely to have the men of his own tribe, who were naturally most loyal to him, come to Hebron and crown him king. After all, his appointment was not of his own choice but of God. There was no need for him to worry or be concerned. He was sure that in due time he would be able to show to all of Israel that this was as it should be, and they would receive him as king.

It was not long either before the opportunity appeared which David desired to demonstrate his true feelings concerning the death of Saul and Jonathan. It was here that one of David's greatest virtues qualifying him to be king was to be found, even as at this same point Saul had fallen most miserably short. David understood people, and he could sympathize with them. He had a feeling for their questions and problems and doubts and was concerned with helping rather than just condemning them. So here, he realized that their most natural supposition was sure to be that he was really overjoyed with the death of Saul and Jonathan because of the opportunity which it gave to him. It was not a happy conclusion for them to be drawing about him; but it was natural, and the wisest thing for him to do was to demonstrate that it was not so rather than just trying to squelch it.

One of the first reports that came to him in his capacity as king was that the men of Jabesh-gilead had taken the bodies of Saul and his son from the walls of Bethshan where the Philistines had hung them and had given to them a proper burial. There was good reason why the men of Jabesh-gilead had done this, for it was in their behalf that Saul had engaged in his first and perhaps most heroic act as king. When he as yet had



had no organized army, Saul had called all Israel to join him in driving away the Ammonites who were encamped against Jabesh and threatening to destroy it. The men of the city had never forgotten it, and it seemed but a small price of thankfulness to pay when they had received the opportunity of rescuing the remains of the king from the humiliation of the Philistines. Nevertheless, those who brought the report of their bravery to David did so with uncertainty, for they were not really sure how their report would be received, whether with appreciation, indifference or anger.

For David, however, this was exactly the opportunity which he sought, an opportunity to demonstrate the fact that he had not desired the death of Saul and Jonathan in the least even though it had resulted in his being set upon the throne. Thus his reaction was immediate. He summoned a group of men to serve as his messengers and sent them to Jabesh-gilead with these words, "Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them."

The move of David was a very wise one; but, if he thought that it would be sufficient to gather all of Israel behind him, he was mistaken. It was to be yet seven and one half years before his rule would be recognized throughout Israel.

The fact was that David, in removing as he had into the land of the Philistines to make his life among them, had committed a great sin. There were many reasons why he did it and excuses which could have been given, but the fact of the matter was that he had broken his identity with Israel; and, although God had not withdrawn his grace from David because of it, the people were not all so ready with their forgiveness. After all,

how did they know if David had not stirred the Philistines up to make their attack upon Israel? and how did they know that he had not given them instructions just how to make their attack most effective exactly in the hope that Saul would be slain and make room for him upon the throne? There are always those in every situation who are much more ready to condemn someone for whatever trouble may arise than to try to understand and forgive. But it was David's own doing. He had given them the opportunity to lay blame at his feet, and it would be many years before the scars would disappear if ever they would.

But even more than this, although Saul was now dead, the effects of his wickedness lived on still. There were those who had shared with him the wickedness of his power, and they were not about to surrender the influence which they possessed without a struggle. The friends of Saul were determined to hold on to the power of the throne as long as they could.

Most prominent among these friends of Saul was Abner, Saul's cousin and the captain of the army. All through the reign of Saul he had held a position of importance; but particularly toward the end, as Jonathan had become less and less active in the affairs of the kingdom, he had been able to solidify his power in the nation. Now, he was not about to abandon it. All he needed was a pawn who could maintain some rightful claim to the throne in opposition to David. Neither was it necessary to go far to find such. In Ishbosheth, a weak younger son of Saul he had just such an instrument. No sooner had David been crowned king in Hebron than he had taken Ishbosheth to Mahanaim and crowned him there as king in the place of his father. It was in a large part a successful maneuver. To many in Israel David was not yet a man to be trusted, and all but the tribe of Judah fell behind Ishbosheth and Abner. It was a division in Israel that would never again be healed except for a short time in the latter reign of David and of Solomon.

## FROM HOLY WRIT—

# The Book of Hebrews

## Hebrews 5:11–6:20

*(Read from own Bible)*

*by Rev. G. Lubbers*

There are some very definite points which the writer to the Hebrews has made crystal clear up to this point in the book of Hebrews. He has set forth in bold relief that Jesus Christ is the very effulgence of God's glory, the expressed image of his being.

Such was the burden of the writer's message up to

this point in the first four and one half chapters. We ought to review the following points very briefly. In the first place, the writer pointed out that in these last days God has spoken in His Son, and that this Son has now sat down on the right hand of God in the majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:1-4) Secondly, the author pointed



out that this exalted Christ is far above the angelic glory of the inhabitants of heaven. This is evident from the many Psalms which the writer quotes. The entire Old Testament Scriptures speak thus concerning the Christ. The writer gives us a good example of the basic principles of interpretation, better known as the science called Hermeneutics. Thirdly, the Son could only be exalted in the deep way of his suffering. He is exalted at the right hand of God because of the suffering of death. Thus he brings many sons to glory. (Hebrews 2:5) He is indeed a brother amongst the brethren, like unto us in all things, sin excepted. He destroyed him who had the power of death. He is the faithful and merciful high priest in the things which pertain to God. Fourthly, it is for this very reason that we must not look back to Moses or to an Aaron in the Old Testament dispensation, but we must look forward to Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our profession. Christ is greater than Moses, exceedingly greater. As much as the builder of the house is greater than the building, so much is Christ greater than Moses. Wherefore we must not have in us an evil heart of unbelief, but we must enter into the rest. This rest is not a mere temporary and typical rest, but is the final rest, the eternal Sabbath. Fifthly, Christ is the perfect high priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, according to the order of Melchizedek. He has brought about our salvation through the strong crying and tears, and having become perfected he was greeted of God a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

The chief part of the message of the writer to the Hebrews we must still consider. The writer will have much to say concerning the priest after the order of Melchizedek. He will demonstrate in detail from the Old Testament Scriptures the great thoughts of God concerning His son, when he swore with an oath; thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:6; Psalm 110:4) This one is the appointed Son of God, who is called Jesus because He it is that will save His people from their sins. The writer will be explaining from the Old Testament Scriptures concerning this priest after the order of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:1 through 10:18. Such is, of course, the next major section of the book of Hebrews which we will now be considering.

However, before entering upon this discussion the writer signals a difficulty in explaining this to the Hebrews. It is not basically a difficulty of applying sound rules of interpretation. The matter itself is clear and perspicuous enough. It is not difficult to develop the difference between the Old Covenant of the shadows and the types and the New Testament reality. He will surely shew the difference and the relationship between the priesthood of Aaron and that of the better and the abiding priesthood of the Son of God in human nature.

That is not the difficulty.

The difficulty lies in those who must be instructed. They are become dull of hearing. Really they are spiritual dullards. And unless the basic attitude

change on the part of the hearers, Christians out of the Jews, it will be impossible to have them press on to the perfection in Christ, and see the great lines of the teaching of the Scriptures.

Wherefore before the writer will explain these great Biblical truths he admonishes the readers to press on to perfection. They must prove themselves to be true sons of Abraham, having the same full assurance of hope to the end.

#### *THE HEBREWS REPROVED FOR THEIR BEING DULL OF HEARING Hebrews 5:11-14*

In every teaching situation there are really three separate factors which enter into consideration. First of all there is the teacher. He must be equipped and able to teach. Next, there is the matter of the pupil who must receive the instruction. Lastly, there is the element of the subject matter which must be taught. For a successful instruction and pedagogy each of these elements must be in proper focus. If one of these is missing there is no instruction, or if one is impaired there is no successful fruition of the instruction.

It is one thing to have children which did not learn well in the first place. But it is quite another when we have come to the age when we should be matured and be teachers of others, and then once more revert to the condition where one is still in the kindergarten class. If there is healthy instruction there must be a corresponding growth and a coming to the full manhood, to ripe maturity.

This was exactly what was lacking here in the church of these Hebrews. They had come to a rather completed state of spiritual dullards. They were slow and sluggish to learn. The term in the Greek is "noothros," that is, sluggish, dull. Here it refers to a dullness in mental and spiritual perception. The full reality of what it means to be under the Word did not dawn upon them. In Chapter 6:12 we read "That ye be not *slothful*, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." There was not simply a danger that these Hebrew Christians would become such sluggish dullards; the sad fact was that they had become such in very deed. The verb in the text is "gegonate," that "ye have become such *up to the present moment*." It is sad reality. This same verb is employed by the writer in Chapter 5:12 where we read "and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." They were in a state of perpetual learning of "first principles" and not pressing on to learning the full implication of the glory of the gospel of salvation in Christ, to come to a knowledge of the deep truths of the plan and the purpose of God in Christ Jesus.

It is a terrible thing when a fifteen year old young lady or young man once more sits, or is still finding himself in the kindergarten learning the alphabet! One does not forever remain a child naturally unless one is an intellectual moron; and one does not ever remain such that he must be in the catechism class learning the basic principles. They are good at their time, but



we must not remain there. God did not prattle in the Bible. His Word is such that it must be studied, and it therefore requires spiritual growth!

Now the writer is going to write on a great subject. He will be writing on the great and profound truths of the Gospel; the truth of the matter that the first temple was made after the type of the tabernacle which is heavenly. He will unfold the real tabernacle of God as this is in the mind and plan of God in the counsel of peace. (Hebrews 8:5b)

But the one difficulty was that those instructed were dull of hearing! It is not the difficulty of the subject. True, the subject is profound which the writer will unfold here in these next few Chapters. But that is not a difficulty as long as the hearers are quick to hear, and eager to learn and to press on. For in the process of learning there is ever the question of, the element of what is called proper "motivation." In the field of the natural there is the motivation to exceed. We have but to remind ourselves of the tremendous impetus and motivation of the learning of the world in our day. Ever since the appearance of the Russian satellite there has been a tremendous motivation in the field of scientific technology. It is the motivation of survival, to meet the challenge of the looming superiority of other great nations. Then there is the motivation of personal gain in the world, of greed and covetousness. Here there must be a different motivation. It is the motivation for the pressing on to final glory of the believers. It is the full maturity not so much in the ages to come, as the full-orbed understanding of the truth in Christ, so as to discern good and evil. This discernment of "good and evil" refers to what is beautiful and beneficial for the saints, and to what is for their spiritual detriment. What is "good" is the truth in Jesus, the word of righteousness. It refers to the righteousness which is ours in Christ Jesus, as portrayed in all the

sacrifices and as fulfilled in Christ on the Cross. Now one who is dull and is in need of "milk" and not of "solid food" he does not have his "senses exercised by reason of use." The term in the Greek for sense means: the organs of perception. The eyes, ears, hands, tongue and nose. Here it refers to all the spiritual faculties. It refers to the mind in being able to judge, to perceive, to understand. It is here in the plural: our hearing, seeing, tasting, touching and smelling.

This is to be developed in the truth by use! Perhaps we can clarify this with the example of those who are trained in their senses to distinguish the good from the harmful in money: real money from counterfeit coin. Such people go to Washington, and for three weeks handle nothing but real, honest and genuine paper money. Thus their feeling, their sense of touch is exceedingly keen. It is the positive approach. Only when they know by reason of the use and exercise of the senses what real money is, will they instantly know when counterfeit money is passed through their hands.

Here is a strong point to be remembered by us.

Only when we are alert and know the truth in Christ in all its ramifications will we be able to detect the lie. This is true in the realm of the gospel centrally, but this is also true in the field of ethics and of all education. The Dutch spoke of their Biblical "voel-horens," that is, of their being sensitive to the least departure from the truth.

We must be the "perfect," that is, we must come to the full understanding of the truth. Unless we make progress in the truth we shall surely go back in the grace of Christ. Here is where the great pitfalls for apostatizing from the living God are in evidence.

Therefore having left the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us press on unto perfection.

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## EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

# What Others Say

by Rev. G. Van Baren

One encounters often today books which deal with the subject of ecumenism. Most of these appear to support the idea from one or more points of view. It is an interesting contrast to read books which present rather the objections to present-day ecumenism. Such a book came to the *Standard Bearer* recently for review and was referred to the present writer. The book is

entitled, "The Ecumenical Mirage." The author is the Rev. C. S. Lowell, editor of *Church and State*, and Methodist minister. The book is published by Baker Book House at Grand Rapids and sells for \$4.95. It is a book I can recommend — particularly since it contains many arguments against today's ecumenical spirit with which we would heartily agree. For the



benefit of our readers, I would like to point out and quote some of the pertinent arguments found in the book.

### THE FACT OF ECUMENISM

One common denominator among ecumenists is the fact that present denominations are scorned as rather outdated. These, say the ecumenist, no longer serve the functions of proper churches. The author quotes from Dr. G. L. Hunt, a Presbyterian minister who serves as executive secretary for COCU:

"Denominations," he said, "are only a sociological structure to preserve the competitive principle." He felt that the denominational pattern was inadequate because "today we must come to grips with the power structures of our society." In a day of sociological giants, the church must become one, too, if it is to make its impact. So ecumenists think of Christian unity in terms of merger upon merger, culminating finally in that ultimate ideal — union with Rome (pg. 19)

The Rev. Lowell further shows how that the ecumenist is ready to present his "bridges" which will span the gulf of denominational differences. Quoting from Bishop Corson of the Methodist Church, he writes:

"Education, knowledge, understanding which leads to clarification, will prove a strong two-way bridge to a true unity of the Spirit in the Body of Christ," he said. Then he explained how this could work: "Differences sometimes resolve themselves in understanding, and while doctrines cannot be compromised, their meaning is clarified by interpretation." Theologians took this to suggest that such apparently impassable barriers as papal infallibility and the immaculate conception and bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary could be resolved or at least eased with some give-and-take in theological discussions. (p. 15)

It is the conclusion of this author that the ecumenists have in mind merger finally with the Roman Catholic Church itself. Such an idea seemed beyond the scope of possibility only ten years ago — yet today the thought is repeated constantly. Says the author:

Professional ecumenists think of Christian unity as a steady progression of church mergers culminating in a union with the Church of Rome. Time after time I have heard them conclude their discussion of the ecumenical movement with some such statement as "And I do not bar reunion with the Roman Catholic Church," or, "We must envisage as our ultimate goal reunion with Rome." (p. 18)

Several interesting conclusions are made concerning this ecumenical movement, conclusions which are very pertinent and with which we would heartily agree:

In Scotland, Professor R. A. Finlayson told the Presbyterian General Assembly there (June 1966)... "We cannot regard the present ecumenical movement as a distinctively Christian movement at all. It is a political-ecclesiastical movement making a strong bid for political power and willing to jettison its faith and all Christianity in the attempt." (p. 20)

While the rolling wave of the moment may be no

more than one of vague togetherness, the leaders who ride it are merger-happy men. They would like to ride it all the way. They want this wave to roll to a structural unity in which all churches would merge into one under a single ecclesiastical tent. (p. 25)

### ECUMENICAL ASSUMPTION

Rev. Lowell reminds his readers of the assumption which is made by the ecumenist: organic union is in itself good; organic division is necessarily bad; total merger of all churches is the highest good. Together with this assumption is the notion that the calling of the church is no longer simply to preach Christ crucified. In fact, there is no room for such a gospel today:

The connectional managers of the Protestant denominations are under constant pressure to come up with new gimmicks. The gospel is never enough. They feel they must compete with the thousand and one forms of excited appeal which din their way in upon their constituency. They must whip them up, keeping both clergy and laity on the move and justifying their own position. (p. 29)

The author of the book evaluates the assumption of the ecumenist as follows:

Many Christians today, their denominational leaders among them, have no real hope for the future. The gospel they know does not provide it. For all their nominal professions of faith, they are quite as the pagans. For them there is only darkness ahead. Animals fearful of a gathering storm huddle together in a cave. In the group there is a sense of safety. In some such manner the large belongingness of ecumenism is helpful. Men feel that they are joined with something that is very big, something that must be very strong. Thus ecumenism becomes a palliative for those who fear, a substitute for faith. (p. 35)

### A QUESTION OF STERILITY OR PROLIFERATION AND HEALTH

It is the contention of the author that ecumenism promotes a certain spiritual sterility within such denominations which have followed that path towards ever wider mergers. He points to many instances which reveal that mergers do not in reality promote the cause of missions nor do they promote spiritual and numerical growth within the denomination. One apparently convincing argument of the ecumenist is that unity of denominations would result in unified and thorough mission endeavor. The argument runs as follows:

The scatter-gun approach to the non-Christian world has lacked system and thoroughness. And, what is far more serious, the non-Christian is undoubtedly confused by the multiple and diverse appeals reaching him from various Christian bodies, none of which may know very much about what the others are doing. This is even worse when the appeals are competitive. (p. 52-53)

The author points out, however, that ecumenism has not solved that problem which it claims is inherent in



denominationalism and its mission work. The result of ecumenism is first, a loss of missionary zeal and concern; secondly, to a large extent a loss of the only message the missionary can bring: the gospel. Ecumenism tends to destroy the very idea of mission work. And the author's conclusion is surely true.

Rev. Lowell quotes membership figures of churches which are "ecumenical" and compares these with "non-ecumenical" churches. The "ecumenical" churches show an overall decline in membership. The conclusion must be that where the gospel is no more preached, there is no further reason for the existence of the "church." The author insists:

Ecumenism is not a kindling, creative movement among Protestants. It appears to be more like a death march. As distinctives recede and convictions decline, ecumenists have little or nothing to cling to except each other. (p. 61)

On the other hand, Lowell points convincingly to the fact that the divisions of denominations have a useful purpose. He states:

Unity has never been a stimulating condition for the church of Jesus Christ. As long as the formal challenge of paganism remained in the West, the church maintained its vitality in mighty missionary thrusts. Mere paganism provided the challenge to keep the church alert and on the move. Then there was the challenge of the great heresies which had to

be met. The movement led by Arius in the fourth and fifth centuries rocked and stirred the church just as the stagnation of unity was nicely settling in. It created currents and stirred tides that are still felt fifteen hundred years later. The movement of Arius was a nuisance to the Roman Emperor and the bishops of the church, but the church's tradition and teaching would have been poorer without it. (p. 66)

Uncritical ecumenism provides no comparable challenge to change. The art of being like everybody else may be comforting but it is not stimulating or creative. History teaches that reforms come about only under challenge and only when the challengers are firm to the point of proliferation away from the group to be reformed. This is why division has been good for the church. A church incapable of proliferation is dead. (p. 83)

It is a small measure of assurance that there are others within other denominations who recognize the evils in ecumenism as practiced today. May they continue to sound the necessary warning. We must not, however, deceive ourselves into thinking that perhaps this ecumenism will be stopped. From this point, it would appear that this present trend towards oneness represents nothing less than that which leads to the establishment of the antichristian church of the last days. God grant us grace to remain faithful now — and in that day.

## OUR SEMINARY—

# A Day In School

*by Mr. J. M. Faber*

It is time for another report on our Theological School, so we made a special visit on Wednesday to give you the opportunity to share with us, A Day In School. That Wednesday, Jan. 24, happened to be the first day of the new semester and was therefore not a true example of regular school sessions, but we found it very interesting and hope that you do.

Wednesdays and Fridays are Prof. Hanko's days, and Tuesdays and Thursdays have been assigned to Prof. Hoeksema. Prof. Hoeksema teaches poimenics in his first class of the day, which deals with pastoral duties — the word refers to "soul-care." His next subject is Old Testament History, then Old Testament Exegesis, with Thursday's schedule substituting Dogmatics Review for Exegesis. Prof. Hanko's courses are, Medieval Church History, Isagogics and New

Testament Exegesis. This semester the Scripture under scrutiny begins with Ephesians 1 for the student to exegete, and James 3 on which the professor lectures and the student takes dictation.

This particular Wednesday, being the first of the semester, was primarily taken up by an introductory preview of what the student can expect in the semester ahead. Prof. Hanko opened the day with devotions and welcomed a committee of two from the Theological School Committee and your reporter to his opening day. Our student body is so small that with the addition of three visitors the Professor's class was fourfold its usual constituency. Indeed, it is "a day of small things" in our Seminary; if only one student is ill there would be no school that day — he is the student body! Even if that fact is a bit detrimental to a



well rounded education, it does offer private tutorship to our prospective minister; he receives all the attention of his instructors. The school room is situated in the basement of First Church, and is well equipped with a growing selection of library books suitable for seminary students.

The visitors that day were impressed with this introductory session and shared with the student much of the instruction given in lecture form. The professor warned him that he would be responsible for reading two volumes of one author, one volume of another, and the late Prof. Ophoff's material on Medieval Church History. This history begins at about 590 A.D. in the reign of Pope Gregory the Great, and ends with the year 1074. We learned that this period of history dealt with the missionary work of the church in the countries of Europe inhabited by barbarian tribes, beginning with the Latin tribes of Italy, Spain and Portugal; then north to the Celtic tribes of Britain, the Gauls, the Scots, the Picts and the Irish. The work then progressed to the Teutonic tribes from which we have descended. The church was already at that time split into East and West, and they were sometimes in competition with one another in their missionary work. That work ended with the Christianizing (and civilizing) of the whole country about 1075 A.D. The Capitol of the church was Rome in the Western Division, and, the professors said, this was going to be the chief concern of this semester's inquiry. We also learned why evangelizing and civilizing is a parallel process. Where the Gospel is preached there is education; there is knowledge; there is reading and development. The monasteries were the center of the activities in each region. The Monks taught the children reading and writing, and led the people in their political development, and actually ruled the continent of Europe in every sphere of life. This developed into hierarchy and the papal rule. This evil of priest-craft inevitably led the church into a condition from which it had to be rescued by The Reformation.

One of the results of Christianizing the barbarians, we learned, was that many of the pagan rites were incorporated into the worship of the church. The missionaries were instructed by the Pope to be ready to adopt their teaching to existing pagan religions and incorporate certain old religious peculiarities into their worship services. Some of our church holidays owe their origin to that practice, of which Christmas is a striking example. The worship of Mary may have had its origin in the service of their goddesses, and angelology, demonology and the superstitious respect for miracles are all due to pagan superstitions of that period.

The professor warned his student that the study of Medieval Church History would not be a happy experience because it is a history of decay and degeneration. In the church of that day one could find all sorts of crime. The truth that Absolute Power corrupts is very evident in the study of that time. Student Moore was advised that church history and secular history are inter-twined; that if he were a bit hazy about

secular history he had better brush up on it for he would not be able to understand the one without knowing the other.

In all his references to the old church history one point stood out in the professor's lecture, that though apostasy abounded in the Medieval Church one could not therefore draw the conclusion that God does not at all times preserve His Church. The very opposite is true; the worse a church becomes the more evident it becomes that God does preserve His people. This preservation, we were told, was accomplished through the work of individual theologians, some of whom succeeded in preserving Augustinianism in spite of the Hierarchy. It was preserved in the monasteries which had become the centers of learning and religious zeal. Even though heresies also invaded these islands of peace there remained a great deal of dedication to God and His Truth. Because of the monasteries in which the true religion was kept the center of the church came to be in Europe. That fact leads to the other patent truth that it necessarily became the center of Anti-Christianity. Even as true doctrines have come to our country from Europe, so heresies are also immigrating to America from Europe. Right now America is about twenty years behind our fatherland in heretical teachings in such errors that lie behind the "God is dead" and "The Bible is not the Word of God, but the Word of God is in the Bible" theories.

After the above instruction and assignment of Medieval Church History a short recess was declared before taking up the next subject. A thermos of coffee and cookies (wife-packed at home) is the highlight of recess, not unlike the coffee break enjoyed by the factory or office worker.

If you have not gone home during recess and are still with us, let us sit in on the next course which is New Testament Isagogics. This course, under that hard-to-pronounce title is the study of an introduction to the New Testament. The word literally means, "a leading into." It serves to lead the student into a thorough understanding of the New Testament without an exegesis thereof. It serves to inculcate knowledge which will serve as a basis for exegesis. The scope of this course is, in general, to come to the understanding of the canonical significance in the organism of the entire Scriptures. This organic characteristic of the New Testament (and of the whole Bible) the Professor found to be of major importance. This truth pre-supposes organic inspiration. Our instructor described the Scriptures as a portrait of Christ. He said it must not be viewed as a jigsaw puzzle of 66 pieces with one or more pieces missing, or defaced, or obliterated. Though Scripture does not exhaust the depths of God, it is a true portrait of Christ as the Face of God, and is all we need to know to be saved (cf Belgic Conf. #7). The professor was quite emphatic in his assertion that there are no extraneous parts of Scripture; none of them are merely scientific, or peripheral, or old fashioned and out of date. He insisted that every part was important and belonged to the whole portrait. Our Lord's "jot and tittle"



cannot be taken from it without marring the whole picture.

All the while the professor was discussing the above he would interrupt himself with statements like these: "I want you to pick that up when you study this," or, "I want you to read that book," or "I want you to fully comprehend this," until the visitors began to rejoice they were visitors and not students. In a single morning visit (of which Student Moore has four each week) one might come to the conclusion that there is one house on the one street (119 Fitzhugh Ave., S.E.) in Grand Rapids where the days are 48 hours long and each week has 10 work days!

Noticing a quick glance at the clock by his student the professor awoke to the realization that it was past time of adjournment. Our school is not equipped with an automatic bell system and the student seems to feel his calling to call the right signals when it seems that his instructor is lost in his assignment-giving-instructions.

One of the Theological School Committee delegates was asked to close this session with prayer, and the first-day-in-school of this semester came to an end.

Everyone went his own way, and it was probably only our imagination that we thought we detected a little weaving in the walk of Student Moore as he went to his car at the curb.

If you have enjoyed this Day In School you may well believe that we did, too. But one must have a deep desire to be a minister and be firmly dedicated to this pursuit to be able to enjoy it day after day. It is a grueling ordeal, or so it seemed to us.

We were also informed that the Spring issue of our Seminary's Theological Journal is past the planning stage. This issue will include a paper on "Melancthon" by Rev. D. Engelsma, pastor of our Loveland, Colorado church; a comprehensive review of Prof. Berkhofer's book on The Holy Scriptures by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema; and a scholarly treatise on, "The Synoptic Problem" by the editor, Prof. H. Hanko. All in all, this Journal promises to be well worth while reading and owning. There is no cost affixed to this magazine which may be had for the asking. If you are not already on the mailing list you can still have your name placed on it by writing to Professor H. Hanko, 4665 Ju-le-on Drive, S.W., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49504.

## ALL AROUND US—

# Reflections On Assen and Lunteren

## Ecumenical News Items

### Southern Presbyterians

by Prof. H. Hanko

#### REFLECTIONS ON ASSEN AND LUNTEREN

In 1926 the Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands deposed a certain Dr. Geelkerken from office for denying that the two trees which God placed in the Garden of Eden were actual trees and that Satan actually talked with Eve through the serpent which spoke. He denied the literal, historical interpretation of Genesis 3. Last year the Gereformeerde Kerken reconsidered this decision and decided they had been wrong in condemning Geelkerken; that his interpretation of these chapters in Genesis was a permissible interpretation and did not constitute a denial of the authority of Scripture.

In the last article of the *Reformed Journal* Prof. Lewis Smedes comments on last year's decision of the Gereformeerde Kerken taken at Lunteren and finds himself pleased with it.

He is pleased, first of all, because he finds in this decision an act of humility: the Church was willing to confess past error and concede that the Church on earth is a fallible institution.

He is also pleased that the Church was honest. It could have permitted the decisions of Assen to atrophy through disuse. It could have maintained these decisions which would have involved a thorough house-cleaning of present professors and ministers who teach the same thing that Geelkerken taught. But it chose to be honest and retract the decision.

Now whether this was really honest or not depends entirely on one's agreement or disagreement with the decision of Assen; and Smedes, by calling it honest, has already tipped his hand that he agrees that Assen was a mistake and that Geelkerken should have been permitted to teach his views. Certainly it was dishonest when the Gereformeerde Kerken which condemned Geelkerken should now tolerate men who believe as he did. If this is all that was involved, then honest indeed the decision was.

But supposing now that Assen was a correct decision. Then the action of the Church at Lunteren in retracting it was anything but honest. It was then



simply a matter of expediency and a recognition of the fact that the Church no longer possessed the spiritual strength to cast out of her fellowship those who denied the truth. This strength she still had in 1926; she has lost it, to her shame.

But there is another point which Smedes makes in the article that is far more important. He insists correctly that the Church did not really approve of Geelkerken's interpretation of Genesis 3 when it struck down Assen's decision. The church only said that this was a matter of exegesis and not of faith. That because it was a matter of exegesis, and not of faith, it was a tolerable view within the Church whether it was right or wrong. "No *interpretation* of the words of Genesis chapter three should be accorded the status of an article of faith."

It is on this basis that Smedes rather contemptuously condemns those who find a connection between the literal interpretation of Genesis 1-3 and the resurrection of Christ. Rather off-handedly and without much proof he says that "the argument is bad on many counts;" and adds

There is a notion abroad that we can somehow bolster faith in the risen Christ by demanding a literal interpretation of Genesis. It is in fact a very mistaken notion. Anyone whose faith in the resurrection rests on the necessity of a literal interpretation of Genesis is the better off the sooner he finds a better basis for his faith.

But is the matter indeed as Smedes presents it?

We ought to mention, first of all, that, while indeed a distinction must be made between exegesis and faith, it is not the kind of distinction Smedes implies. It is certainly true (and Smedes himself would be the first to agree) that the faith of the Church is derived from exegesis of Scripture. Geelkerken was not condemned for faulty exegesis. He was condemned for denying important points of the Christian faith. If it is true as Smedes insists that "no *interpretation* of the words of Genesis chapter three should be accorded the status of an article of faith" then certainly this is true of any interpretation of any text, including the interpretations of those texts which have to do with the resurrection of Christ. Inasmuch as the whole of the Christian faith is founded upon interpretation of Scripture, Smedes will have to concede (and might be ready to concede) that there is really no article of faith in the whole body of Christian belief which is not fair target for the heretics.

But there is also a question of the method of exegesis involved here — something which Smedes himself points out. And the *method* of exegesis, it must be granted, already presupposes a doctrine of Scripture. Proper exegesis can only be conducted on the basis of a prior commitment of faith in Scripture as the infallibly inspired Word of God. Proper exegesis is possible only when it is first of all accepted by faith that God reveals Himself on the pages of Holy Writ which pages contain infallibly inspired writings. Anyone who departs from this commitment has al-

ready ruined all possibility of proper exegesis and is no longer to be trusted as a responsible expositor of Scripture. And this is precisely what has happened when Genesis three is interpreted in another way than literally and historically. To deny the reality of the two trees and the reality of the speaking serpent reveals that the one who does this denies that Scripture is infallibly inspired. This is grounds for excommunication. Assen was right. Lunteren was wrong.

Smedes' answer to this would be that many parts of Scripture are to be interpreted in a way other than literal and historical. He himself refers to Revelation 21 as an instance. We concede the argument, of course. But we deny that Genesis 3 is the same kind of writing as Revelation 21. The difference is quite plainly that the entire context of Revelation 21 assures us beyond a shadow of doubt that this was a vision, given to John which has to be interpreted as a vision. Even a child, it seems clear, would understand that when the apostle John, on the island of Patmos, received this description of a new heaven and a new earth, of a holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, that this was a vision granted the seer of Patmos. Is this the language of Genesis 3? Was Genesis 3 a vision given to Adam perhaps? Let Smedes prove this from the context. Every indication in the whole book of Genesis is that we have historical fact before us. Genesis 3 must also be included as historical fact. If there are those who think not, let them show where the context indicates this. Smedes concedes that this is the telling point: "The only question we should ask...is how the text and context requires (require? - H.H.) us to take it."

Hence there is considerable plausibility in the argument which Smedes considers to be bad: "Toleration of error on this point seriously undermines the church's ability to protect the faith at other more crucial points." Supposing that Genesis three must be interpreted as a vision. This means, of course, that the fall is also not a historic reality, but a vision. What is to keep an exegete from interpreting any historical section in Genesis as a vision since Genesis three has the same kind of historical and literal "flavor" about it as Abraham's offering of Isaac has? But one cannot then dodge the question of how Jesus could consider all these events as being historical. The only way out is to deny the divine nature of Christ. Here is the destruction of both the incarnation and the resurrection. And not only is this an abstract possibility; but history is replete with examples of this sort of thing happening all the time. And, as a result, history is strewn with the wreckage of churches who took this approach to Scripture.

Lunteren was not "a support for faith," much less a "liberation of scholars," but a concession to modernism and a serious threat to the existence of the Gereformeerde Kerken as a Reformed denomination.

#### ECUMENICAL NEWS ITEMS

Billy Graham continues in various ways to reveal



that he is caught up in the ecumenical movement. He recently participated in a convocation of the Ecumenic Institute for Protestant, Catholic and Jewish clergymen at Belmont College in Belmont, North Carolina. This is a Roman Catholic institution which also, at the time of the convocation, conferred on Billy the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. Billy Graham was the chief speaker and in his acceptance speech spoke of the need for more understanding among Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians. This, he said, was possible because the Gospel which formed the basis of the College where he spoke was the same Gospel which he preached. This may very well be true.

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Colgate Rochester Divinity School, affiliated with the Baptist Church, will join with Bexley Hall, a small Episcopal Seminary, in a new ecumenical endeavor. While the two seminaries will not merge, they will share their facilities, libraries and faculties. But this is only a first step towards the establishment of a proposed Rochester Center for Theological Studies which will probably include a nearby Roman Catholic Seminary and several other Seminaries in the area. This is but one instance of a nation-wide trend towards federation among seminaries of various denominations. If the churches are uniting, it seems but logical to merge seminaries as well.

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Unity week is past. To most of our readers this may come as something of a surprise since few within our circles were even aware of the celebration of this event on Jan. 18 to Jan. 25. But to ecumenical leaders it was of utmost importance and eminently successful.

Several items stand out in importance.

Dr. Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury in the Anglican Church appeared in London's Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral to dispense blessings in the glare of television floodlights.

In the Netherlands Dutch Roman Catholics and Protestants joined in many places in receiving the Eucharist in ecumenical Masses.

All the big cities in America witnessed a spate of pulpit-trading among clergy of different denominations. Rev. James Stuart of the Episcopal Church became the first Protestant to speak in Saint Patrick's Cathedral. Catholics, Protestants and even a Salvation Army Band joined in common prayer services in San Francisco. Even in the "Bible Belt" of the deep South a Roman priest confessed to Methodists and Baptists joined in

worship with Roman Catholics.

It is interesting to note that more and more emphasis in ecumenical activity is on the relation between Protestants and Roman Catholics.

### SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS

A couple of news items concerning Southern Presbyterians are interesting especially in the light of the present merger talks between the Presbyterians and the Reformed Church of America.

It has long been evident that there are two groups within the Southern Presbyterian Church: one group which is liberal and favors union with the United Presbyterian Church and participation in the COCU talks; another group which is more conservative and is pressing for union with the Reformed Church of America. Recently, Dr. Marshall Dency, moderator of the Southern Presbyterians, called a conference between these liberal and conservative factions at which conference he urged both groups to disband in order to restore unity within the Church. The result was quite different. The lines between the liberal and conservative factions were more sharply drawn than ever, and it became plain that both could not agree on fundamental questions of doctrine and practice. The Southern Presbyterians will have to reckon with this deep division in their ranks as they pursue their ecumenical objectives.

Two congregations in the same denomination belonging to the Savannah, Georgia Presbytery have withdrawn from the denomination on the grounds that the denomination has substantially altered the historic stand of the Church. There was a question of property since the presbytery involved claimed the property and denied the congregation the right to it. The Georgia Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the two congregations were entitled to keep their property even though they withdrew from the denomination inasmuch as the court was of the opinion that the denomination had indeed altered the original tenets of faith and practice.

This decision was being hailed as having far-reaching implications for all congregations within the denomination and within other denominations who refuse to go along with the liberalism and ecumenism of their parent churches. It ought to give the ecumenists pause; for they were rather certain they could hold congregations by the threat of taking their property. It ought to encourage those who want no part of the liberalism rampant in the church today.

The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a teacher for grades one through four for the 1968-1969 school year. Anyone interested in this position please apply to Mr. Gerald Van Den Top, R.R. 1, Rock Rapids, Iowa, 51235.

Gerald Van Den Top, Sec'y.

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

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



## 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

Writing on Pelagius' view of the freedom of man and his primitive state, Philip Schaff, in his *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. III, 803 f.f., writes as follows:

This is the only conception of freedom which Pelagius has (the ability to be able to choose both, the good and the evil), and to this he and his followers continually revert. He views freedom in its *form* alone, and in its *first* stage, and there fixes and leaves it, in perpetual equipoise between good and evil, ready at any moment to turn either way. It is without past or future; absolutely independent of everything without or within; a vacuum, which may make itself a plenum, and then becomes a vacuum again; a perpetual *tabula rasa*, upon which man can write whatsoever he pleases; a restless choice, which, after every decision, reverts to indecision and oscillation.

Pelagius himself, however, it must be admitted, recognized to some extent the power of habit and its effect upon the will, although it is claimed that Coelestius and Julian, his disciples, carried out his idea of the freedom of choice more consistently to the conception of a purely qualitative or formal power which admits of no growth or change by actual exercise, but remains always the same. Pelagius, however, recognized to some extent the power of habit and its effect upon the will. On this Schaff writes as follows:

Human liberty, like every other spiritual power, has its development; it must advance beyond its equilibrium, beyond the mere ability to sin or not to sin, and decide for the one or the other. When the will decides, it so far loses its indifference, and the oftener it acts, the more does it become fixed; good or evil becomes its habit, its second nature; and the will either becomes truly free by deciding for virtue, or it becomes the slave of vice. "Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin." Goodness is its own reward, and wickedness is its own punishment.....The right use of the freedom of choice leads to a state of holiness; the abuse of it, to a state of bondage under sin. The state of the will is affected by its acts, and settles towards a permanent character of good or evil. Every

act goes to form a moral state or habit; and habit is in turn the parent of new acts. Perfect freedom is one with moral necessity, in which man no longer *can* do evil because he *will* not do it, and *must* do good because he *wills* to do it; in which the finite will is united with the divine in joyful obedience, and raised above the possibility of apostasy. This is the blessed freedom of the children of God in the state of glory. There is, indeed, a subordinate sphere of natural virtue and civil justice, in which even fallen man retains a certain freedom of choice, and is the artificer of his own character. But as respects his relation to God, he is in a state of alienation from God, and of bondage under sin; and from this he cannot rise by his own strength, by a bare resolution of his will, but only by a regenerating act of grace, received in humility and faith, and setting him free to practice Christian virtue. Then, when born again from above, the will of the new man co-operates with the grace of God, in the growth of the Christian life.

Physical *death* Pelagius regarded as a law of nature, which would have prevailed even without sin. The passages of Scripture which represent death as the consequence of sin, he referred to moral corruption or eternal damnation. Yet he conceded that Adam, if he had not sinned, might by a special privilege have been exempted from death.

This is all rather confusing, is it not? We have no reason to believe that the above is not a correct and factual presentation of the position and views of Pelagius. One can hardly call this a clear presentation of the "truth." Of course, heretics do not speak a clear and unambiguous language. According to Pelagius, habits do affect a person's conduct. The right use of the freedom of choice leads to a state of holiness; the abuse of it, to a state of bondage under sin. And the state of the will is affected by its acts, and settles towards a permanent character of good or evil. Pelagius also speaks of the state of perfect freedom. He must do this. Do not the Scriptures speak of everlasting life and glory? So, the people of God in heaven will be everlastingly perfect. However, perfect freedom, according to him, is the state in which man can no



longer do evil because he *will* not do it. But, how can the state of everlasting glory ever be the product of one's own will? That is surely impossible. Whereas the wages of sin is death, everlasting life is surely the gift of God. Notice, too, that Pelagius speaks of a subordinate sphere of civil justice and natural virtue. This must remind us of the modern theory of common grace. This theory, too, speaks of a natural sphere of natural virtue and civil justice. It, too, draws a distinction between two spheres, the natural and the spiritual. The spiritual sphere refers us specifically to our relation to God. And the natural sphere emphasizes the natural sphere, the relation in which all men stand to one another. In that natural sphere men can do much good in the sight of God, often put the people of God to shame. Is it not striking that, already in the days of Augustine, Pelagius speaks of such a subordinate sphere? There is certainly a striking resemblance between the conception of Pelagius and the modern theory of common grace.

Finally, also Pelagius speaks of the regenerating act of grace. Of course, he must do this. Do not the Scriptures speak of this regenerating work of God's grace? Does not our Lord Jesus Christ say to Nicodemus that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God?" So, also Pelagius speaks of a bondage under sin, and that man cannot rise from this by his own strength, by a bare resolution of his own will. But we do well to note that Pelagius also declares that we must receive this regenerating act of grace in humility and faith. And he also declares that the will of man co-operates with the grace of God. This is pelagianism. The sinner needs the grace of God, but whether this grace of the Lord will operate in him depends upon the free will of that sinner. And this is also the fundamental heresy of the Three Points of 1924.

### THE FALL OF ADAM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

With regard to Pelagius' conception of the fall of Adam and the consequences of that fall, Philip Schaff writes as follows, Vol. III, 805, f.f.:

Pelagius, 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 have no bearing beyond himself.

In his view, the sin of the first man consisted in a single, isolated act of disobedience. Julian compares it to the insignificant offence of a child, which allows itself to be misled by some sensual bait, but afterwards repents its fault. "Rude, inexperienced, thoughtless, having not yet learned to fear, nor seen an example of virtue," Adam allowed himself to be enticed by the pleasant look of the forbidden fruit, and to be determined by the persuasion of the woman. This single and inexcusable act of transgression brought no consequences, either to the soul or the body of Adam, still less to his posterity, who all stand or fall for themselves.

There is, therefore, according to this system, no *original* sin, and no *hereditary* guilt. Pelagius merely conceded, that Adam, by his disobedience, set a bad

*example*, which exerts a more or less injurious influence upon his posterity. In this view he condemned at the synod of Diospolis (415) the assertion of Coelestius, that Adam's sin injured himself alone, not the human race. He was also inclined to admit an increasing corruption of mankind, though he ascribed it solely to the habit of evil, which grows in power the longer it works and the farther it spreads. Sin, however, is born with man; it is not a product of nature, but of the will. Man is born both without virtue and without vice, but with the capacity for either. The universality of sin must be ascribed to the power of evil example and evil custom.

And there are exceptions to it. The "all" in Rom. 5:12 is to be taken relatively for the majority. Even before Christ there were men who lived *free from sin*, such as righteous Abel, Abraham, Isaac, the Virgin Mary, and many others. From the silence of the Scriptures respecting the sins of many righteous men, he inferred that such men were without sin. In reference to Mary, Pelagius is nearer the present Roman Catholic view than Augustine, who exempts her only from actual sin, not from original. Jerome, with all his reverence for the blessed Virgin, does not even make this exception, but says, without qualification, that every creature is under the power of sin and in need of the mercy of God.

With original *sin*, of course, hereditary *guilt* also disappears; and even apart from this connection, Pelagius views it as irreconcilable with the justice of God. From this position a necessary deduction is the salvation of unbaptized infants. Pelagius, however, made a distinction between *vita aeterna*, or a lower degree of salvation, and the *regnum coelorum* of the baptized saints; and he affirmed the necessity of baptism for entrance into the kingdom of heaven (Roman Catholicism today also distinguishes between Roman Catholic unbaptized and baptized infants — H.V.).

In this doctrine of the fall we meet with the same disintegrating view of humanity as before. Adam is isolated from his posterity; his disobedience is disjoined from other sins. He is simply an individual, like any other man, not the representative of the whole race. There are no creative starting-points; every man begins history anew. In this system Paul's exhibitions of Adam and Christ as the representative ancestors of mankind have no meaning. If the act of the former has merely an individual significance, so also has that of the latter. If the sin of Adam cannot be imputed, neither can the merit of Christ. In both cases there is nothing left but the idea of example, the influence of which depends solely upon our own will. But there is an undeniable solidarity between the sin of the first man and that of his posterity.

In like manner sin is here regarded almost exclusively as an isolated act of the will, while yet there is also such a thing as sinfulness; there are sinful states and sinful habits, which are consummated and strengthened by sins of act, and which in turn give birth to other sins of act.

Finally, the essence and root of sin is not sensuality, as Pelagius was inclined to assume (though he did not express himself very definitely on this point), but self-seeking, including pride and sensuality as the two main forms of sin. The sin of Satan was a pride that aimed at equality with God, rebellion against God; and in this the fall of Adam began, and was inwardly consummated before he ate of the forbidden fruit.



## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

The first of two of this winter's Lecture Series was held in First Church February 1 on a foggy, rainy evening — a change from the blizzards of last winter. Prof. H. Hanko was the lecturer, his topic being the timely one of Ecumenism — the word on the lips of the majority of church leaders who want "involvement" in the social affairs of the world; the race question, peace talks, its population explosion and the burning issues of the day.

The speaker viewed his subject under the theme, "Scriptural Ecumenism," and asked us to consider it as to its meaning according to the Word of God; how we should evaluate modern ecumenicity; and what is our calling in regard to this. His emphasis was found in our confession that we believe in One Holy Catholic Church; how that is founded on Christ Who is The Truth — the full revelation of God; the Christ who is her Head, and she His Body. The speaker also described the test which the True Church must meet, that of displaying The Three Marks: the pure preaching of the Word, the pure administration of the Sacraments and the proper exercise of Christian discipline.

The Lecturer evaluated for us the modern ecumenical movement and found it to be derisive of doctrine, a rejecter of the creeds, and an advocate of union before a common basis may be established. The trend of all these is toward social reform, an alliance with the State, and eventually the institution of a One-World-Church — that of the Anti-Christ. The Professor pointed out our calling in regard to this modern idea of unity, counselling us to remain firm in our resolve to resist this pressure while we still have a choice. He warned about the future in which the choice would be, "Join, or else!", when the "or else" would mean our lives. The speaker's final observations led to the prediction that true church unity (in its institutional form) might be expected when the saints will be driven into each other's arms through the persecution by the Beast and its Image in the Latter Days. That, he concluded, would be true ecumenicity.

The program committee chose two appropriate Psalter numbers for the audience to sing, Nos. 350 and 371, which was the only music beside the organ prelude and postlude by Mrs. C. Lubbers. The main auditorium was comfortably filled with many young people in evidence. Rev. Van Baren led in the opening devotions, and Rev. Lubbers led in closing prayer.

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The High School Board, in its last bulletin, reported several large gifts which added materially to the school's treasury. Two of those were bank drafts of about \$1,200.00 each from an anonymous donor. The members of the finance committee, in their monthly meetings, eagerly look for that one blue envelope which contains a neatly folded \$100.00 bill each month! The name chosen by the board is, "Covenant Christian High," which expresses both its foundation and the goal.

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The Holland Ladies Aid Society met in the home of Mrs. N. Yonker Tuesday afternoon, Feb. 6 to honor her 91st birthday anniversary which she hopes to celebrate Feb. 12. This aged widow is wheelchair-bound but comes to Holland's Church regularly from her home in Muskegon. Transportation and noon lodgings are furnished by the members of her church. The host family finds her an interesting historian who can remember events from yesterday to more than 80 years into the past.

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Loveland's new clerk is Mr. G. R. Griess, 1017 E. 57th Street, Loveland, Colorado 80537.

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Southeast's church building committee has finished off the former consistory room to make it a cloak room with an additional exit. This will hopefully relieve the congestion in the main lobby when leaving the building.

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An announcement recently appeared in First Church's bulletin in the Holland language. *Correction* — what was supposed to be the Holland language. But, probably due to the fact that the typesetter was not a Hollander the typographical errors and mis-spellings resulted in a Yankee-Dutch version, with the Dutch for "First Church" coming out as "Farthest Church" in the translation. But the message was clear: a soup supper scheduled for Feb. 23. If it should turn out to be alphabet soup 't would make no great difference — the Dutch and the English both have the same twenty-six letters.

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"Growth from within" was reflected in Loveland's Jan. 14 bulletin when it recorded that the infant daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Engelsma was to be baptized that morning, and that a daughter had been born to Mr. and Mrs. D. Gleason that week. Hudsonville's Jan. 28th bulletin also announced that two infant daughters of the congregation would receive the sign and seal of the covenant through the administration of the sacrament of baptism that morning.

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A family visitation schedule in a recent bulletin of First Church revealed the polyglot character of the constituency of that congregation. The names Gruszynski and Quenga are very evidently not natives of the Netherlands, the nationality that characterizes the bulk of our denominational roll-call. What a roll-call that will be when all nations, tribes and tongues shall be gathered before the Great White Throne in the Day of The Lord!

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... see you in church.

—J.M.F.