

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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

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

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

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

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MEDITATION—

Thanks for the Fruits of Election

by Rev. M. Schipper

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God our Father; knowing brethren beloved, your election of God."
I Thessalonians 1:2-4

The church of Christ, and here particularly the church of the Thessalonians, brings forth fruits which become manifest as she assumes her place in the world.

These fruits have their origin and source not in the church, considered by herself, but in God Who has chosen her in order that she might bring them forth.

For this fact, and for these evidences of divine

election the apostle and those with him cease not to give thanks.

This is the thought expressed in our text!
Consider, first of all, these beautiful fruits!
Your work of faith!

It should become apparent that the apostle is not speaking here of "your work," that is, of the work of the church. He is not interested in the mere work of the church. This is indeed a far cry from the situation as we see it in the church today. Today the emphasis seems to fall on the work of the church, what the church is doing or is expected to do. A long list of works are prescribed for her and assigned to her membership to perform. Even ministers are no longer called today in the accepted sense of that term to the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, but they are being hired as professionals to be the administrators of the works. They must be adept in organizing and fostering youth clubs, missionary societies, serving in ministerial and political organizations, which in turn again are intended to serve the community.

Nor is the apostle interested in the diligence with which the church works. Also this is a far cry from the situation as we see it in the church today. The church is encouraged to be on fire for the work of the church. And the church is judged according to the amount of enthusiasm she displays as to whether or not she is a good and prosperous church.

But again, the apostle does not give thanks because the church was all on fire, filled with holy enthusiasm, expending all her energy in vying with other churches in a popular effort, or even for the cause of Christ.

Rather, it is your work that is marked by faith!

And again, this does not mean that the apostle gives thanks merely for faithful work accomplished by the church. He is not complimenting the members for their faithfulness, because they had been faithful in all that they did, though there is nothing wrong with acknowledging faithfulness on the part of members of the church and it may be entirely in place. Someone has said that it is the oil of appreciation which makes the machinery of social relations run more smoothly. And this is also true in the church. Nevertheless, the apostle is not rewarding the church members here for their faithfulness. Rather, he is speaking here of the work of faith. That is, the work which proceeds from faith, not from the members. It is the work which faith produces in and through those who possess it.

Then there is, your labor of love!

This is not mere repetition.

Labor and work are different. Work may be the mere use of energy in the accomplishment of a certain task. But labor has in mind that work which is done with much weariness. For example, a man may work, let us say, in a foundry where heavy castings are made. And at the end of the day he may have filled his quota and become very tired so that he must retire for the night. But if that same man works in a shop where he is pestered because he refuses to join with the union out of religious principles, he labors. He labors with great difficulty. He has the added burden of persecution to contend with. The apostle evidently has in mind

work that is toilsome. The church at Thessalonica had evidently undergone much suffering for Christ's sake. The apostle is thinking of this now, when he speaks of their labor of love.

It is your labor marked by love!

This same apostle in Colossians 3:14 offers what may be called a definition of love, when he says, "And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness." That describes the true nature of love. It is a bond that unites a perfect subject and a perfect object, or, it is the action of a perfect subject whereby he seeks the perfection of its object. For example, if I possess the grace of love and I see you do that which is wrong, or evil, I cannot be silent, lest I hate you. However, if I truly love you I will seek your perfection. That is love!

Here the apostle has in mind very evidently the love of others. In their love of others they suffered. Hence, labor of love!

And finally, the apostle mentions your patience of hope!

Note the triad: faith, love, and hope!

The apostle in I Corinthians 13 speaks of this trilogy again, only in a different order. There he writes: "And now abideth faith, hope, and love (charity), these three; but the greatest of these is love." Here noticeably love is mentioned last and receives the emphasis. But in our text, the order is: faith, love, and hope. Not especially does this order emphasize the greatness of hope in distinction from the others. For also here, most assuredly, love would be the greatest. But hope in our text marks the climax, the end of the ascending scale.

Patience marked by hope!

Hope is that grace in the child of God that desires, longs for a certain object with the confidence that it will attain to it, or receive it. It is never used in the Scripture in the sense in which we often use it, when we mean to express our doubt or uncertainty relative to a certain thing. We say when we are asked whether we are going to this affair or are expecting a certain thing: I hope so. We mean, I'm not sure. We are asked: Are you a child of God? or, Are you saved? And we reply: I hope so. We mean to say: I'm not quite sure. But so the Word of God never uses this concept. Rather, hope is absolute certainty relative to an object we know exists, though we see it not; that we shall surely have it, though it is only promised to us. Hope is that activity of faith that aspires to its object because it knows it is real, though it cannot be seen as yet.

Patience, on the other hand, is that grace of endurance which bears up under the most trying circumstances. It is seen in one who has gone through intense battle, and when the smoke of the battle is dissipated he is still standing. It refuses to go down. It remains steadfast to the end. It is a grace that is given to us, which we do not possess of ourselves. Peculiarly, you never read in the Scripture that God is patient. You do read that He is longsuffering, and forbearing, and you also read that He is the God of patience; that is, the God Who gives patience; but you never read that He is patient. It is a virtue peculiarly given to His people of

mere grace. It is given unto them not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake; and in the midst of that suffering to endure. That is patience. Patience of hope is patience that is produced by hope, which in turn motivates, gives that patience its enduring character.

All these, work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope, are fruits which find their origin not in us, but in sovereign, eternal election.

* * *

Election!

Not merely foreknowledge!

O, it is that too, no question about that! Surely election means that we were foreknown of God. Those elected God knew before the foundation of the world, and that, too, with a knowledge of love. Paul tells us in Acts 15:18 "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." And this surely applies also to those elected, chosen by Him. Yet, if we were to say no more, the Arminian would have no quarrel with us. He too believes in and teaches election. It is exactly his theory that God chose those whom He foreknew would do works of righteousness, and on that basis He chose them.

Rather we must say that election is an eternal, sovereign, causal choice. God did not choose us because He knew before hand what we would be or become. He chose us in order that we might become what He ordained we should be. He did not choose us because we were holy in His sight, but He chose us in order that we might become holy in His sight. He did not choose us because of our work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope; but because He wanted us to have these things. Election is the cause, the source of the virtues of faith, love, and hope. The possession of these virtues is therefore the proof of our election.

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God!

This is a knowledge which the apostle has concerning the saints at Thessalonica.

And how did the apostle attain to this knowledge? How did he know that the saints were chosen of God? Did he perhaps have a secret look into the Lamb's book of life where he discovered their names inscribed? Had God perhaps given to him a special revelation of His predestinating counsel and showed him exactly who were the chosen ones? The answers to the last two questions are negative.

The apostle received no secret or special revelation concerning the election of God. Nor do we receive a secret or special revelation concerning our election. Would we know our election of God, we may determine this by its fruits. When the apostle Peter in II Peter 1:10 exhorts: "give diligence to make your calling and election sure," the implication is: that we make our election sure by making our calling sure. The same relationship obtains in our text: we make our election sure, that is, we know our election, by its fruits. This would also imply, would it not, that in the purpose of God election never stands by itself. To our election, that is our having been chosen of God, also belongs the way in which that election is realized and the fruits it must also bring forth. Or, to put it still more simply,

God chose us in order that we would bring forth certain fruits of grace in our lives. He chose us in order that we might believe, possess a faith that works. He chose us in order that we might love, a love that labors. He chose us in order that we might hope, a hope that enables us to endure faithfully to the end; namely, according to which we shall stand in the assembly of all the elect in life eternal.

Judging their works, the apostle can say of the saints in Thessalonica, I know your election of God. You have not been chosen because you possess faith, love, and hope; but you have faith, love, and hope because you have been chosen. Election is, therefore, the cause, the source of these graces. And for this the apostle gives thanks!

* * *

A continual thanksgiving!

Paul, Silas, and Timothy cease not to give thanks, remembering without ceasing these fruits of election.

And again, the thanks are not directed to the congregation, no matter how faithful she had been. Thanks only to God!

God is praised, He is well-spoken of! That is the implication of thanksgiving here!

And so, God attains to the very purpose for which He has chosen us, and causes us to bring forth fruits in our lives, — His glorious praise!

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift, through Whom flow unto us all the riches of Christ Jesus, which work for our salvation not only, but unto the glory of God.

IS THE REFORMATION DEAD?

"450 YEARS . . . AND THEN?"

by

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Commemorate with us the 450th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. We want you too to hear and be stirred by a relevant message which you will never forget. Mark the date on your calendars!

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2
AT 8:00 P.M.

First Protestant Reformed Church

(Fuller at Franklin)

(Sponsored by the Protestant Reformed Churches)

EDITORIALS—

“To Free You From All Worldly Cares”

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The above is a phrase extracted from a paragraph in the form call-letter in use in our churches. The whole paragraph reads as follows:

Convinced that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and to encourage you in the discharge of your duties, and to free you from all worldly cares and avocations while you are dispensing spiritual blessings to us, we, the elders and deacons of the Protestant Reformed Church do promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of dollars, in payments, yearly, and every year as long as you continue the minister of this church, together with free use of parsonage, and free use of a telephone

As you have guessed, the subject of this editorial is ministers' salaries. More specifically, it is low salaries.

Before I proceed, let me exclude myself, lest anyone think that the intent of this editorial is self-serving. I am adequately cared for.

Now let me explain.

It is almost an annual occurrence at our synodical meetings that when subsidy requests are treated, someone makes the remark that the salaries of ministers in subsidized churches are low, — low to the point of being downright inadequate. The trouble with that remark is, however, two-fold. In the first place, synod can do nothing about this situation. It does not have the right, for example, to say to a congregation, “We will give you \$500 more subsidy than you have requested, provided you raise your minister's salary by that amount.” In the second place, the remark is really made at the wrong place: for the most part, it does not reach those who should hear it.

Hence, I decided to make the remark(s) where they could be heard by all, both in subsidized and in non-subsidized consistories and congregations. This is not an attempt to dictate to any consistory. Moreover, I am aware that some consistories inquire annually of their pastors whether their salaries are adequate, — although I am also aware that many a pastor is reluctant to ask for a salary increase, especially in a subsidized congregation. This is merely an attempt to call attention to what I believe is a real problem, and to do so at the time of year when proposed budgets are being considered by consistories.

Consider the following facts:

1. Of ten churches which requested subsidy this year, seven listed proposed salaries of \$4800 down to

\$4500. I have no statistics for non-subsidized churches. Besides, I am listing only the more extreme cases.

2. Usually, let alone the fact that salaries are already below average, increases in salary do not keep up with increases in the cost of living. This is according to government statistics.

3. As a rule, increases in salary do not keep up with increases in size of family, nor with increased costs as a family grows up.

4. The *average* per family income in the United States is said to be around \$9500 per year.

5. In comparison with other denominations, salaries in our denomination as a whole are at the bottom of the scale. I do not say this because we should “keep up with the Joneses.” But I present these statistics merely to give some idea of what other churches do. For example, the *average* (not the highest) Christian Reformed salary in 1967 is \$6,734.52; the projected average for 1968 is \$6,935.00. Recently I gleaned from a Chicago newspaper some statistics as to average salaries in Protestant denominations in that area. For example: The Episcopal Church pays an average of \$6500, plus utilities, pension and hospitalization allowances. The United Church of Christ reports a “low average salary” of \$5200, plus car allowances of \$1000 to \$1500. The United Presbyterian Church will not install a pastor unless the congregation pays a minimum salary of \$6000, with provision of \$200 additional for each dependent child. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reports that base salaries, plus housing and benefits, start at approximately \$7000 to \$7500.

Understand well, I am not saying that the salary standard for our churches ought to be the average salary standard of all other denominations, even though the newspaper article previously referred to made a point of commenting that while the average earnings of ministers have come up in recent years, they have not come up as much as the cost of living. Other churches are not our standard, even in salary matters.

We have a standard, and it is a good one.

It is the Biblical standard expressed in the words: “Convinced that the labourer is worthy of his hire....” And, secondly, that standard is expressed in the words which state the purpose of the salary: “...to free you from all worldly cares and avocations while you are dispensing spiritual blessings to us....”

This standard must be observed, and observed diligently and carefully. And it must be observed, of course, in the light of the facts of economic life and of the cost of living and the standard of living.

And then, I submit that it does not take a financial expert to discover that some of our ministers and their wives do some "nailbiting" to figure out how to "make ends meet" on a salary of, say, \$4500 for a family that has two or three little ones.

But what, then, is the solution for a small congregation which should raise and desires to raise the pastor's salary?

I would suggest two things:

1. Let the consistory first make a careful and comparative appraisal of the weekly budget per family. Is it already high in comparison with the budget of our

other churches and in comparison with the ability of the congregation? Or can the congregation do more, perhaps, without difficulty? Remember: for a congregation of 20 families a fifty cent increase in the weekly budget will produce a salary increase of \$500 for the pastor.

2. If the consistory, after careful appraisal, is convinced that the congregation is already doing its best, then let them freely ask for an increase in subsidy. To my knowledge, our churches have never yet rejected a well-founded request for subsidy. And, contrary to the thinking of some, our synodical budget is not a high one.

Think about it, — before the annual congregational meeting.

The Christian Reformed Synod and the "Dekker Case"

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

THE TRAGIC DECISION ANALYZED

In a previous editorial on this subject we looked at the August decision of the CR Synod in the "Dekker Case" from a formal point of view. We are now ready to enter into the contents, the material, of the decision.

We shall concentrate first on what is undoubtedly the "meat" of the decision, namely "That Synod admonish Professor Dekker for the ambiguous and abstract way in which he has expressed himself in his writing on the love of God and the atonement." As I have remarked before, Point 3 of Synod's decision, which has to do with not adopting the recommendations of the Doctrinal Committee and which is based on the fear of adopting extra-creedal statements, is also important, probably more crucial than many realized when it was adopted in June. Moreover, there is a goodly measure of ecclesiastical hypocrisy in its reference to the decisions of 1924. But to these matters we shall return later. All have recognized that the crucial decision is the one quoted in the beginning of this paragraph. This was the thing for which Synod recessed and reconvened. This is the "upshot" of the "Dekker Case" at the 1967 Synod.

Let us analyze the decision itself, first of all. What does it say, judging by its language?

In the first place, the decision accuses Professor Dekker of expressing himself in his writing on the love of God and the atonement in an *ambiguous* way.

What is the meaning of that word *ambiguous*?

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Fifth Edition, gives this:

Doubtful or uncertain, esp. from obscurity or indistinctness; capable of being understood in either of two or more possible senses; equivocal.

Now I am at a complete loss to understand how the committee and the Synod arrived at this judgment concerning Prof. Dekker's writings about the love of God and the atonement.

Nor does the decision of Synod make this plain whatsoever. There is not even the slightest attempt, in fact, to prove this claim. Take note of the grounds. The first ground reads: "His writings have resulted in considerable misunderstanding and confusion within the churches concerning the doctrine of the atonement." Now let us note that this again is in itself an altogether unproved statement. It may be true; in fact, I believe it is true. But this by no means proves that Dekker's writings were ambiguous. It might indeed prove that the churches were so poorly founded in the truth concerning the love of God and the atonement that when Dekker began to write, they easily became confused.

And I suspect that this is true: there are many in the Christian Reformed Church who no longer know the truth concerning the love of God and the atonement and who are unable to discern and who become easily confused. This "ground" might also prove that the Christian Reformed Church by its decisions of 1924 and by its preaching and writing ever since has created considerable misunderstanding and confusion within the churches concerning the doctrine of the atonement. But the ground DEFINITELY DOES NOT PROVE that Prof. Dekker was ambiguous.

The second ground reads: "His presentation of his views has resulted in widespread uncertainty concerning his adherence to the creeds." Again, this statement itself is only a claim, and an unproved claim at that. It may be that there was some uncertainty on this matter in the minds of some. That it was widespread is open to serious doubt indeed. As I read the various journalistic writings and the documents on Synod's Agenda (and I think I have read nearly everything that was written on the matter), and as I listened to the discussion on the floor of Synod, I certainly did not gain the impression that there was much uncertainty on the score of Prof. Dekker's adherence to the creeds. I rather gained the distinct impression that there were two opposing camps with respect to this question. On the one hand, there were those who vehemently claimed that Prof. Dekker was entirely loyal to the creeds, and that the matters involved in the "Dekker Case" were strictly extra-creedal matters, and that therefore there must be room allowed for an on-going discussion. This, generally speaking, was the position of the liberals. And, as is well known, this is the position of the *Reformed Journal*, particularly of Dr. Henry Stob. I will not enter into the intellectual honesty of this claim here, except to say that it seems to me that this case is so clear that the above claim almost necessarily must be made with tongue-in-cheek. On the other hand, there were those who were firmly convinced that Prof. Dekker's writings were in conflict with the creed. This was the position of the Doctrinal Committee: did they not repeatedly begin the negative part of their recommendations with the words, "It is unwarranted in the light of Scripture and the Confessions....?" And in these recommendations did they not deal literally with Dekker's statements? This was also the position of many of the overtures sent to the Synod of 1967, even to the extent that they asked for Dekker's suspension under the Formula of Subscription. And this was the expressed position of a goodly number of delegates during the course of the discussion on the floor of Synod, — until that fateful evening of August 30, when suddenly these same delegates conveniently overlooked their creedal convictions and said they would be satisfied to call the professor ambiguous.

These are simply the facts.

This second ground is far from the truth.

But even conceding that it might be the truth, is it a ground for calling Prof. Dekker's expressions ambiguous?

What could "widespread uncertainty concerning his adherence to the creeds" be a ground for?

It might indeed be a ground to examine the doctrinal soundness of the churches. It might be reason to investigate whether the churches are even able and willing to judge someone's adherence to the creeds any longer, seeing that Prof. Dekker is so plainly in conflict with the creeds and so rankly Arminian in his doctrine, and seeing that the churches had before them for more than a year a report which rather plainly showed that Dekker was in conflict with the creeds. It might also be very good ground for examining Prof. Dekker. For if there is such widespread uncertainty, is it not logical to find out and to decide once and for all whether or not a seminary professor is in harmony with or in conflict with the creeds?

But ground for charging Prof. Dekker with *ambiguity*? It does not follow whatsoever.

These two grounds may be characterized as two buckets of whitewash. They constitute a "snow job." The churches have been sold a bill of goods!

But then there is one other place to turn to find a reason for Synod's decision. I refer to "preliminary observation b." That reads as follows:

After long consideration and much discussion with Professor Dekker, members of the Study Committee on Doctrinal Matters, and others, your advisory committee is convinced that Professor Dekker has erred in making ambiguous statements and using them in an abstract way.

Yes, but the Study Committee on Doctrinal Matters was convinced that Professor Dekker was in conflict with the creeds. The Advisory Committee was not convinced that Prof. Dekker's position is in conflict with the creeds (cf. Report IX-C, p. 2). And Prof. Dekker himself claims that he is loyal to the creeds. Moreover, I doubt whether Prof. Dekker feels himself to be guilty of any basic ambiguity, even though, according to Report IX-C, he expressed a willingness to accept the personal admonition proposed by the committee. Who the "others" were and what they thought, this the committee report does not tell us.

Now, of course, this was not a formal ground for the decision. But it was a "preliminary observation," and as such it psychologically led up to the recommendation. For if the advisory committee was convinced of this, they surely had to recommend it. As far as Synod is concerned, however, the only conclusion one can come to is that it acted simply on the *say-so* of the Advisory Committee.

However, if one delves back into Report IX-C (the unified report prepared in July, but tabled by Synod), he discovers certain facts. Personally, I wondered for a long time why this report was not adopted. For I considered it to be a much more thorough compromise, and a smoother one, than the report which Synod finally adopted (Report IX-D). Actually the decision which Synod finally took was but one small item lifted almost literally out of Report IX-C. And I have come to the following conclusions about Report IX-C:

1) That it would inevitably have involved Synod in painful discussions about 1924, the well-meant offer, and, ultimately, the question of what is creedal and what is anti-creedal.

2) That because Synod would have to pass on a statement of Prof. Dekker included in that report, they would again have been confronted by the question of his loyalty to the creeds, something which he affirms in that statement.

3) That Synod would have confronted recommendations that "Synod recognize the need for further discussion on the issues raised in the writings of Prof. Dekker," and that these recommendations would again, if debated, raise the question of the creeds.

4) That finally there was an agreement, supported by members of the Doctrinal Committee, to limit Synod's decision to this one recommendation about Dekker's ambiguity, leave the impression that at least to some degree Prof. Dekker was "ticked on the fingers," and pass by in silence the nettlesome question of the creeds.

But if there is any doubt about it, I will show later that this entire decision plays into the hands of the liberal, or pro-Dekker faction in the CRC. In fact, it even uses some of the language of the *Reformed Journal*.

BUT WAS PROF. DEKKER AMBIGUOUS?

Does Synod's decision ring true?

Let us apply it to the three statements of Prof. Dekker which are quoted in Report IX-D.

The first set of statements is as follows:

There is one love of God and this one love is redemptive in nature. God loves all men with a redemptive love.

Are these propositions ambiguous? Doubtful or uncertain, due to obscurity or indistinctness? Capable of being understood in either of two or more possible senses?

Mark well, the question is not whether they are true, whether they are according to the Scriptures and the creeds. But are they of a double meaning?

The answer is so obvious that I need not belabor it. The above statements have only one meaning, and that one meaning is perfectly clear. The meaning of these statements is clear even when they are read apart from the context of Dekker's articles. "There is one love of God," — not two or three loves, not a common and a special love; but one love of God. "This one love is redemptive in nature." Using Dekker's own explanation, "redemptive" means "tending to redeem." What is ambiguous about it? Prof. Dekker means, and everyone knows that he means, that there is not a non-redemptive as well as a redemptive love. God's love in its very nature tends to redeem. You may agree or disagree with the statement. I, for one, agree with it. To me, a love of God which would not tend to redeem its objects, in other words, a love which would tend to let its objects go lost, is inconceivable, is a contradiction in terms. But whatever you judge of the statement, it surely is not of a double meaning! The same

is true of the third proposition: "God loves all men with a redemptive love." Again, you may agree or disagree with the statement. I, for one, violently disagree and claim that it directly contradicts Scripture and the confessions. Or again, Prof. Dekker may have difficulty explaining why all men are not actually saved if this statement is true. But the statement as such is as clear as the sun in the heavens. It very forthrightly teaches a universal love of God which is redemptive in nature.

Whatever may be Prof. Dekker's failings in this set of statements, one of them is not ambiguity.

Now let us examine the second set of statements quoted by Synod:

The atonement itself is inherently universal. There is neither need nor warrant for retaining the concept of limited atonement, as it has been traditionally used among us.

Again I say: one may accuse Prof. Dekker of many things in connection with these statements. He may agree or disagree with what the professor teaches. But one thing is certain: the statements are clear to the point of bluntness. In fact, has not that been exactly the history, that many were shocked when the professor so bluntly came out against limited atonement? The trouble was not that Dekker was not clear; it was rather that Dekker was much too blunt! Bluntly Arminian! And especially when these statements are taken in the context of his writings, they are exceedingly clear.

The atonement is inherently universal?

That is precisely the same as the Second Point of the Arminians: "Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins."

Neither need nor warrant for retaining the concept of limited atonement?

That means this: the doctrine of limited atonement has no basis in Scripture or the confessions. It is worthless, good for nothing. We must discard it, for it is both unnecessary and unwarranted. And do not forget that Professor Dekker exactly claimed that this unneeded and unwarranted concept of limited atonement actually constituted an obstacle to the mission work of his denomination!

Pray, tell me: what is ambiguous about all this? I cannot understand how there could be a single delegate on the floor of Synod who was convinced in his own conscience that this second set of statements was of double meaning, suffering from obscurity or indistinctness.

The only term about which there might be some question is that term "traditionally." But, in the first place, Prof. Dekker himself made it abundantly clear in his writings that he certainly did not equate "traditionally" and "confessionally." Dekker referred to a concept of limited atonement which he claimed had grown up in the Christian Reformed Church and which was by some thought to be and alleged to be the doctrine of the confessions. But Prof. Dekker made it

very clear that he did not consider this traditional concept of limited atonement to be confessional; he claimed all along, — astounding though that may seem to a Reformed man, — that his doctrine of universal atonement was according to the confessions. He denied, for example, that he was in conflict with Canons II, 8. He affirmed that his doctrine was in harmony with Canons II, 3.

But even if we grant a degree of ambiguity on this point, who was the Synod to admonish Dekker for using this language? The Synod used the same language. In fact, that is the “sleeping” in Point 2 of Synod’s decision. They speak of the report of the Doctrinal Committee as “a valuable contribution, *within the Reformed tradition*, to the discussion of the matters contained within the report.” To many, I know, this means the same as “within the Reformed confessions” or “in the framework of the confessions.” But you may be certain that Synod did not say this and did not intend to say this. If Synod had attempted to say this, there would have been a prolonged debate on the point. That word “tradition” leaves the door open for Prof. Dekker’s idea of “the concept of limited atonement as it has been *traditionally* used among us.” But then Synod must not accuse its professor of being ambiguous. People who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones!

Now look at the third set of statements:

We may say to every man individually, “Christ died for you.” When I say, “Christ died for you” to any man, I mean to say that Christ has actually suffered for his sins and has in that sense expiated his guilt. If, however, the word “expiate” is intended by definition to include the idea of effectuation, which to my mind it need not include, I would not want to use the word expiation to describe what Christ has done for all men.

Once again; whatever the fault of the above statements may be, one would be hard pressed to point out any ambiguity. In fact, one stands amazed that the Advisory Committee, let alone the Synod, had the audacity to call this language ambiguous! One could

only with difficulty, it seems to me, express himself more unambiguously.

Every man individually? Does that not mean every last son of Adam whom one meets? Does it not mean men, individuals, without exception?

We may say? Was not Prof. Dekker writing about preaching on the mission field when he wrote these words? Do they not plainly mean that missionaries have the right (the *may*), and therefore the divine commission, to say this?

Christ died for you? Does not Prof. Dekker make it very explicit when he tells us that this means that Christ has actually suffered for every man’s sins and in that sense expiated his guilt? Who has any difficulty understanding such language?

Perhaps it might be objected by some that the last proposition in this set of statements is ambiguous. The answer to this objection is that this is not the fault of Prof. Dekker’s way of expressing himself. His language is very clear, and leaves no doubt as to what he means. He says: 1) That if the word “expiate” is intended to include the idea of effectuation, he would not want to use the word to describe what Christ has done for all men. 2) That he does not think that the word “expiate” necessarily includes the idea of effectuation. There is nothing cloudy or doubtful about what the professor says, therefore. This last proposition is simply the embodiment of the characteristic Arminian denial of the efficacy of the atonement. But ambiguity of expression there is not.

The conclusion of this investigation of Synod’s decision is plain for all to see.

The charge of ambiguity is not true.

The admonition was uncalled for.

The sad part is that the Synod did not even bother to examine and to discuss this question. Scarcely a word was said about it; and there was no debate about it.

But by means of this ruse Synod avoided the main issue: *creedal or anti-creedal*?

Next time, D.V., we shall discuss the charge of abstractness.

Now, in order to understand how Scripture can speak of this suffering as a gift of grace, we must note that it is voluntary. It is a form of suffering which under certain conditions believers deliberately choose. This is not true of the suffering of this present time in general. When sickness attacks your frame, or when sorrow and death enter your home, you have no choice. This kind of suffering is simply inflicted upon you without your will. You cannot avoid or escape it. But in regard to the suffering in the behalf of Christ this is different. You are placed before an alternative, and you must make a choice. The alternative is always suffering with Christ, or freedom from suffering with Belial; the reproach of Christ, or the pleasures of the world; fellowship with Christ in His death, or fellowship with the world in its life. And he that suffers in the behalf of Christ makes a decision. He considers the alternatives and evaluates them in order to determine what is preferable. And he reaches the conclusion that the reproach of Christ is to be esteemed far greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, that it is far preferable to die with Christ than to live with Belial. And having reached this conclusion, he follows it up to the very end: he deliberately chooses to suffer with Christ, and without hesitation he rejects the proffered deliverance that is presented to him on condition that he will deny Christ, and walk in the way of the world.

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

The Mediation of Christ

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

About ten years before he became, or knew anything about being *Protestant Reformed*, this writer came across a tiny book in the library of his maternal grandparents, entitled, "The Heidelberg Catechism." On page 7 of this little book a question is asked, "What sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for?" The answer given is: "For one who is very man, and perfectly righteous; and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is also very God." Since we are to seek such a mediator, is there such a mediator to be found? Holy Writ assures us that there is. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (I Tim. 2:5)

We once had a conversation on the train with a fine gentleman, a medical doctor, and a Roman Catholic. Our dialogue centered around the above text. We asked whether he believed that there were many mediators by which we are to approach God. He readily affirmed that he did. We then asked, that if there were only one mediator, whether all other so called mediators were unnecessary. He replied that they probably were, but that they could be of help. Then we asked that if there were exclusively one mediator between God and men, that then all other so called mediators are no mediators. He admitted that in that event such would be the case. Finally, we asked that if the Word of God stated just such a fact, would he believe it? Then we quoted the above words of Paul. It was pointed out that Paul could not hold with the Roman Catholic doctrine of many mediators. Romanists say that Christ Jesus is the one mediator, but not the only one. To this it need only be replied that the words "one mediator" mean nothing less than "only one mediator," just as the language "one God" certainly means "only one God." They are blasphemously wrong who infer that Christ Jesus is not the one and only mediator. They deny the exclusive mediation of Christ, as taught, e.g., in I Tim. 2:5; Jn. 14:6 and Acts 4:12.

Among apostate Protestants there are modernists who have appealed to this text (I Tim. 2:5) in support of their denial of the Godhood of Christ. To their minds the text teaches that Christ is not God, but plainly and merely man. To go along with this thinking would be to follow blind guides. Consider the apostle in Galatians 1:1, "Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ." One might as well reason, as the Doketic heresy, that in the light of this text the Lord Jesus Christ is not man, as to infer from I Tim.

2:5 that He is not God. Christian Science, falsely so called, does exactly this; it maintains the double denial, that he was neither man nor God — He was an idea in the mind of Mary. But the Scripture is full of the truth that the estrangement between God and men could never be removed and overcome except by a mediator who had in himself both the divine and the human natures.

Also in the same marvelous little book we read, "Can there then be found any where, one who is a mere creature, able to satisfy for us? None! for first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man hath committed; and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, so as to deliver others from it." This is true, because there is such a great difference between God and man as a result of man's sin and fall from Him. The fall brought about the complete ruin of the whole human race. There could not then be found in heaven or earth any creature, in its original state or condition, fitting or able to restore the breach between God and man. "For if one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" (I S. 2:25). Yet mediation must be effected or man is without hope for ever. The mediator, though of God, and true God, could not be God absolutely considered, for "a mediator is not of one, but God is one." (Gal. 3:20) He must also be "one who is true man." He is God manifest in the flesh, and as such became, as the children of God did, a partaker of flesh and blood.

The eternal Son of God was possessed and embraced in the bosom of the Father by eternal generation. In the counsels of eternity He was set up, ordained, before the earth was, to be the Head and Mediator of His people. In eternity He willed to come into the world as Head and Mediator. From everlasting, from the beginning, when God appointed the foundations of the earth, He, the Son, was eternally rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth, and His delights were eternally with the sons of men. That is, the decree of the incarnation was always before His mind. Note, while we are on this thought, that in the view of God's decree, the Son was seen first as Head, then as Mediator. God has the end in view first, then the means to that end. In God's decrees, Christ as Head is first. All else is means. "Christ is (first) the *Head* of the Church, and (then) He is the *Saviour* of the body." (Eph. 5:23)

From before all worlds, He saw himself as the Head of a glorified people, becoming so as Mediator, Saviour, as making "himself of no reputation," and taking "upon Him the form of a servant," seeing himself "made in the likeness of men," looking to the day when He would fill and discharge the office of mediator. How God condescended to man in the foreappointment of His Son as the humble Saviour! God "dwelleth on high, and humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth." (Ps. 113: 5, 6) Every consideration the most glorious God has for His creatures is an infinite condescension. This is so because there is an infinite distance between the being of God and the being of the creature. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" In fact, what are "all the nations before Him" but "a drop of a bucket!" This is so, too, because God is Jehovah, the absolutely independent and self-sufficient God. He needs no other outside himself to be what He is, the eternally happy God. Man, the creature, has a desire to that which will bring or add to his comfort. Neither he, nor any creature, is self-sufficient to his own happiness. But God never wants anything, never lacks anything, never needs anything, is never envious of anyone. "Your heavenly Father is perfect."

How the Son of God humbled himself! He being in the form of God, considered it not robbery, robbing God of His infinite glory, to be equal with God. That is, He considered it perfectly in harmony with reality to be what He is, equal with God! He was always being in the form of God and equal with God, even when He made himself of no reputation by taking the form of a servant. God alone possesses absolute transcendence beyond the whole creation. God alone is so perfectly self-sufficient that nothing can be taken from Him, nothing added to Him. Yet He became nothing, of no reputation, a worm and no man! This is evidence that from before the foundation of the world He loved the decree and covenant of God, He loved the Father, He loved the people the Father gave Him. "Lo, I come, in the volume (head) of the Book (of election) it is written of Me, — to do Thy will, O God," "I do always those things that please the Father." "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them" perfectly.

Christ as Mediator is the Son of God in human nature, God and man united in the one person of the Son, His two natures distinct, yet inseparable, unmixed, undivided. This explains what we meant when we said the Mediator could not be God absolutely considered, that is, God without a human nature united to the divine person. For then He could never make himself of no reputation and take the form of a servant. He would be too transcendent to humble himself according to obedience to the law, being obedient, even as far as death, the death of the cross. Nor could He be man absolutely considered, that is, a mere creature. For then He would be too low, too inadequate, with no infinite value attached to His work. It took God incarnate in two perfect entire natures to be the Mediator. He must therefore be in one person true God and true man, "that He might by the power of His Godhead sustain in His human nature the burden of God's wrath," and so

"restore to us righteousness and life." (HC, 17)

Back in Depression days a great aunt read to me from a little black Puritan book entitled, "The Westminster Confessions," where she rightly deemed this very teaching beautifully expressed. "It was requisite that the Mediator should be God that He might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God and the power of death, give worth and efficacy to His sufferings, obedience and intercession, and to satisfy God's justice, procure His favor, purchase a peculiar people, give His Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation." (Westminster L.C., 38) He must be a divine person, for only God can give eternal life and be a Saviour of those dead in sins (Jn. 10:27, 28; 11:43). The Princeton Seminary bookstore discarded an old book we salvaged containing the works of Herman Witsius (1693), who wrote, "For man to glory in any one as his Saviour, and give him the honor of the new creation, to resign himself to his pleasure, and become his property, and say to him, 'Thou art Lord of my soul,' is an honor to which no mere creature can have the least claim. 'In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory.'" (Isa. 45:25)

Also the Mediator had to be man, a human being without being a human person, for He could not, as with Nestorianism, be two persons. But He must be true man and perfectly righteous man, "because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which hath sinned should likewise make satisfaction for sin, and one who is himself a sinner cannot satisfy for others." (HC, 16) Or, the same thought may be expressed thus: "It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that He might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer and make intercession for us, in our nature, have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace." (Westm. L.C., 39)

Further, the Mediator must be God and man in one divine Person. "It was requisite that the Mediator who was to reconcile...man should himself be both God and man, and this in one person, that the proper works of each nature might be accepted of God for us, and relied on by us as the works of the whole person." (L.C., 40) Had He been God only, He could not have died. Had He been man only, His death could not have been the satisfaction for sin demanded by divine justice. Nor could He have come forth in resurrection life to bestow the Spirit and eternal life on His people.

EASTERN LADIES LEAGUE MEETING

The Eastern Ladies League will hold its Fall Meeting Thursday, October 26, 1967 at First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids at 8:00 p.m., D.V. Rev. J. Kortering will speak on "The Great Tribulation and the Freedom of Speech." Ladies, you are invited to meet with us for an evening of Christian fellowship. E. Kuiper, Vice Sec'y.

FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Book of Hebrews

Hebrews 4:10

by Rev. G. Lubbers

Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although their works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again he limited a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as did God from his.

THE FOURFOLD "WHEREFORE" OF HEBREWS 4

Even a casual reading of this chapter shows that it is one of great admonition, exhortation, threatening, and a warning finger raised. These are warnings and threatenings which come to us from the dealings of God with unbelieving Israel in the desert, which could enter into the rest of God. They could not enter because of their unbelief!

A word ought to be said about the development of the argument and exhortations here, as appears from the "wherefore" as this is found in the verses 1, 11, 14 and 16. The term in the Greek translated "wherefore" is the conjunction "oun." According to Thayer in his Lexicon this conjunction indicates "that something follows from another necessarily." Writes Thayer further, "Hence it is used in drawing a conclusion and in connecting sentences together logically." In exhortations this means that the writer will show what ought now to be done by reason of what has been said. This is very emphatically the case here in this fourth Chapter of Hebrews.

Since the people in the desert could not enter into the rest of the promised land because of unbelief, the consideration of the tremendous implication of the righteousness and divine judgments ought to cause us to walk in holy fear, with awe and trembling before God's majesty. Rather than walk as did Israel we should give all diligence to enter into the rest in order that we fall not in the same example of unbelief as Israel of old. But living under the preaching of the sharp and living Word of God, we should hold fast the profession, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens. And, therefore, we should draw nigh to the throne of grace and find mercy and grace in time of need!

THE REST RESERVED FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD (verses 1-10)

It might seem that since many of Israel did not enter into the rest as did God swear with an oath, that this would be a reason for us not to give diligence to enter into the rest. However, such is not the case. The truth of the matter is that the "example" of Israel's unbelief is used as a motivation in us of holy fear. "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us...." The promise of entering into the rest stands! It is left us, that is, the status quo of the promise of God to Abraham remains real, as realized in Jesus Christ! There ever remains a rest for the people of God. (Verse 9) No matter whether "some" cannot enter because of unbelief, others must enter in by faith. For "it remains for some to enter in." This is *left to them*; this is left to them as a consequence of the unrepealed promise made to Abraham and his seed, to the people of God. The Greek term for "left to them" is the verb "apoleipe tai" which is a present passive indicative: to leave behind, to remain over, as dispensation of God. Thus there was not "left over" a sacrifice for the sin of those who willfully walk in unbelief after they have known the truth (Chapter 10:26). Paul would say: God hath not forsaken his people whom he foreknew. (Romans 11:2)

That such a rest is reserved ever for the people of God is evident, first of all from the fact that the word is preached to us now even as it was to Israel then by Moses. Certainly if the promise was not to us, the gospel could not be preached to us. But the gospel has been preached to us even as it was to them, that is, to Israel who wandered about in the desert. And it is exactly at this point that we must fear and tremble. We must give heed to the preaching of the promise. If

unbelieving Israel could not enter because "their hearing was not mingled with faith," our hearing must be such that it is with believing ears and hearts. And since the preaching of the gospel is either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death (I Corinthians 2:14-16), whether in the desert in Moses' day or *anno Domini* 1967, we are to exercise ourselves in holy fear when we listen to and hear the gospel. Says Jesus in Mark 4:24 "If any man have ears let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear...for he that hath to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath." And, according to the gospel of Luke, Jesus said "Take heed how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given: and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." (Luke 8:18) Yes, the promise to enter is left us. Only the entering is by faith, a faith that lays hold on the gospel of salvation in the great and merciful High Priest, Jesus.

Yes, there remaineth even a rest for the people of God. But that "rest" is the perfect rest of the completed work of God in Jesus. The reasoning of the writer here in the book of Hebrews is not wholly clear at first reading. However, a careful study and prayerful reflection will make it clear that the writer speaks here not simply of the rest of the earthly Canaan into which Joshua brought Israel, crossing Jordan. For David, when all the land is subjugated and the temple worship is organized some four hundred years after Joshua, says "today" if ye will hear his voice. This is a later day. Israel must still enter into the rest by kneeling down before the Lord their Maker. (Psalm 95) This indicates that there is a "Sabbatismos" which is still left and into which we ever enter in by faith through the preaching.

It is true that Joshua brought Israel into the rest. Howbeit, that rest was *open-ended*, so to speak. It was not a completed and closed rest. It was not as the rest spoken of in Genesis 2:2. That rest was not open-ended; it was the rest of creation; it is closed and not open, awaiting a further fulfilment. Here God had placed a period. He wrote "finis!" For we read, do we not "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works?" A closed rest. It is a day which ideally is followed by none other. It is not limited by morning and evening. It is a picture of the eternal day. It is used in our text as an analogy of the perfect rest. But such a period was not place by God back of Joshua's bringing of Israel into the rest of the land of Canaan. This typical rest simply prefigured the final rest of the heavenly Canaan, as realized in Christ's death and resurrection. Hence, not entering into this rest on the part of some does not put to nought the faithfulness of God with respect to his people. For when God speaks of "my rest" in David, he is speaking of the "Sabbatismos" which there remaineth even for the people of God now in faith and presently in heaven's glory, face to face!

THE FEAR MOTIF IN THE PREACHING IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE ENTERING INTO THE REST (verse 1 ff.)

There is ever the possibility that we hear the gospel and perish in our sins notwithstanding. Such was actually the case with more than 600,000 men in Israel which came out of Egypt. No, none of the elect perished. But many who were under the preaching did. Many are called and few are chosen. (Matthew 20:16; 22:14)

It is of this calling by the preaching that the writer to the Hebrews refers. Writes he, "for to us was the gospel preached, as well as to them." In some this preaching is received with believing hearts; the hearing is mingled with truth faith. In others faith is lacking. They hear and hear not, see and perceive not. They do not repent and are not healed.

Now God uses the "hear motif" to keep us as good listeners, who receive the word with hungry and believing hearts, so that we "beware how we hear!" Such *fear* as here spoken of is not the slavish fear of being filled with morbid fear, with anguish and terror from the face of God, rying: hills fall on us and mountains cover us! Nay, this is the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. Surely the Bible speak of both kinds of fear, which are quite different both in nature and in motive.

The carnal fear of the wicked who will not believe God, who walk in their own chosen ways, is described to us by the Lord himself in Deuteronomy 2:25. Says the Lord, "This day will I begin to put the dread of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee." Truly, that is not the fear toward which the writer admonishes the reader in Hebrews 4:1.

However, the fear of the Lord unto which the church is admonished is to stand in holy awe before God, to tremble in the beauty of holiness as did Israel of old when God appeared in the cloud of glory above the tabernacle. A very instructive passage, in this connection, is what we read in Psalm 5:7, "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy tender mercies: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy mountain." According to the Hebrew parallelism this "fear" is the expression of the "mercy" of God. Were it not for the great mercy of God none could come into God's presence in the fear of God. This fear is the principle of the love of God. This passage is but one of the many passages which we could quote to substantiate the thesis of the uniqueness and godliness of the "fear" unto which we are admonished so that we may hear and heed the gospel which is preached to us. Should any desire to pursue this study further we suggest that he take note of the following passages: Psalm 2:11, 5:7; 19:9; 34:11; 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 22:4; Acts 2:43; Romans 11:20; Colossians 3:2; Philippians 2:12; I Peter 1:17; 3:2; 3:15. In all these passages we are told to work out our salvation with holy fear and trembling. It is God who worketh in us both to will and to do.

Such is the fear-motif of Scripture for the godly. It is not the anguish of hell, the cold sweat of a terrified conscience. Yet, it is that awe which prevents us from a heedless attitude of indifference when God speaks. It is the fear which heeds joyfully and willingly the admonition of the Psalmist "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms. For the Lord is a great God,

and a great King above all gods.... For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart as in the provocation in the wilderness!"

In this fear we who have, receive more abundantly, and our hearing will be mingled with faith. Only thus will we hold firm our profession to the end, looking to Jesus, the greater than Moses.

EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

The C.R.C. and the W.C.C.

by Rev. G. Van Baren

In examining ecumenism it is beneficial for us to observe also the actions and reactions of other denominations to this trend of the day towards church unity. This column has called attention to the recent concern of the Christian Reformed Church towards the ecumenical movement as embodied in the W.C.C. The Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands had asked member churches of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod to give their reaction to the stand of the Gereformeerde Kerken that it was permissible for Reformed churches to belong to the W.C.C. This caused considerable discussion in the Christian Reformed Church. There were those who strongly voiced support for the W.C.C. as well as many who voiced strong opposition. When the appointed study committee reported to the synod of the C.R.C. this year, there was both a majority and minority report on the subject. The advisory committee of this synod was likewise divided. I quoted some of the minority report in the last article. In this article I would quote from the final decision on the subject as it was adopted by the Synod of the C.R.C. I believe that on this score the Synod is to be commended in that it was willing to state that it was "inadvisable" and even "not permissible" to join the W.C.C. as presently constituted.

STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE W.C.C.

With regard to the World Council of Churches, the majority committee reminded the C.R.C. Synod of the following:

While Synod would be well advised to address itself solely to the issue which is before it, it should be borne in mind constantly, that all our statements are made within the faith of the Christian Church. Specifically our pronouncements issue from these convictions:

— that there is only one Church of Jesus Christ and

that the Church's unity should come to visible expression;

— that the Christian Reformed Church has a responsibility with respect to all Christian churches;

— that we want to obey the Lord, both in seeking fellowship with all those who confess Jesus Christ, and in separating ourselves from those who reject, deny or pervert the truth of the Gospel.

THE C.R.C. POSITION TOWARDS THE W.C.C.

The Synod adopted the following position with regard to the W.C.C. (as quoted in the *Banner* of July 14, 1967:

Although fully aware of the ecumenical calling of Christ's church as expressed in the synodical Report of 1944 (Acts 1944, pp. 330-367), and therefore of the responsibility to contact all those churches in which some traces of the catholic church of Jesus Christ are still to be found, Synod declares with regret that it is not permissible for the Christian Reformed Church to join the fellowship of the W.C.C. because of the present nature, its inadequate basis, its maintenance and functioning of that basis, its socio-political activities and declarations, and the implications of membership in this Council. Following are the grounds for this decision:

1. Concerning the Nature of the W.C.C. — The W.C.C. claims to be, and is in fact, substantially more than a forum for the discussion of differences. It is a "council of Churches" which defines itself as a "fellowship of churches," and thus claims to be at least a provisional manifestation of the unity for which Christ prayed (John 17). Furthermore, the ecclesiological character of the W.C.C. is ambiguous and is regarded differently by various member churches.

2. Concerning the inadequate Basis of the W.C.C. — Although the words of the Basis are in themselves a summary of the Gospel, the Basis is inadequate for ecclesiastical fellowship in view of the doctrinal errors

within the churches today. In the light of history and contemporary theology, the Basis is inadequate for excluding radically unbiblical interpretations of the Gospel. Hence the Basis admits to membership in the W.C.C. such churches with which we may not have fellowship (*koinonia*).

3. Concerning the Maintenance and Functioning of the Basis — The W.C.C. does not maintain the Basis in a meaningful way since it does not consider it within its jurisdiction to judge whether member churches are really faithful to the Basis. The W.C.C. declares that, if it were to judge whether an applicant or a member church was actually living in harmony with the Basis, the W.C.C. would become a "super-church." That the Basis does not function meaningfully is evident from the admission that there are churches within the W.C.C. "to which the qualification 'modernist' is fully or partly applicable."

4. Concerning the Socio-Political Activities and Declarations of the W.C.C. — The activities of the W.C.C. in the social, economic, and political areas involve it in pronouncements and programs which are not the immediate responsibility of the church. The type of action taken in these areas is frequently an embarrassment to a Reformed church.

5. Concerning the Implications of Membership in the W.C.C. — The general character of the W.C.C. is ambiguous. Its membership is diverse ecclesiastically and doctrinally. By joining this organization we would endorse the ecumenical methodology of the W.C.C., give a measure of recognition to churches with a radically different interpretation of the Gospel, and thereby becloud or relativize our own witness. "Scripture forbids such association with unbelievers and with those who preach another Gospel." Cf. II Cor. 6:14-18 and Gal. 1:8, 9 (Acts 1958, p. 92)

One point ought to be noted at this point. If the above decision is a true evaluation of the W.C.C., and I believe that it is, there is no reason at the present time that the Christian Reformed Church, or any other Reformed church, should have *anything* to do with this organization. The resolutions above emphasize that the W.C.C. IS NOT a manifestation of the unity for which Christ prayed. That is true at the present date. Even past history shows that the W.C.C. is not improving; it is not approaching more closely to that which is "orthodox"; but each year the evidence accumulates showing that the W.C.C. departs ever further from the Scriptural unity. Then there is absolutely no reason for imagining that in the future this organization will conceivably change for the better.

On the basis of the above resolutions, the Synod also adopted statements in response to the resolutions of the Gereformeerde Kerken. The Synod stated:

1. Synod judges that in view of the grave implications of membership in the W.C.C., it is not sufficient to state that there is "no decisive impediment" to such membership, but that it is necessary to demonstrate convincingly that one is acting in obedience to Scripture and in line with the Confession.

2. Synod urgently requests the assistance of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in working out a positive statement on our ecumenical calling, in the context of our common confession of Articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession. This Confession demands of us

(a) fellowship with all who confess and obey Jesus Christ, and (b) separation from those who reject, deny, or pervert the truth of the Gospel.

3. Synod requests its sister churches to bear in mind the situation from which we are speaking. On our Continent we are daily confronted by the blight of theological modernism, and by the fact that the evangelical churches — which, for example, supply the largest number of missionaries — are generally opposed to the W.C.C.

4. Synod reminds the Gereformeerde Kerken that to join the W.C.C. means to give recognition also to churches with a radically different interpretation of the Gospel. One cannot claim to be engaged in a "common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit" with churches which in fact require the evangelistic endeavours of our local Reformed congregations. Therefore, membership in the W.C.C., even if it were permissible, would be inadvisable.

In addition, it was decided to forward to the Gereformeerde Kerken a transcript of the decisions together with the Majority and Minority Reports on the W.C.C. by Synod's study committee. A transcript of the decisions is to be sent also to the member churches of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and to the General Secretary of the W.C.C.

CONCLUSIONS

It was rather sad, I feel, that the C.R.C. Synod also decided to send two observers to the Fourth Assembly of the W.C.C. which convenes at Uppsala, Sweden, July 4-20, 1968. Rev. William Haverkamp and Rev. John Vriend (the president and the first clerk respectively of this last Synod) were chosen as observers. Why such a concluding decision would be taken, I am not sure — unless it is to satisfy a large number within the C.R.C. who reveal strong leanings toward the W.C.C. I am convinced that the C.R.C. Synod, if it is to continue to maintain its position of opposition to membership in the W.C.C., should not have decided to send observers. For several reasons I am convinced of this:

1. The presence of observers gives the appearance of a real interest and concern in the W.C.C. — despite the decisions which had been taken. Yet if the decisions taken were correct, there should not be any measure of interest at all in this organization at this time.

2. What conceivable advantage will the presence of observers gain the C.R.C.? It could give such observers the opportunity to convey a very favorable report of the gathering (especially if such observers were predisposed in favor of the W.C.C.) which will place renewed pressure on future C.R.C. Synods to join the W.C.C. Yet, finally, a decision to join or not to join the W.C.C. can only be based on official published decisions and actions. Observers can not change or even interpret these decisions. If there is a change for the better in the W.C.C., the official decisions will plainly show this.

At this point, one can only wonder what consequences there will be as a result of this decision. Two years should tell.

ALL AROUND US—**End of African Missions?****Lutheranism 450 Years After Luther****The Battle Over Abortion****Religious Liberty in Spain***by Prof. H. Hanko***END OF AFRICAN MISSIONS?**

The missionary work of the church in Africa is in deep trouble. As the African nations emerge from paganism and take their place on the scene of Twentieth Century History, they show an increasing hatred of the white man's church and of the work of missions. Some evidences of this:

— In Uganda twelve Roman Catholic priests were expelled from the land. The charge against them was smuggling arms, but reliable reports indicated they were only helping refugees from the fighting between Uganda and Sudan.

— Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere informed the churches in his country that he would tolerate no preaching but that which supported his own brand of social revolution. And this is only one instance among many in which African leaders are attempting to force churches to become instruments of their own political aspirations.

— Almost all of today's African leaders are themselves products of mission schools. But this does not prevent them from taking a hostile position over against the Church now that they are in positions of power. The leader of Uganda has nationalized all missionary schools and assumes the right to appoint teachers in these schools, many of whom have no intention of giving religious instruction. Tanzania has recently forced all missions to give up landholdings not presently in use.

— Even in white-ruled countries (Rhodesia and South Africa), mission work faces rough going. The reason is different: usually these governments are suspicious that white missionaries are too sympathetic towards the movement of black rule. Rhodesia is making plans to turn over control of 2,781 missionary-run private schools (95% of the elementary educational system) to tribal chiefs who are paid by the government and who can expect to teach government policy. South Africa has reduced missionary visas from three years to one and has, in several instances, refused extensions when present visas expired.

— Much more dangerous to the churches in Africa is the growing demand that the churches incorporate

in their teaching and worship the indigenous culture of the Africans. By this is not meant that the Scriptures be translated into the natives' languages or that the churches train black ministers and teachers. Rather, the governments are insisting that pagan religion itself be introduced into the worship and teachings of the church. In Kenya, e.g., suggestions have been made that the Bible be rewritten so that the first man and woman are not Adam and Eve but Gikuyu and Moombi, the primordial spirit-beings of old pagan legend. Others are insisting that the Christian doctrines of sin and salvation be substituted for by something which speaks more directly to African needs in these days of rising nationalism; teachings which stress the place of Africa on the world stage.

All of this surely points to the end of mission work in the days ahead and reminds us of the coming of the Lord when the gospel will have been preached in the whole world.

LUTHERANISM 450 YEARS AFTER LUTHER

This year is the 450th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. In this day of ecumenical activity we can expect that the Reformation will be discussed in the next couple of months in its relation to church merger and return to Rome. But we can also expect that there will be studied attempts to deny the significance of the Protestant Reformation in efforts to pave the way back to Roman Catholicism. Already some aspects of this subject are under discussion, especially among Lutherans.

Apparently some Lutherans had hoped that with the softening attitude of Rome towards Protestantism and with the 450th anniversary of the Reformation in the offing, the Romish Church would finally relent in its condemnation of Luther and lift the excommunication which was imposed on him. But it seems as if these hopes are not to be realized. The Vatican has given no indication that it intends to alter its stand on this point. Rather, the word from Rome is that any change in Luther's status would involve too great a change in Roman Catholic doctrine. But Lutherans find solace in the fact that Luther has already been "indirectly

rehabilitated" by the Second Vatican Council. Lutherans point out that Luther's theology is being carefully studied by Romish theologians and that many of his hymns are now sung at worship services in the Romish Church. They insist too that liturgical reforms in the Romish Church are directly due to the influence of the German Reformer. And, almost with a sigh of disappointment, they opine that if only Luther had not been so sharp in his attacks on the papacy, even now there would be possibility that Rome would restore Luther to good standing within the Church.

If we can imagine that Luther were an observer to these men who are interested in changing his standing in the Romish Church, we can also almost hear Luther's bellow of disgust. The petty and superficial reforms of Vatican II would be of little interest to the man who stood so firmly on the sole authority of Scripture. And he would, with some choice words, tell those who want his status altered to mind their own business. When he defiantly burned the papal bull of excommunication, he snapped his fingers in the face of the pope and said: "As thou (Pope) hast vexed the Holy One of the Lord, may the eternal fire vex thee!"

But all this does not keep eager Lutherans from trying their best to get back to Rome. The 45 year old Council of the Lutheran Student Association of America has recently passed a resolution urging the three major Lutheran Churches in this country (American Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church in America, and Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod) to seek organic union with the Roman Catholic Church. The resolution was unanimously adopted and was intended "to inject a note of hope for church unity into the observance of the 450th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. As a basis for this resolution, the Council pointed out that Luther never intended to establish a separate denomination, but wanted only to reform the Romish Church. The separation which did occur, the Council insisted "was not intended but forced by a series of historic and ecclesiastical misfortunes."

There is a small element of truth in this assertion; although what the Council could conceivably mean by "ecclesiastic and historic misfortunes" is a mystery. At any rate, it is correct that Luther had, in the early years of his work of reformation, no thought of separating from the Roman Catholic Church. But there are two elements which are conveniently forgotten. The one is that Luther himself did not (even when he nailed his theses to the chapel door) understand the full implications of his own position—especially with respect to the doctrines of the sole authority of Scripture and justification by faith alone. Only as he developed in the truth of Scripture did he come to see how deep and fundamental was the cleavage between the Church in which once he had been a priest and the truth of God's Word. Secondly, even then he might have continued to fight for reform within the Church, for he understood very well that this was his calling. But it was soon apparent that the Romish Church had no thought at all of reform. And the stronger Luther insisted upon it, the more vehement was the opposition. It all resulted in Luther's excommunication. And there

was really no alternative. Luther came to understand this very well. But from this position of adamant opposition to Luther the Romish Church has not moved till this day. Hence the choice is between remaining true to Luther's teachings (something which American Lutheranism has long ago ceased to do) and staying away from Rome, or denying all Luther ever stood for and rushing back into Rome's deadly embrace.

THE BATTLE OVER ABORTION

The battle to liberalize abortion laws continues. An interesting development is to be found in the views of Mr. Authur H. Jones, a state representative in North Carolina, and the one most responsible for recent passage of a liberalized abortion bill in that state. At present, the law reads that abortion may be legal if there is grave danger to the life or health of the mother, if the child to be born might have serious physical or mental defect, or if pregnancy resulted from rape or incest. But Mr. Jones has made clear that he thinks this law is not nearly adequate, but only a first step. He is willing to settle for such a first step for the time being because he is aware of the fact that public opinion, for the moment, will not allow for much more. But he has his plans for the future. And the first step in these plans is to re-educate the populace so that they take a different attitude towards abortion. When this has been done, the next step is to make abortion legal for any mother who desires it. The hope is that, if this is done, there will be no more unwanted children in the world. But even this is not enough to satisfy Mr. Jones and those who are in favor of liberalized laws. These people envision, with obvious relish, the time within the next 100 years when every woman desiring a child will have to secure a permit from the government. She would make application to a government agency which would study her case and decide whether or not to issue a permit. The agency could decide to refuse such a permit on the grounds that there were already too many people of her race; or that her family could not provide financial security for the child; or that she and/or her husband did not have a sufficiently high intelligence to be parents; or that the area in which they lived was already too densely populated; or some such reason as this. If, nevertheless, the couple went ahead and had their child, the state would then insist on an abortion or take away the child under the guise of promoting the general welfare.

This is the ultimate aim of those who favor abortion; and it sounds perilously close to what Pharaoh tried to do in Egypt to the children of Israel.

Protestant religious leader Dr. Paul Ramsey, thinks it foolish even to debate abortion laws since he is convinced that within a few years drugs will be available which make it possible for a woman to bring about an abortion privately in her home. And, perhaps, Dr. Ramsey is right. Already there are so-called "morning after" birth control pills; and drugs to bring about abortions cannot be too far away.

Strikingly, 48 experts in the fields of gynecology, law, sociology, and religion recently came together to

discuss the problem. They came from all over the world for three days of discussions sponsored by the Harvard Divinity School and the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation. Their aim was to attempt some kind of consensus on the whole question when studied from a religious, medical, legal and sociological point of view. But their efforts were not entirely successful. They agreed that the problem was far too complex for easy solutions. But they also agreed on a couple of important points. They agreed that the unborn child, from the first days of existence, was a human being, and that the death of this human being for the sake of convenience was immoral.

This is a major point. And it certainly agrees with Scripture which teaches that at the moment of conception the God-created person is united with the conceived nature in the womb of the mother. The meaning is, quite clearly, that the unborn child is a personal being. As such, abortion is murder. It makes no difference whether the act is done before birth or after birth; the name of the crime is still murder. Abortion must be condemned. The Church of Christ must maintain the abiding principles of the law of God.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN SPAIN

Protestants have always had a difficult time of it in

Spain where the heavy hand of Roman Catholicism comes very close to overt persecution. Recently the prospects of a new religious liberty bill brought a collective sigh of relief from Protestants in Spain who hoped that the worst was over. But they are now having some second thoughts about it since the law has been heavily amended. According to the *Presbyterian Journal*, the law requires among other things:

— that non-Roman groups must submit annually a complete list of members to the Minister of Justice.

— that the church's financial records must be available for inspection and the government may intervene if it believes a budget is being improperly administered.

— that anyone who has ever taken priestly vows is forbidden to register as a non-Roman Catholic clergyman. There is fear that the law will be used to force former priests who have become Protestant ministers to resign.

— that places of worship must be approved by the state and permission to hold any religious service elsewhere must be obtained from the state.

— that a register of non-Roman ministers must be kept by the Ministry of Justice.

— that any minister which includes home visitation as a part of evangelism is forbidden to do this.

Some Protestants insist they had more freedom before the new liberty law was passed.

FROM OUR SCHOOL COMMITTEE—

Our Seminary

by J. M. Faber

Our Seminary is under the direct supervision of the Synod and its officially appointed Theological School Committee, which carries out the work in the interim between the annual meetings of Synod. The Theological School Committee is an out-growth of the former Curatorium, which supervised the school in the early days of our existence, before we were organized as a full-fledged denomination with Classes and Synod. The Curatorium at that time was made up of one delegate from each of our consistories; but the School Committee consists of synodically appointed members elected to three-year terms. At present it consists of five ministers and five elders (all from the Grand Rapids area).

The duties of this committee are varied. They include the appointment of delegations of two brethren each to visit the classes, so that the school receives a

monthly visit from the committee. The obvious reason for those regular visits is to observe whether the instruction given is in full accord with Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity and in harmony with the constitution of our School. Each of these visits must be reported in written form at the next committee meeting. The Committee must also cooperate with the faculty in case of discipline, and with both faculty and students in case of other difficulties.

The opening day of school is open house for the whole committee, and one of the minister-delegates gives a word of encouragement to the faculty and students that they may face the year with all boldness in the faith that their efforts will be crowned with God's grace as they are true to the study of the Scriptures and to their quest to be heralds of His Word.

The Faculty of our school has embarked on a new

venture on a one-year trial basis. The two professors are editing the new *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, which is to appear semi-annually. It will be of some 50 to 60 pages in mimeographed form, and it will be sent free of charge to those asking for it, besides to those on the limited mailing list. The purpose of this magazine is to provide an outlet for our professors to develop the truth in a scientific and objective way. One of the by-products of this effort will be that the church world may know that our seminary is not stagnate, but is scholarly in its approach to the development of the truth of the Scriptures through a studious application to God's Holy Word.

The first issue will contain a rather comprehensive examination of the concept "Wisdom" in the eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs, from the pen of Prof. Hanko. Prof. Hoeksema's first contribution will be a treatise on "The Scriptural Presentation of God's Hatred," in the light of the confusion existing in the Reformed church world regarding the scope of the love of God, which is being proclaimed to be a blanket covering all men. Prof. H. Hanko is acting as editor of this journal. This newest arrival in the field of theological journalism may be found by some of us to be somewhat "heavy" reading because of the scholarly approach; but many of the Bible students among our laity will find it quite readable and beneficial to our understanding of the basic truths which are being caricatured these days until they are being made to teach what they formerly denied! Surely our consistory members will take advantage of this golden opportunity to arm themselves more fully to be leaders in the fight of faith in these last days.

Our Seminary will be small this year — as small as it can be and still operate. We have only one student this year who will be kept very busy by his two professors. The future of our school is looking brighter, however, than it has for years. The plea going out to our young men is bearing fruit under the gracious guidance of our God. Five young men have pre-enrolled in our school while still in high school and college. The object of pre-enrolling them is that the Committee may notify the Draft Boards that the designated young man is a divinity student and is now free from the draft according to the laws of the land. This enables the aspirant to concentrate on the completion of the prescribed course of study in the pre-seminary years without the interruption of some years of military duty. And so we may believe that the Lord has heard our prayers for ministers and has moved these young men to make this choice of vocation believing that they have been called to this work. Besides these five, there are as many other younger young men who have expressed their desire to follow the same course when they shall have reached that age. Thus our older ministers may breathe a little easier, knowing that our churches will not lack under-shepherds as long as our Lord tarries to come and we are still allowed the freedom of worship.

The old, outworn political cliché, "As Maine goes so goes the nation," may well be transposed into the ecclesiastical realm: "As the Seminary goes so goes the denomination."

Brethren and sisters of our membership, pray for our school!

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Doctrine of Sin

The Second Period - 250-730 A.D.

The Pelagian Controversy

Life of Augustine (Philip Schaff)

by Rev. H. Veldman

It is a venturesome and delicate undertaking to write one's own life (the undersigned believes that our readers will be interested in an account of Augustine's life, particularly with a view to the pelagian controversy, as set forth by Philip Schaff in his history of the Christian Church, Vol. III, 988 f.f.), even though that life be a masterpiece of nature or of the grace of God, and therefore most worthy to be described. Of all

autobiographies none has so happily avoided the reef of vanity and self-praise, and none has won so much esteem and love through its honesty and humility as that of St. Augustine.

The "Confessions," which he wrote in the forty-sixth year of his life, still burning in the ardor of his first love, are full of the fire and unction of the Holy Ghost. They are a sublime effusion, in which Augus-

tine, like David in the fifty-first Psalm, confesses to God, in view of his own and of succeeding generations, without reserve the sins of his youth; and they are at the same time a hymn of praise to the grace of God, which led him out of darkness into light, and called him to service in the kingdom of Christ. Here we see the great teacher of all times "prostrate in the dust, conversing with God, basking in His love; his readers hovering before him only as a shadow." He puts away from himself all honor, all greatness, all beauty, and lays them gratefully at the feet of the All-merciful. The reader feels on every hand that Christianity is no dream nor illusion, but truth and life, and he is carried along in adoration of the wonderful grace of God.

AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, born on the 13th of November, 354, at Tagaste, an unimportant village of the fertile province Numidia in North Africa, nor far from Hippo Regius, inherited from his heathen father, Patricius, a passionate sensibility, from his Christian mother, Monica (one of the noblest women in the history of Christianity, of a highly intellectual and spiritual cast, of fervent piety, most tender affection, and all-conquering love), the deep yearning towards God so grandly expressed in his sentence: "Thou hast made us for Thee, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee." This yearning, and his reverence for the sweet and holy name of Jesus, though crowded into the background, attended him in his studies at the schools of Madaura and Carthage, on his journeys to Rome and Milan, and on his tedious wanderings through the labyrinth of carnal pleasures, Manichæan mock-wisdom, Academic skepticism, and Platonic idealism; till at last the prayers of his mother, the sermons of Ambrose, the biography of St. Anthony, and, above all, the Epistles of Paul, as so many instruments in the hand of the Holy Ghost, wrought in the man of three and thirty years that wonderful change which made him an incalculable blessing to the whole Christian world, and brought even the sins and errors of his youth into the service of the truth.

A son of so many prayers and tears could not be lost, and the faithful mother who travailed with him in spirit with greater pain than her body had in bringing him into the world, was permitted, for the encouragement of future mothers, to receive shortly before her death an answer to her prayers and expectations, and was able to leave this world with joy without revisiting her earthly home. For Monica died on a homeward journey, in Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber, in her fifty-sixth year, in the arms of her son, after enjoying with him a glorious conversation that soared above the confines of space and time, and was a foretaste of the eternal Sabbath-rest of the saints. She regretted not to die in a foreign land, because she was not far from God, who would raise her up at the last day. "Bury my body anywhere," was her last request, "and trouble not yourselves for it; only this one thing I ask, that you remember me at the altar of my God, wherever you may be." Augustine, in his Confessions has erected to Monica the noblest monument that can never perish.

If ever there was a thorough and fruitful conversion, next to that of Paul on the way to Damascus, it was that of Augustine, when, in a garden of the Villa Cassiciacum, not far from Milan, in September of the year 386, amidst the most violent struggles of mind and heart—the birth-throes of the new life—he heard that divine voice of a child: "Take, read!" and he "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 13:14) It is a touching lamentation of his: "I have loved Thee late, Thou Beauty, so old and so new; I have loved Thee late! And lo! Thou wast within, but I was without, and was seeking Thee there. And into Thy fair creation I plunged myself in my ugliness; for Thou wast with me, and I was not with Thee! Those things kept me away from Thee, which had not been, except they had been in Thee! Thou didst call, and didst cry aloud, and break through my deafness. Thou didst glimmer, Thou didst shine, and didst drive away my blindness. Thou didst breathe, and I drew breath, and breathed in Thee. I tasted Thee, and I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me, and I burn for Thy peace. If I, with all that is within me, may once live in Thee, then shall pain and trouble forsake me; entirely filled with Thee, all shall be life to me."

He received baptism from Ambrose in Milan on Easter Sunday, 387, in company with his friend and fellow-convert Alypius, and his natural son Adeodatus (*given by God*). It impressed the divine seal upon the inward transformation. He broke radically with the world; abandoned the brilliant and lucrative vocation of a teacher of rhetoric, which he had followed in Rome and Milan; sold his goods for the benefit of the poor; and thenceforth devoted his rare gifts exclusively to the service of Christ, and to that service he continued faithful to his latest breath. After the death of mother, whom he revered and loved with the most tender affection, he went a second time to Rome for several months, and wrote books in defense of true Christianity against false philosophy and the Manichæan heresy. Returning to Africa, he spent three years, with his friends Alypius and Evodius, in an estate in his native Tagaste, in contemplative and literary retirement.

Then, in 391, he was chosen presbyter against his will, by the voice of the people, which, as in the similar cases of Cyprian and Ambrose, proved to be the voice of God, in the Numidian maritime city of Hippo Regius (now Bona); and in 395 he was elected bishop in the same city. For eight and thirty years, until his death, he labored in this place, and made it the intellectual centre of Western Christendom.

His outward mode of life was extremely simple, and mildly ascetic. He lived with his clergy in one house in an apostolic community of goods, and made this house a seminary of theology, out of which ten bishops and many lower clergy went forth. Females, even his sister, were excluded from his house, and could see him only in the presence of others. But he founded religious societies of women; and over one of these his sister, a saintly widow, presided. He once said in a sermon that he had nowhere found better men, and he had nowhere found worse, than in monasteries. Combining, as he did, the clerical life with the mon-

astic, he became unwittingly the founder of the Augustinian order, which gave the reformer to the world. He wore the black dress of the Eastern coenobites, with a cowl and a leathern girdle. He lived almost entirely on vegetables, and seasoned the common meal with reading or free conversation, in which it was a rule that the character of an absent person should never be touched. He had a couplet to this effect engraved on the table. He often preached five days in succession, sometimes twice a day, and set it as the object of his preaching, that all might live with him, and he with all, in Christ. Wherever he went in Africa, he was begged to preach the word of salvation. He faithfully administered the external affairs connected with his office, though he found his chief delight in contemplation. He was specially devoted to the poor, and, like Ambrose, upon exigency, caused the church vessels to be melted down to redeem prisoners. But he refused legacies by which injustice was done to natural heirs, and commended the bishop Aurelius of Carthage for giving back unasked some property which a man had bequeathed to the church, when his wife unexpectedly bore him children.

Augustine's labors extended far beyond his little diocese. He was the intellectual head of the North African and the entire Western church of his time. He took active interest in all theological and ecclesiastical questions. He was the champion of the orthodox doctrine against Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism. In him was concentrated the whole polemic power of the catholicism of the time against heresy and schism; and in him it won the victory over them.

In his last years he took a critical review of his literary productions and gave them a thorough sifting in his *Retractions*. His latest controversial works against the Semi-Pelagians, written in a gentle spirit, date from the same period. He bore the duties of his office alone till his seventy-second year, when his people unanimously elected his friend Heraclius to be his assistant and successor.

The evening of his life was troubled by increasing infirmities of body and by the unspeakable wretchedness which the barbarian Vandals spread over his country in their victorious invasion, destroying cities, villages, and churches, without mercy, and even be-

sieging the fortified city of Hippo. Yet he faithfully persevered in his work. The last ten days of his life he spent in close retirement, in prayers and tears and repeated reading of the penitential Psalms, which he had caused to be written on the wall over his bed, that he might have them always before his eyes. Thus with an act of penance he closed his life. In the midst of the terrors of the siege and the despair of his people he could not suspect what abundant seed he had sown for the future.

In the third month of the siege of Hippo, on the 28th of August, 430, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, in full possession of his faculties, and in the presence of many friends and pupils, he passed gently and happily into that eternity to which he had so long aspired. "O how wonderful," wrote he in his *Meditations*, "how beautiful and lovely are the dwellings of Thy house, Almighty God! I burn with longing to behold Thy beauty in Thy bridal-chamber...O Jerusalem, holy city of God, dear bride of Christ, my heart loves thee, my soul has already long sighed for thy beauty!...The King of kings Himself is in the midst of thee, and His children are within thy walls. There are the hymning choirs of angels, the fellowship of heavenly citizens. There is the wedding-feast of all who from this sad earthly pilgrimage have reached thy joys. There is the far-seeing choir of the prophets; there the number of the twelve apostles; there the triumphant army of innumerable martyrs and holy confessors. Full and perfect love there reigns, for God is all in all. They love and praise, they praise and love Him evermore...."

He left no will, for in his voluntary poverty he had no earthly property to dispose of, except his library; this he bequeathed to the church, and it was fortunately preserved from the depredations of the Arian barbarians.

Soon after his death Hippo was taken and destroyed by the Vandals. Africa was lost to the Romans. A few decades later the whole West-Roman empire fell in ruins. The culmination of the African church was the beginning of its decline. But the work of Augustine could not perish. His ideas fell like living seed into the soil of Europe, and produced abundant fruits in nations and countries of which he had never heard.

(to be continued)

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Annual Secretary's Report - R.F.P.A.

It is again with thanksgiving to our covenant God that we as Reformed Free Publishing Association are privileged to complete our forty-third year of publishing and distributing the *Standard Bearer*.

The purpose of our magazine, to declare the truth especially as to God's sovereignty, His love and grace, and man's depravity, lack of merit and works, was achieved by our editor and staff. Although past efforts in spreading these truths outside our churches have not created great concern and had great effect, we know that the *Standard Bearer* is successful in making known the truth to leaders and people alike. We know too that it has its effect; and sometimes this becomes evident from requests for back issues.

This last year through the combined efforts of the Mission Committee and the R.F.P.A. Board two hundred copies of the *Standard Bearer* were placed on tables at each of the lectures held in the Grand Rapids area, with riders inserted offering a three months' free subscription to those requesting it.

During the past year eight-nine bound volumes, plus two partial sets of bound volumes, were distributed. From reports of personal experiences these bound volumes are found to have an abundance of reference materials in accordance with Scripture, and they are being used frequently as commentaries in Bible study.

According to our August report, we have had 108 new subscribers during the year and 59 cancellations, for a net increase of 49. Our total distribution at present is 1285.

The annual treasurer's report of the Permanent Committee for the Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature shows that 432 copies of "Reformed Dogmatics" have been sold to date. Total receipts have been \$11,550.92; total disbursements were \$9833.50; the balance on hand is \$2,717.42. This committee asks for combined efforts of our members in promoting the sale of this book. Financially, the work of further book-publication is dependent on recovering the capital invested in the "Dogmatics."

Our Education and Information Committee would appreciate any information and suggestions which would help to further the *Standard Bearer's* witness to the truth. Ways and means of increasing our subscriptions and readership must be found.

Our Finance Committee report shows that 50% of our costs is met by donations. These donations are greatly appreciated by the Board. And we ask that the R.F.P.A. be remembered when collections are taken in the churches and when various societies annually distribute their gifts.

This past year the Board has experienced Christian harmony under the leadership of our chairman, Mr. Theodore Engelsma. Mr. James Dykstra, who is of great assistance to this organization, has again efficiently performed the various duties of Business Manager. We hereby express our appreciation.

Finally, may our earnest prayer be that the God

of all grace keep us faithful, that we as Protestant Reformed people may continue this work in His fear, and that through this means His truth may be declared and His name may be glorified.

— G. Pipe, Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT — R.F.P.A.

Balance on Hand September 1, 1966		\$ 1,306.79
Receipts		
Subscriptions	4,638.90	
Membership Dues	137.00	
Gifts	4,837.84	
Advertising	192.00	
Bound Volumes	690.50	
Receipts for year	10,496.24	\$10,496.24
Total Receipts		\$11,803.03

Disbursements		
Wobbema Printing	9,297.74	
Holland Bookbinding Co.	503.75	
Mr. J. Dykstra - Gift	300.00	
Miscellaneous	164.00	
Disbursements for year	10,266.39	\$10,266.39
Balance on Hand September 1, 1967		\$1,536.64

Gifts		
Doon Prot. Ref. Church	49.09	
Edgerton Prot. Ref. Church	40.70	
First Prot. Ref. Church	1,392.14	
Holland Prot. Ref. Church	110.23	
Hope Prot. Ref. Church	336.52	
Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church	517.78	
Hull Prot. Ref. Church	79.84	
Kalamazoo Prot. Ref. Church	37.53	
Loveland Prot. Ref. Church	16.51	
Lynden Prot. Ref. Church	13.76	
Oaklawn Prot. Ref. Church	11.00	
Randolph Prot. Ref. Church	27.81	
Redlands Prot. Ref. Church	111.30	
South East Prot. Ref. Church	179.82	
South Holland Prot. Ref. Church	290.93	
Southwest Prot. Ref. Church	152.33	
Pricilla Soc. 1st Church	25.00	
Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Soc. 1st Church	48.75	
Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Soc. 1st Church	65.00	
Ladies Aid Soc. 1st Church	100.00	
Choral Soc. Hull Church	25.60	
Men's Soc. Hope Church	30.00	
Men's Soc. Southwest Church	25.00	
Ladies Aid Soc. Hudsonville	25.00	
Men's League	25.00	
Mary Martha Soc. Redlands	25.00	
Individuals	1,076.20	
	\$4,837.84	

— R. Bos, Treasurer

BOOK REVIEWS—

Asleep In Jesus**God and Evil****Pen Pictures In The Upper Room**

ASLEEP IN JESUS, by J. H. Hartenberger; Baker Book House; 120 pp., \$1.50 (paper).

Part of the "Preaching Helps Series", this book contains twenty-three funeral sermons. In some ways it is a nice book: it does not contain in the sermons long eulogies concerning the deceased such as characterize modern funeral preaching; it contains sermons which are based upon Scripture and are expositions of fitting texts. Although the Lutheran views of the author are included — especially his views on baptismal regeneration — the book can be read for devotional purposes or to give ministers ideas of various texts adaptable to funeral preaching.

Prof. H. Hanko

GOD AND EVIL, by William Fitch; Eerdmans Publishing Co.; 183 pp., \$2.65 (paper).

Subtitled "Studies in the Mystery of Suffering and Pain", this little book is a comprehensive discussion of evil in the world. It discusses the problem of evil, not only as found in suffering, but also the evil of sin. While it is not possible to agree with every part of the book (the author occasionally introduces Arminian theology and questions the literal interpretation of Genesis 1-3) nevertheless, this is a worthwhile book. It takes the Scriptural approach throughout and is both instructive and edifying. We recommend this book as worthy of reading and study in the home and as of special importance to all those whose way is beset by much distress.

Prof. H. Hanko

PEN PICTURES IN THE UPPER ROOM, by Bernard C. Clausen; Baker Book House, 1967; 187 pp., \$1.50, (paper).

This is one of the "Preaching Helps Series" being published by Baker. It contains fourteen communion sermons and has as its purpose: "If we are to recapture for modern Christians those recollections of Jesus himself which glorified the Communion moments for the early Church, we must make deliberate efforts to restore those fading pictures of the upper room, which have now almost surrendered to the patient attack of time." While the book is well written and contains some interesting material on the Last Supper, it is not a very good book. It is exegetically unsound; it is based upon a very loose conception of inspiration; it misses the point of the events of the Last Supper badly, failing to direct the attention of the reader to the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Recommended for general reading, but of little help in preaching.

Prof. H. Hanko

IN MEMORIAM

It pleased our heavenly Father to take from out of our midst a former elder and member of our Men's Society

MR. SIMON DE VRIES

Our comfort and peace in this bereavement is that "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." II Corinthians 5:1.

The Consistory and Men's Society of
The First Protestant Reformed Church
of Holland, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church mourns the loss of a faithful member

MRS. JESSIE RIETEMA

whom the Lord called home on Sept. 23, 1967. We herewith express our sincere sympathy to the bereaved family may they rejoice in the assurance that she has gone to be with the Lord in glory.

"I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of good courage". Joshua 1:5, 6.

Mrs. D. Jonker, Pres.

Mrs. J. Newhouse, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of First Protestant Reformed Church express their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Looyenga in the recent passing of her Father.

MR. HARM HAMSTRA

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

Prof. H. Hanko, Pres.
Mrs. Donald Hauck, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church extends its sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. John Moelker, in the loss of her Mother

MRS. FLORA JOHNSON

Our prayer is that our heavenly Father may comfort the bereaved family.

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.
Mrs. G. Engelsma, Vice Sec'y.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

September 24, 1967

The Reformed Free Publication Association met in Annual Business Meeting Sept. 21 in Southeast Church. Election of three board members and the adoption of several constitution changes occupied most of the evening after Rev. H. Veldman delivered a short but pithy talk. The speaker reminded the members of their continued responsibility to contend for the faith through our Standard Bearer which has for forty years been the means of publicly proclaiming and defending the basic truths of Scripture. He warned his hearers that because our position in the church world is unique in that ours is a lone voice in the wilderness we are called to faithfulness in witnessing boldly to the faith once delivered unto the fathers. The three members added to the board are, George DeVries, Richard Teitsma and Henry Velthouse.

* * *

Thursday, Sept. 19, was the date scheduled by Loveland's Extension Comm. to feature a public lecture by Rev. C. Hanko, of Redlands, Calif. The announced topic was, "Believing the Truth in these Last Days." Loveland's City Auditorium was the place chosen by the committee to seat the expected audience. Rev. Hanko had expressed his intention of presenting material "that would be beneficial to all, especially to those who have little or no acquaintance with the Reformed faith." Loveland was also the site of an Office Bearer's Conference in which Rev. Woudenberg, of Lynden, Wash. addressed the delegates to Classis West on the subject, "The Local Congregation: Its Mission". After the address the delegates were invited to discuss the paper.

* * *

The congregation of First Church is eagerly awaiting the end-of-the-year installation of their new organ. They are advertising the sale of their old organ and will expect the buyer to remove same at the last moment (weeks) so that they will not have to suffer the inadequacy of piano accompaniment in such a large auditorium for more than two Sundays.

* * *

Emeritus Minister, Rev. Vos, writes in Hudsonville's bulletin that his wife is also suffering from a painful phlebitis besides the burden of extreme nervousness and rheumatoid arthritis, but adds: "God is good, and we understand that all these afflictions work together for good to those who love God, and we do that, we do!"

* * *

Lynden's consistory scheduled a "work-bee" on a recent Monday evening to complete several projects in their church, which included some outside painting. Lynden's congregation was privileged to hear Rev. C.

Hanko who was invited to conduct an afternoon service while there on Church Visitation.

. . . see you in church

J.M.F.

Report of Classis East
July 5 and September 13, 1967
At Hudsonville, Michigan

Rev. G. Van Baren led in the opening devotions. After Classis was declared properly constituted, the Rev. R. C. Harbach presided while the Rev. Van Baren recorded the minutes.

The Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee gave their reports.

Requests for pulpit supply were received from Holland, and from Classis West for South Holland, Randolph, and Hull. A committee of Rev. G. Lubbers, J. King and H. Ophoff prepared the following schedule which Classis adopted:

Holland: Aug. 6 - H. Veldman Aug. 13 - M. Schipper Aug. 20 - J. Kortering.

South Holland: July 23 - H. Veldman July 30 - M. Schipper Aug. 13 - G. Van Baren Aug. 20 - G. Lubbers Sept. 10 - R. C. Harbach Sept. 24 - M. Schipper Oct. 1 - G. Lubbers Oct. 8 - J. Kortering.

Randolph: July 16 - G. Lubbers Aug. 6 - R. C. Harbach Aug. 13 - H. Veldman Aug. 20 - G. Van Baren Aug. 27 - M. Schipper Sept. 17 - G. Lubbers Oct. 1 - R. C. Harbach Oct. 8 - H. Veldman.

Hull: July 23, 30 - J. Kortering Sept. 10, 17 - G. Van Baren.

The Church Visitors, the Revs. H. Veldman and M. Schipper, tendered their report of the annual church visitation which Classis filed for information.

Letters from the Stated Clerk of Synod relative to decisions of Synod pertinent to Classis East were read and filed for information.

Mr. D. Langeland and Mr. O. Vander Woude served as finance committee for this session of Classis.

Classis in executive session treated requests for the increase of censure of several members of one of our churches, and the erasure of a baptized member of another of our churches.

Mr. R. Lubbers and Mr. H. Ophoff were appointed to thank the ladies of Hudsonville for their excellent catering services.

Classis decided to meet next time the first Wednesday in October in Holland.

The Questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered satisfactorily.

The Chairman expressed appreciation for the cooperation he received through these long sessions in which Classis met.

Rev. M. Schipper led the Classis in the closing prayer of thanksgiving. M. Schipper, Stated Clerk