

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Meditation

Our Great Ascended High Priest

Rev. M. Schipper

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Hebrews 4: 14-16.

We have a great high priest!
Who is gone through the heavens!
Jesus the Son of God!

A sympathetic high priest, Who is now seated on the throne of grace! Where you may now come boldly to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need!

Let us hold fast this our profession!

O, indeed, He is the great high priest! This Jesus the Son of God!

Not great, you understand, is He simply because He compares or is to be compared with other priests, and in the comparison is greater than all. Though surely

that He is! But great is He because He is the reality, the One to Whom all the rest pointed, and of which they all were only faint pictures. Not one of them could bring a sacrifice that could really atone for the sins of the people they represented. All they could bring was the blood of animals which the people brought to them, but which could never take away sins. All they could do was enter an earthly sanctuary and sprinkle animal blood upon a man-made mercy seat between artificial cherubim, the work of a human sculptor. All they could say to the people whom they sought to mediate was, "You must not expect salvation to come from us, but from Him of Whom we serve only as types and shadows."

Great High Priest is He because He is the unique, the only true High Priest. Who brings not a sacrifice you give Him, but Who offers Himself. Who poured out His life's blood, which could effectively blot out our sin and guilt, and which could merit the right to enter into the presence of God without fear of being cast out. Great is He because He can truly make intercession with the Father for us, an intercession that must be heard.

And this great high priest is none other than Jesus the Son of God!

Jesus, the revelation of the God of our salvation!

Very God of God! Infinite in power is He! Full of infinite perfections!

For when God saw that there was no man who could redeem his brother, and that we all had made ourselves incapable of doing any good, and were inclined to all evil, and that we could only therefore increase our debt — He came Himself, in the Person of His Son, and joined Himself so perfectly to our nature in the womb of the virgin that He assumed that nature in its entirety, though without sin, without incurring our guilt; in order that He might truly represent us as our great High Priest. Then He came, as it is written in the volume of the book, to do God's will, to fulfill the law which we had transgressed and could not keep, while at the same time presenting Himself as an atonement for our sins. He gave Himself unto the death of the curse. He allowed Himself to be burned under the fire of God's holy wrath, and satisfied God's justice completely. So that we have no debt, all our guilt is erased, and in its place we now possess a righteousness of God wherewith we may appear before His face as if we had never committed one sin, and had always walked obediently in His commandments.

O, indeed, we have a great High Priest!

Who is none other than Jesus the Son of God!

Who is gone through the heavens!

For you see He has risen from the dead, and ascended up on high as a reward of merit, because He had first so deeply humbled Himself. And having been raised from the dead, the very nature of His resurrected body which had now become heavenly and glorious could no longer abide in the earthly.

From the Mount of Olives, in the presence of His disciples, He was taken up, and He ascended into heaven. Yea, the text informs us that He went through the heavens. Until He came to the very heart, the very center of the heaven of heavens—to the right hand of the throne of God—which is now called the throne of grace, being no longer a throne of judgment for His people.

There, on that throne of grace, He still serves as our great High Priest. No longer, you understand, to make atonement for the sins of His people: for once for all He accomplished this on the cross. But now to intercede for them on the basis of that atonement. To serve there as our advocate, our lawyer, who will constantly plead our case with the Father. That it is the throne of grace upon which He sits, signifies that now only grace, that is, the beauty and forgiving favor of God can emanate from that throne to those who are represented by the great High Priest. It is no longer a throne of wrath and of judgment for them.

Moreover, the text emphasizes the fact that also the High Priest is favorably disposed to us.

We do not have a High Priest Who is not able to be affected with respect to our infirmities, but He was tried according to all things in like manner as we are, though without sin. He knows, therefore, exactly what we go through when our faith is tried, when we are surrounded with manifold temptations. While He was strong and sinless as He was tempted in all points as we are, and therefore could stand in the temptations without succumbing, He knows that we are weak and sinful and lapsible. He knows that we would not be able to stand for a moment without His sustaining and redeeming grace.

He is the sympathetic High Priest from Whom you need not to flee away because He is holy and you are sinner; but you may come to Him with fearless freedom, believing that He will help you in your need.

Our need!

O, yes, we still have need! Though we are justified before God and shall never be brought into judgment to answer for our sins, (for that judgment was finished on the cross), and though we through regeneration possess in principle eternal life and immortality through the Spirit of the resurrected and exalted Redeemer, and though our names are written in the Lamb's book of life and can never be stricken, yet we have great need! We dwell still in the body of sin and death that never delights to do the will of God, that never wants to go to heaven, and is still inclined to all evil, and still constitutes our greatest enemy. We have not yet finished the race, nor attained to the goal set before us. We still have to fight the good fight of faith in which we do not always taste the victory we have in Christ. We experience daily that we have only a small beginning of new obedience, and we often falter in the way. Moreover, we still transgress all of God's good

commandments. Even our best works are all tainted with sin. We need constantly grace and mercy. We need the intercessory prayers of our great High Priest Who must purify our prayers with His own and Who must constantly plead our case with the living God Who is always inclined to heed the intercession of our High Priest and Advocate with the Father.

Let us then hold fast our profession!

Our profession is to say the same thing God has revealed to us in the Holy Gospel, and by His Holy Spirit in our hearts.

And what has God revealed to us?

That Jesus His only begotten Son is our Lord and Saviour! That He has been sent of the Father into our world to unite Himself to our nature in which He could perfectly represent us as the Head of His people given to Him of the Father from before the foundation of the world. That He gave Himself unto death, even the death of the cross, in our stead. That He satisfied the justice of God in respect to our sin and guilt. That He merited for us righteousness and life. That He was raised again from the dead to declare our justification, and to open the way for us through death and the grave unto eternal and heavenly life. That He is ascended into heaven, having taken our human nature, now glorified, into the very presence of God. That there He may finish His priestly work, interceding for us with the Father, and preparing there a place for all His own in the house of many mansions. That from there He might send forth His Spirit given Him of the Father into the church and into our hearts, that Spirit which cries: Abba, Father; the Spirit which testifies with our spirits that we are the children of God and joint heirs with Christ of all the blessings of God's kingdom and covenant.

Briefly, this is our profession which we are to hold fast!

Which while we hold it fast, will also give unto us the boldness and freedom to come to the throne of grace.

We need not therefore stand afar off as the children of God in the old dispensation did and remain in the outer court while their priest functioned in the inner sanctuary. For they feared to draw near, and remained far outside the drawn curtain that separated them from the holy of holies and the mercy seat. In fact they might not enter there on pain of death. Only the priest might enter, and that only after he had sanctified himself and came with blood.

But we may come boldly, that is, with fearless freedom to the throne of grace. The veil of the sanctuary has been rent from top to bottom, never to be repaired again. Now the mercy seat is open to the view of all, and we see Jesus, "the captain of our salvation who was made perfect through sufferings," seated on the throne of grace and mercy, who is the hope set before us; "which hope we have as the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entered into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec."

Should we then be afraid?

Should we hesitate then to come in our need to that throne of grace?

Indeed not! But let us go freely to Him Whom we boast in our profession to be our merciful High Priest, Who alone has the right to plead our case, and Who alone can give us the assurance that His pleadings shall be heard, and Who promises grace to help.

Editorials

As to the Frustration of Protest

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Frustration is a feeling of disappointment and defeat which arises when a person has been stymied or thwarted in a certain course of action and in the attainment of a purpose.

It is about such frustration in connection with the process of protest and appeal in general in the Christian Reformed denomination, and in particular in connection with a concrete case at the Synod of 1968, that there has been a flurry of discussion in the March, 1969 issue of *Torch and Trumpet*, occasioned by an article on "The Frustration of Protest" by Mr. Henry W. Hoeksema (no relation to your editor) in the November, 1968 issue of the same magazine. In my

opinion Mr. Hoeksema touches on a real problem and a sore wrong; and, in a sense, he has reason, as many have had reason, to experience feelings of frustration. However, while voicing complaints of frustration, Mr. Hoeksema suggests no solutions. In "Letters to the Editor" in *Torch and Trumpet* (March, 1969) one correspondent, Rev. J. Tuininga, does little more than commiserate with Mr. Hoeksema in his frustration, while the other, Rev. John Gritter, attempts to soothe Mr. Hoeksema's feelings, but offers no real solutions.

Because this so-called "frustration of protest" is a very sore evil which has become increasingly common in the Christian Reformed denomination and others;

because, moreover, it involves the walking of the "ecclesiastical way," about which many have become disillusioned and frustrated; because too, we all may benefit from this discussion; and because the *Standard Bearer* desires to furnish assistance and instruction in matters of concern to Reformed people, therefore I will venture to suggest a solution to this problem of frustration. Meanwhile, I remind *Torch and Trumpet* and those concerned in this discussion that our *Standard Bearer* welcomes discussion.

A Brief Review of Events

The concrete case cited in detail by Mr. Hoeksema is one of a long process of protest and appeal by a Mr. N. Bierema against a sermon preached by the Rev. Leonard Sweetman, Associate Professor of Religion and Theology at Calvin College, at the Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church on January 3, 1965, based on the so-called parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew. 25: 31-46. I do not possess a copy of the protest and am not in a position to say how well worked out it may or may not have been. However, from the synodical record it may be gathered that the protestant had some serious objections to the sermon, involving questions concerning salvation by works, the Reformed view of the antithesis, and the correct and Reformed view of the incarnation; and he asks for a determination whether the theology of the sermon is in agreement with our Reformed doctrine. I do, however, possess a copy of the sermon in question (from which Mr. Hoeksema quotes excerpts). That there were grounds for protest is putting it mildly; I assure you that the sermon was so thoroughly rotten and heretical that any consistory should have initiated suspension proceedings immediately and without waiting for protests from the congregation. In this instance, however, the only person who took action and made work of his objections was the protestant, Mr. Bierema. A year later, after protracted procedure, the consistory held that the Rev. Sweetman was not censurable. From May, 1966 to May, 1967 the matter was before Classis Grand Rapids East at various times by way of appeal, the result being again that Mr. Bierema was not upheld. Finally, in June of 1968 the appeal came before the Christian Reformed Synod. But again it was rejected. The decision was as follows:

1. That Synod do not sustain the Appeal of Mr. N. Bierema.

Grounds:

- a. In the presence of the Advisory Committee, Rev. L. Sweetman withdrew certain unsatisfactory expressions contained in the sermon.
- b. He explained to the committee his sermon method which appears to account for an inadvertent one-sidedness in the sermon.
- c. He expressed to the committee his complete agreement with the three Forms of Unity.
- d. The contents of one sermon are an insufficient

basis for a fair judgment of a minister's total creedal commitment.

However, the Synod did a very strange thing. It expunged from the printed Acts the "Observations" of its Advisory Committee, and it did so in such a way that this does not at all appear in the Acts. What was "D" (Recommendations) in the report of the Advisory Committee appears as "C" in the printed Acts. And what was "C" (Observations) in the report of the Advisory Committee is simply omitted in the Printed Acts without any indication that anything has been omitted. Moreover, the decision to omit this material was taken on the last day that Synod met, long after the Appeal had been treated. These observations are supposed to form the background of Synod's decision. One can only guess as to the reason why they were omitted; but an educated guess is that the observations contradict the decision to no little degree. This Mr. Hoeksema calls "*Knoeien met de waarheid*, (Tampering with the truth.)" I will quote those omitted observations, so that the reader may compare them with the decision quoted above:

C. Observations:

1. Your Advisory Committee carefully read and analyzed the sermon and came to the conclusion that the appellant did indeed have a real basis for his criticism.
2. In the judgment of your committee, the sermon contains ambiguities, very unfortunate expressions, questionable exegesis, and is an incomplete presentation of the gospel.
Your committee held an interview with Rev. Sweetman in which he:
 - a. Withdrew certain unsatisfactory statements contained in the sermon.
 - b. Explained the method of the sermon which might lead to one-sided emphasis on one special word or text without intention to deny the truth revealed in *all* of Scripture;
 - c. Expressed his complete agreement with the three Forms of Unity.

The above history is cited in detail by Mr. Hoeksema as a "case in point" of the frustration of protest. His complaint comes down to this: it is absolutely useless and frustrating to follow the ecclesiastical way, the orderly way of protest and appeal. This is what he writes:

Taking its cue from the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary, Synod 1968 adopted the following recommendation: "That Synod take note of the fact that our consistories and people are being subjected to illicit and undermining propaganda regarding Calvin College and Seminary, that it deplores this practice and calls attention of the churches to the proper channels of addressing complaints."

"Proper channels" is the hue and cry in the Christian Reformed Church today. It is used most piously and fervently by the apostles of change. The mainline clerics are ardently devoted to the

"Kerkelijke weg." A precious few have recognized that while the use of "channels" is indeed proper and desirable, the channels, although open, are not channelling properly.

The position of a complainant has worsened in recent months. The concerned individual today is quickly and easily dismissed as "lacking in love;" "a trouble maker;" "misguided and uninformed;" "too legalistic;" "a detriment to church unity;" or "a John Bircher."

The channelers cleverly concentrate on the "individual," his "attitude," and his "procedure," rather than on the issue raised. This inevitably permits lengthy delays which will hopefully dull the issue, frustrate the complainant, and allow "dialogue" and "conditioning" to pave the way for innocuous disposition of the complaint should the complainant continue to show signs of life.

Reactions To This Complaint

As has been stated, two reactions to Mr. Hoeksema's complaint appear in *Torch and Trumpet* of March, 1969. Neither of them is of any real help.

That of the Rev. J. Tuininga actually does little more than express agreement and sympathy. If anything, Mr. Tuininga underscores the frustrating nature of Synod's decision and the manner in which it was published in the Acts. The only additional element in the article is a warning against the dangers involved in appointing committees to study such matters locally, supported by a quotation from the late J.L. Schaver's *The Polity of the Churches*. The latter suggestion is of no help, for there was no appointment of a committee to study the case locally in the case under discussion. For the rest, an expression of agreement and sympathy in a situation like this is of no help. It may offer some small comfort to Messrs. Hoeksema and Bierema, on the principle that "misery likes company." But it does not remove the frustration. In fact, one might expect that if Mr. Tuininga entertains such strong feelings about the matter, he would do more than express his agreement journalistically: he should take up this ecclesiastical miscarriage of justice through ecclesiastical channels and create no small stir about it at ecclesiastical levels. But to date I have noticed no such procedure on his part.

The sum and substance of the Rev. John Gritter's remarks in the same issue of *Torch and Trumpet* is that he tries to pour some oil on the troubled waters. In the twelve points of his article there is not one which is really to the point. None of his remarks serves to help the complainants in their frustration. None of them changes the fact that here was a sermon filled with heresy and that Synod did not find any heresy. None of them changes the fact that the Advisory Committee stated that Mr. Bierema did indeed have a real basis for criticism, but nevertheless advised that the appeal be rejected. None of them is pertinent to the fact that Synod hypocritically removed this glaring contradic-

tion from its published Acts. None of them explains how and why it is possible, even with the vague admissions of wrong-doing which Rev. Sweetman made, to remove before a synodical advisory committee wrongs which were committed in public before the congregation to whom the sermon was preached and under the supervision of its consistory. None of them deals with the fact that both Classis Grand Rapids East and the Fuller Avenue Chr. Ref. Consistory went unreprieved for their failure to heed Mr. Bierema's protest.

The result? The frustration remains!

And such frustration is spiritually unhealthy as far as the frustrated individual is concerned. Such an individual, if he is a serious-minded child of God, is in deep trouble. He needs help!

Nor is such frustration good for any congregation or denomination. Its presence means that there is deep, underlying disunity and lack of harmony though there may be outward and organizational unity.

Frustration Unlimited

Where is the blame to be assigned for this frustration?

First of all, as far as the merits of this particular case are concerned, there is no question about it that the blame lies squarely at the door of consistory, classis, and synod. Here was a clear-cut case of gross heresy in the public preaching of a minister, totally contrary to the provisions of the Formula of Subscription, completely at variance with the confessions and with Scripture; and no ecclesiastical assembly would touch it with a ten-foot pole. To all intents and purposes, the guilty office-bearer went scot free. True, he received a mild tick on the fingers from Synod's committee. True, he made some vague admissions. But as far as the essence of the case is concerned, he was found innocent. Here was a case, moreover, of gross injustice to a protestant and appellant who was concerned to maintain purity of doctrine and of preaching in his church and denomination. Moreover, the synod took pains to remove from its published records the only hint that the appellant was right and that the minister concerned was wrong. Still more, in its unpublished records there is evidence that Synod knowingly and wilfully rejected the appeal though it knew that the appeal was well-founded. Besides, this injustice and contradiction was then expunged from the published record, thus compounding the wrong-doing.

Nor is this a matter of mere injustice to the individual concerned. That would be serious in itself.

But there is more involved here.

Involved are what the confession calls the marks of the true church!

Involved is the mark of the preaching of "the pure doctrine of the gospel." In place of the aforesaid mark of the true church by its refusal to condemn blatant heresy the synod evinced the mark of the false church,

ascribing more power and authority to herself and her ordinances than to the Word of God, refusing to submit herself to the yoke of Christ. Involved, too, is the mark of the exercise of church discipline in the punishing of sin. When the guilty are upheld and the innocent are condemned when they rebuke the church for her errors, this important mark of the true church is perverted into its very opposite.

In the second place, I call your attention to the fact that this case of Mr. Bierema is by no means an exception. What happened in this particular case is habitual. It is an ecclesiastical way of life in the Christian Reformed denomination. In every case involving a serious doctrinal issue there is either a rejection of the Reformed position, an attempted compromise, or some kind of attempted accommodation without a doctrinal decision.

Put this to the test. In every recent case involving doctrine in recent years the Synod has been afraid to make a finding of heresy, and it has refused to take a clear-cut position in favor of the Reformed truth.

In fact, the question may be asked: when was the last time that a Christian Reformed Synod took a clear-cut Reformed stand in a case of significance?

I will go a step farther: in what case of significance ever since the departure of 1924 has a Christian Reformed Synod assumed a strongly Reformed stance?

And is it a wonder, then, that those who in good faith attempt to walk the ecclesiastical way experience feelings of frustration? Is it a wonder that they complain about the uselessness of following the orderly way?

Frustration Unwarranted

Nevertheless, I insist that this frustration is unwarranted on the part of the individual. It is wrong. One *may not* live in such a state of frustration. He may not for his own sake, because it is spiritually detrimental to himself and his generations. But also he may not live in such a state of frustration for the sake of Zion, the church.

What, then, is the solution to this apparently hopeless situation? It is easy to say that a person may not live in such frustration; but what is the cure? How many one escape such frustration?

My answer is, first of all, that the ecclesiastical way by all means must and may not be abandoned. It is the right way, the orderly way, the obedient way. The way of rebellion and revolution and agitation is wrong. And

the latter way is always a temptation for those who seek an outlet for their frustrations.

In the second place, I point out that the ecclesiastical way has an *end*, and that this end is always REFORMATION. This is necessarily the case. A way has an end. And the end of a certain way is always the same; it does not vary.

To be sure, that end of the ecclesiastical way, Reformation, may assume different forms. In the main there are three such forms. The first is, of course, that the ecclesiastical assembly heeds an appellant and acts accordingly. This means reformation *within* the church. Then, of course, there is no frustration. The second form of reformation is the reformation of the individual. In that case the individual is convinced by the assembly that his protest and appeal were wrong, that there was no cause for action; or at least he may be convinced that his case is doubtful or that it is possible for him to live with a given situation. In that case, too, there is no frustration.

But what if the individual walks the ecclesiastical way to the very end (and no one may do less than that in good conscience), and what if the synod, the broadest assembly, will not heed him; and what if that individual is convinced, on the basis of the Word of God and the Church Order, that he is right and that the assemblies are wrong, and that before God he cannot and may not acquiesce to the decision taken? Is he defeated? Is the only way the way of frustration?

My answer is that also then the end of the ecclesiastical way is the way of reformation. But this time that reformation necessarily takes him outside of the church that has departed from the right way, that has corrupted the marks of the church, and that will not repent. This may imply that he takes steps to institute the church anew, or it may imply that he joins himself to another communion of churches (like the Protestant Reformed) which does show the marks of the true church. But separate he must! This way of separation may be difficult and painful. It is indeed a serious step, not to be taken lightly. But if the only alternative is frustration, then that step *must* be taken.

This is what these frustrated brethren ought to see. They must have the courage of their convictions. When they do, their frustration will end. The alternative is spiritual damage,—to themselves, to their generations, and to the cause of the church.

Their frustration is in this sense unwarranted. And it is needless.

Our Schools and Government Subsidy (5)

A Question of Justice or of Money?

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Our editorial department in the last issue lacked space for further treatment of the subject of "parochiaid." We now continue our discussion of "More Basic Considerations" which was begun in the April 15 issue.

More Basic Considerations (continued)

The second consideration which I offer in support of the contention that the entire concept of government subsidy is wrong, that is, contrary to Christian principles of righteousness and justice, may be stated as follows: *It is wrong before God to act on the basis that government subsidy is an issue of private (or: non-public) schools versus public schools, wrong to make common cause with enemies of the Reformed faith on that basis, wrong to seek financial support for enemies of the Reformed faith and their schools, and wrong to allow ourselves to be treated on that basis by the state and to accept aid on that basis.*

Let me remind you that this second consideration is based on an assumption, an "if." That *if* is: if it were right for the government to be in the business of education at all! This, you recall, we presented as our first objection of a basic nature. Assuming now that this is right for the government,—which we deny,—then the whole concept of government subsidy would still be principally wrong on the basis of the second basis consideration, stated above.

Notice, in the first place, that the nature of the entire parochiaid movement is such that it puts its adherents and its schools on a broad common denominator about which there is absolutely nothing Christian. This is evident from the very names of the two organizations which are pushing for government subsidy here in Michigan. The name of the one is "Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools." The name of the other is "Citizens for Educational Freedom." These names point up the nature of the entire movement. Parochial and parental and private, Roman Catholic and Lutheran and Jewish and Christian Reformed and—supposedly—Protestant Reformed schools and their supporters,—all are lumped together without regard to principle and fundamental differences. All are lumped together and make common cause simply on the basis that they are "non-public" or "private." All supporters are supposed to work together simply on the basis that they are "citizens" and that they are for "educational freedom" (a freedom, remember, which is not defined in Biblical terms, but simply in terms of a secular political philosophy). I

ask: is this right? Is this living out of principle? Is this living from the principle that we are called to walk in the midst of the world antithetically from the principle of regeneration? Let me remind you that this is indeed what is involved as far as principle is concerned. This is not only true as far as the active movement to gain such subsidy is concerned; on that score, any genuine supporter and adherent of covenantal education ought to be thoroughly ashamed to be part of a movement which so completely blurs and blots out the lines of the antithesis. But this is also true as far as the government is concerned. The government also simply views all non-public schools as exactly that, and no more, and if it grants aid, will grant it on that basis. And we may not allow ourselves to be treated on that basis. We may not allow ourselves, educationally speaking, to be lumped together.

No, if it is at all the business of the government to become involved in education, then let us have the courage of our convictions. Let us not say that we are colorlessly non-public, or private. Let us tell the government that we operate parental schools because we believe that is right before God; let us tell the government that we operate covenantal schools because we believe that is right before God; let us tell the government that we operate Reformed schools in which our Reformed, antithetical principles permeate all the instruction, because we believe that is right before God; let us tell them that in schools we offer the *only right education*, the only kind of education that before God has the right to be called education, inculcation of knowledge. And then let us tell them that this is the reason why, if they are a Christian government, they will support us and should support us exclusively.

You say, perhaps, such speech would kill any chance of government subsidy? I agree heartily. But God forbid that we ever become so blinded by dollar signs that we forget the basic principles of our educational system and say anything else than the above! You say, perhaps, that this is a very narrow position? I agree, again. But I ask: since when has the way of the Christian been anything else but narrow?

Notice, in the second place, that the government subsidy movement is emphatically not something neutral, but involves seeking financial support for *enemies* of the Reformed faith.

No, I am not now talking about so-called separation of church and state, though it is indeed difficult to

understand how that idea can be maintained in the courts of our land in view of the fact that support of Roman Catholic schools would involve *parochial* schools, that is, schools that are directly the property and responsibility of the Roman Catholic Church.

Nor am I talking about the fact that the overwhelming *amount* of government subsidy, if granted, will go to such Roman Catholic schools. I could do so. For it is a fact that the whole *parochial* movement would founder and fail utterly except for the fact that the Roman Catholics, as a whole, are strongly behind it. This is true of every published instance of a drive for government subsidy thus far. It is a fact that the Christian school movement constitutes so small a minority that it would not stand a ghost of a chance if it were to seek such subsidy in the halls of government all by itself. It is a fact, too, which can be supported by published statistics, that the Roman Catholics are notoriously poor, in comparison with our schools, in paying for education and in charging and paying tuition. It is even a fact that in some cases they operate schools which are debt-free and which charge no tuition, and yet are clamoring for government subsidy. It is also a fact that it is chiefly Roman Catholic schools which are closing because of financial difficulties and which are threatening to dump a large

influx of pupils upon the public school system. And why, pray, even in this light should we be so foolish as to help fight their battle?

Nevertheless, what I am concerned about is that they are *enemies* of the Reformed faith. How is it possible for children of the Reformation to be in favor of government subsidy for a school system of our mortal enemies and a school system which stands to benefit more than any other from such subsidy? Does this not offend the sensibilities of any right-thinking son or daughter of the Reformation? It ought to! Or have we become so blandly "democratic" and "tolerant" and "ecumenically minded" that this makes no difference any longer?

* * * *

Postscript

As a matter of information, I may state that as of this writing a form of *parochial* is being sought also in the state of Indiana. The governor of Illinois has also proposed it to the state legislature. Here in Michigan the state senate has passed an education bill without *parochial*; it is reported that an effort will be made to tack it on in the house of representatives, but that it will probably be only a token amount this year, partly for the purpose of getting a test in the courts. The propaganda mills continue to grind, however.

All Around Us

A Relevant Liturgy? Brief Items of Interest

Prof. H. Hanko

A RELEVANT LITURGY?

What happens when the church listens to the young people and revises its liturgy to suit their desires? Dr. N. Wolterstorff suggested in an article in the *Reformed Journal* that if we wanted to keep the young people in the church we had better listen to them when they criticize the liturgical practices of the church. If they offer suggestions for improvement we ought to adapt the liturgical form of the worship services to these suggestions. They have something worthwhile to say. They know how to make the liturgy relevant to our times.

Dr. Wolterstorff practices what he preaches. He helped put the suggestions of the young people to whom he listened into practice. The result was a "Young Adults Worship Service" held at the LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church on Sunday, November 24. A description of this service was given in the "Newsletter" of the Association of Christian

Reformed Laymen from which we quote.

At 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, November 24, 1968, a disgraceful event took place at the LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. Although billed as a "Young Adults Worship Service" it was anything but worship. A curious crowd, including dungaree-clad hippie types and mini-skirted females assembled in the church lounge. Here a young man in charge gave directions for marching silently downstairs to the Fellowship Hall following lighted candles, symbolizing the Holy Spirit.

Upon entering the dimly lit Fellowship Hall two Calvin Students were twanging a noisy prelude on their guitars. After the reading of a brief preface, the "Electric Prunes" rendered a noisy selection via a recording. This was followed by a short period of silence.

Next a young man recited some lines which constituted "God's Welcome." He concluded his remarks by saying, "God says welcome to this happening." "Happening" is a very appropriate

handle for this event—it defies a more intelligent label.

Following this, a young woman led the group in a “dialogue response” recitation of the Nicene Creed; i.e., she read a portion, which was then repeated by the audience. The two-man rock-and-roll group then came forward to provide noisy accompaniment for the singing of “Clap Your Hands.” And clap their hands they did.

The printed program listed the scripture reading as “God’s Word to Worshippers,” as opposed to the minister’s talk which was listed as “God’s Word for Worshippers.” (Emphasis not ours.) We simply call this to your attention, and do not profess to know the fine distinctions apparently intended here.

The scripture passage, read by a young woman, was taken from Isaiah 1:10-20 (please read this). This was a shallow mockery, as it was obviously intended as scriptural justification for this “happening.” It is just another glaring example of the theologizing of many of our leaders, whereby they decide what they want to teach or do, and then try to bless that idea or action with a scripture portion. This is also known as using scripture “supportively.”

The prayer, prayed in unison, is here reprinted in full.

“We are hypocrites when it comes to worship services, O God. We just move our lips, and make the right motions at the right time, and attentively appear to listen to sermons. But we aren’t in it. We are thinking about our blue-books, our clothes, our problems, our dates . . . We put on a good front, but are not really as holy and reverent as we pretend to be. Forgive us. Do not judge us.

“We are disgusted when it comes to worship services, O God.

“We are disgusted about:

“Hymns we don’t know or don’t care about.

“People we don’t like or don’t know.

“Pews that are not comfortable or conducive to worship.

“All kinds of chattering before the service, and all kinds of gossiping after the service.

“Sermons that often leave us cold, and music that makes us hot under the collar.

“We do not like this situation, O God; we’d like to see a change. We want to worship You, and we don’t know how, or we are hung up over what we don’t like.

“Tell us, Lord, give us some hints, some clues, some advice about what we should do, what we should be, and what we should change, so that when we worship, we really worship and do not just fool around.

“We know You have answered the needs of many with your Son, Jesus. Answer our need now, with Him.

“We pray to you because we love Him. Amen.”

Rev. Wayne Gritter, the Assistant Pastor at LaGrave Avenue gave a very brief talk. It was a complete perversion of Scripture and the gospel.

His “Text” was taken from John 4 (The context

being the Samaritan Woman at the well), especially vs. 24: “God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth.” He said it was difficult to define worship because you can’t stop it long enough to analyze it, and if you stopped it you could no longer analyze it. Not being able to define worship, Rev. Gritter gave examples of worship. He said, “If a boy or girl says ‘I love you’ and the other responds with love — that’s worship.”

He emphasized that Jesus told the Samaritan woman that “. . . Ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father”, and concluded that there is “not a place for worship.” Next he emphasized that there is “not a set time for worship.” Then he said, “There are no special songs, no special liturgy, no special dress for worship.” All of which must have been sweet music to the ears of many of these young people, who will now feel justified in their manner of dress and actions, etc., having heard it blessed by a clergyman. . . .

A recorded, ear-splitting, orchestral “Amen” ended his talk. The next song by the audience was entitled “Thank you,” again accompanied by the guitars and hand-clapping. . . .

The young woman announcing “God’s farewell” concluded by saying, “God says it’s a pleasure to serve you. God says ‘come again.’” And that too is indicative of the thinking of today — God serving man, rather than man serving God.

Now lest we assume that our Young People are to be blamed for all this, let it be known that they were directed or counseled by adults. Dr. Wolterstorff and Dr. Orlebeke of Calvin College staff were very much in evidence at this meeting. Undoubtedly they were carrying out the plans which they helped formulate for the “Toward Christian Nurture” blueprint published over two years ago, which calls for “developing a sensitivity in the choice of appropriate and worthy vehicles and acts of worship.”

And there was more.

It is difficult to imagine how anyone who has any acquaintance with the Scriptures could possibly call this worship of God. The lofty Psalms of Israel’s poets point in precisely the opposite direction from this stuff. The soaring passages of Isaiah’s prophecies (“Who then is like unto me? and with whom shall I be equal? saith the Lord of hosts.”) speak an entirely different language. How could anyone who has read the overwhelming vision of Isaiah in chapter 6 come with words such as the above contains without choking? It is blasphemous. To make religion and liturgy relevant and appealing to a younger generation is to destroy it and to substitute a confused, tedious, and idolatrous innovation in the place of the true worship of Jehovah of Hosts.

God will tell us how He must be served and worshipped. We had better listen to Him. If we do not, the results are catastrophic. The true worship of God centers in the preaching of the Word of the gospel. It is in this preaching that God speaks to His people and

brings them, through the wonder and power of the preached Word, the knowledge of Himself, Whom to know is eternal life.

BRIEF ITEMS OF INTEREST

The Church of England has decided, according to the RES *Newsletter* to cease asking her clergy to pledge acceptance of the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion. While this creed dates back to the time of the Reformation in England, clergymen had often refused to subscribe to it claiming that the confession is badly outdated. The confession itself was retained as a creed of the Church. But it no longer has binding force upon the clergy. The decision must still be submitted to Parliament to make the change law.

* * * *

Somehow James Pike manages to stay in the news. He first attained some sort of national recognition by helping to author the "Blake-Pike Plan" of church union which developed into the present COCU talks. Later he was charged by his own Church with heresy. Although reprimanded, he remained in the Church. In 1966 he resigned his see in the Episcopal Church and became a fellow in the Center for the Study of

Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara, California. His boldest grab for headlines was made when he claimed to speak to his son who had committed suicide. This was done through the agency of a medium. A short time ago he married for the third time. Now he has announced, in a lengthy article in *Look* magazine, that he is leaving the instituted church altogether. This is probably the wisest thing he has done in his life with the Church.

* * * *

The National Council of Churches (NCC) is becoming more ecumenical all the time. The latest efforts towards ecumenicity were made in the direction of including the Roman Catholic Church in this organization. A committee is at present studying the possibility after preliminary meetings between leaders of the NCC and the Romish Church. It is being suggested that perhaps the time has come for the NCC to be abandoned altogether to be superceded by a new organization which would include Roman Catholics. This would not be a great loss. In spite of claims to the contrary, the NCC has never even come close to representing the Church of Jesus Christ.

Question Box

ABOUT ADAM AND EVE

Questions

From a Holland, Michigan reader, brother Jack Arens, I received some questions which, according to my correspondent, are related to the teachings of Prof. D. R. Wilson concerning creation and evolution. Mr. Arens writes: "Kindly answer this question in the *Standard Bearer*. In Gen. 2: 7 we find the word 'dust' and in Gen. 2: 21 we find the words 'deep sleep.' What do these words mean in the original? . . . Related questions could be added: Does 'dust' mean 'animal body,' and does 'deep sleep' mean a vision?"

Reply

The basic questions here can be answered very simply and briefly. The two words in question mean in the original just exactly what they are said to mean in the English translation. The term rendered by "dust" in our English Bibles, especially as it occurs in the phrase "dust of the ground," means "dust, dry earth, clay, loam." In this sense the term occurs rather frequently in the Old Testament. The term "deep sleep" does not occur very often in the Old Testament (Gen. 2: 21; Gen. 15: 12; I Sam. 26: 12; Job 4: 13; Job 33: 15; Prov. 19: 15; Isa. 29: 10), and in every case it is rendered quite correctly by "deep sleep."

As to the related questions, the answer in both cases

is negative. As to the word "dust," the absurdity of this suggestion can be very clearly illustrated by a comparison of Genesis 2: 7 and Genesis 3: 19. In the latter passage we read: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." What kind of absurdity is the result in this text if we make it read: "for animal body thou art, and unto animal body shalt thou return?" There is no great difficulty of interpretation involved in Genesis 2: 7 if only the interpreter is willing to let the Scriptures speak and if he is not shackled by evolutionistic preconceptions and prejudices. The text plainly teaches that God formed Adam (not only his body, but his entire nature) from the substance of the earth, the dust of the ground. And so we read in I Cor. 15: 47, "The first man is of the earth, earthy."

How the idea of "vision" can be substituted for "deep sleep" is indeed a conundrum to me. In the first place, the very words have nothing in common in the Hebrew; and, surely, if the Scriptures had intended to convey the idea that Adam had some kind of vision in connection with the event of the creation of the woman, it would have been very simple to express this. There are words for "vision" which are used very often in the Old Testament; in fact, some of them are used in

the books of Moses. In the second place, the idea of "deep sleep" and the idea of "vision" have nothing in common. In a vision one is active and conscious, though in a state of spiritual ecstasy. One who has a vision actually sees something. The idea of "deep sleep" conveys the impression of passivity and sub-consciousness. And in Genesis 2: 21 the meaning is precisely that Adam was neither witness of nor participant in the wonder of the creation of the woman; he was not because he could not be. Adam was a creature; God is the Creator. Between the two there is an infinite difference. The work of creation is peculiarly the work of God the Creator. The creature can neither have a part in it nor comprehend it. It is altogether "other." Hence, Adam was indeed in a "deep sleep," and he did not see any vision.

In conclusion, let me make a couple observations. The first is that I have yet to see any *Scriptural and exegetical grounds* for understanding the record of Genesis 1-3 in any other way than literally. All the so-called "interpretations" which seek to make room

for evolutionistic ideas and for millions of years are guilty of *imposing* views upon Scripture, and for this reason they cannot stand the test of Scripture itself and the test of simple exegesis. The second is that it always strikes me that these so-called interpretations of Genesis, which in many cases are supposed to be very learned and scholarly, are absurdly contrary to the truth of the perspicuity of the Bible. Fact is that if these far-fetched "interpretations" are correct, then we have a Bible which is not clear and understandable at all, but far less perspicuous than many writings of mere men. If it were not so deadly serious, it would almost be amusing how men can "interpret" the Bible in a manner in which they would treat no piece of ordinary human literature. And this is scholarly, not to speak of honest? People of God should be righteously indignant about this tampering with God's Word, and they should have a holy anger toward those who are guilty of such tampering. There has been, and there still is today, far too much patience exercised toward these heretics.

The Strength of Youth

Christ Living In Me

Rev. J. Kortering

Every now and then I hear things about you young people that are not so good.

No, I'm not a detective. I do not tape electronic sensors to your telephones. I don't snoop in your lockers at school. I've never hidden in the back seat of your car while you are on dates.

Neither, do I hire others to do my detective work. I haven't bargained with your parents in order to get them to tell me all the bad things they know about you. I haven't elicited from your teachers any gossip they may have heard about you. I didn't stoop so low as to dicker with your "kid brother" to have him sneak in the back seat either.

Rather, I know these things because *you* have told me.

The old adage holds true, "Actions speak louder than words." You tell me a great deal about yourselves by the way you act. I have only to sit on the sidelines, listen to you speak, observe your dress, take note of your interests, and conclude that some things aren't so good.

You tell me this when I preach. When a point is made directly for young people, I notice that you pay particular attention. This is good, and by this reaction it is obvious that you realize that you need to be told certain things, you want to be told these things, because things aren't always what they should be.

Most importantly, you tell me this when you come and talk to me. You have problems of the greatest magnitude. Sometimes you are shaken to the very foundation of your faith, you question whether you are really a child of God or not. Then you wonder how important it is that you continue to be a member of a church that emphasizes doctrinal purity and virtuous living. You cast a glance toward other churches and observe correctly, that there are children of God in other churches, and then wonder why you can't consider leaving the Protestant Reformed Churches for an eligible husband or wife. When you are confronted with the "wisdom" of the world while you are at college, you are impressed with the scholarly and scientific approach to complex problems and are persuaded that there is more than one way to consider the teachings of the Word of God. You observe the terrible situation in our country and in the world at large. This makes you bitter at times; sometimes in your rashness you would lay all the blame upon your forefathers, and if you kick up enough dust you seek amnesty in the "generation gap." In your excitement to join the "in" crowd you clash head-on with your parents' standards of right and wrong. This makes you very bitter at times, sometimes unreasonably so. In your own thinking you even imagine that if only you could have the entire say of your whole life, you would

be the happiest kid alive.

Yet, by talking with you I know that there is much more to you than appears on the surface.

Deep inside of you there beats a heart that loves the Lord. If I ask you whether you appreciate your parents and all they have done for you, your answer is unequivocally, yes! When you are in the armed services, you tell me that you never realized how much church and home and school really meant to you. If you attend services elsewhere, you confide to me that you notice a difference, quite a difference, in fact, so much so that when you are honest, you realize that the Word of God means a great deal to you. You may grumble when you have to work hard in catechism, yet I know that you want to learn the truth and desire to have a good foundation in the Word of God.

It is not easy, however, to let this depth of faith dominate your life. In your exuberance, you realize only too often that your sinful flesh is still so powerful a force in your lives. You see sin in others, including your parents, and you quickly brand all religion as "hypocrisy." You look a little deeper in your own heart and you see that it is not always pure either. "Forbidden fruit" sometimes appears very luscious to you, if only you can convince yourselves that it is justifiable to feast for a little while. You are titillated by the barrage of sexual filth; sometimes you secretly savor its taste. You grow impatient with adult "hang-ups" and argue that you can serve God just as well whether your hairline is at your ears or down to your neck. Why the fuss over the length of skirts, it happens to be style, they go up and they come down, so what?

Down in your heart however, your honesty pricks your balloon of pride. You know that you are the happiest before God when you have a clean conscience. Your greatest burden comes after you have done wrong. It is not first of all that you have hurt your parents, or have acted improperly before someone else, deep in your heart your conscience accuses you before God. This makes you the most restless. If only you could know that you are forgiven for past sins, if only you could find strength not to yield to temptation, that would be the greatest blessing. Beneath the dusty surface, so often stirred up by the sins of youth, you long for guidance, you need a strong hand to lead you through the times of difficulty, you realize that you must be shown the way.

Herein is the glorious truth of the presence of our living Lord.

The Word of God makes this plain for us. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Because He is the life in Himself, He also said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." By means of the truth, Christ is the way that leads us to the life. He is able to do this for He said, "I have the keys of hell and death." The use of these keys in us brings forth the promise, "If Christ be

in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

To all of this the child of God responds in the words of the apostle Paul, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20.

It is your privilege to make this confession as covenant youth.

I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me!

By the resurrection of Christ from the dead, you are assured of forgiveness of your sins. For this you long, don't you. When the pangs of guilt weigh down upon your soul, and when you look to God from the depths into which you have fallen, you desire to be able to get on your knees and say, O Father, I have sinned, forgive me! Free me from this burden in order that I do not have to carry it around every day. It is your privilege to get down on your knees after you have had a terrible argument with your parents. Just at such a time when you feel so alone, so hurt inside, so shameful before God, you have the liberty to take that burden to God in prayer and for Christ's sake have it lifted. At night when you return home from the date and confess before God how tempted you were to sin, and sometimes how you have yielded to temptation, your fevered soul may rest in the certainty of divine forgiveness.

All this is rooted in the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

The death of Christ on the cross was not His death, it was our death. The sins He bore were not His own, they were ours. The hellish agony He suffered was not His hell, it was ours. And, now Christ is risen from the dead! As certainly as we may say, His death is our death, we may also say, His life is our life. If Christ had not conquered death and made perfect satisfaction for our sins, God could not have justly raised Him from the dead. The empty tomb is the certification of the pardon of our sins upon the basis of the perfect atonement of Christ in our behalf.

The certainty of the forgiveness of our sins becomes ours in the way of confession and repentance. Hence, you young people must spend much time in prayer seeking that forgiveness. Through prayer, the burden is lifted.

Not only do we desire to have the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, as covenant youth we desire to have the victory over the power of sin in our lives. We know that sin creates a terrible barrier between each of us, our parents, our fellow students, our neighbors, but especially between us and our God. We realize that it is not sufficient that we find forgiveness of sin and then turn around and say, I may sin all I want because I can nicely go to God in prayer and have forgiveness! Then the precious truth of the forgiveness of sin would

become excuse to continue in sin and justify sin. This thought itself is horrible in God's sight. We desire to be freed from the tyranny of sin. We cry out, O, if only we could resist the devil and see him flee from us. If only we could love our parents and not get into trouble with them, how pleasant life would be. If only we could live clean and holy lives, how much richer our lives would become. We confess that we feel the best when we have the strength to resist temptation, for then God means the most to us and is closest to us.

Here too, the power for a sanctified life is our living Christ. Paul correctly says, "I do not live, but Christ liveth in me." The source of spiritual virtue is not to be found in our own person, for all that is of ourselves is sinful and brings us to grief.

Christ liveth in me!

This we know because He conquered death! Having overcome death in all its horror, God raised Him to His own right hand and crowned Him with the Holy Spirit. By the working of the Spirit, Christ lives in us. He resurrects us from our spiritual death by regenerating our heart and calling us by the gospel. He renews our heart in such a way that we consciously realize that God is our Father and Christ is our Savior. We love His Word and earnestly seek to direct our lives according to it.

The means which Christ uses to "live in us" are the means of grace. In response to the preaching of the Word, and through the use of the sacraments, we say, "the life we now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God."

This presence of Christ living in us becomes for us

the source of spiritual identification. Sensuous jazz, long hair, short skirts, late dates, sit-ins, are not the marks of identification for covenant youth in whom Christ lives. The living Christian does not have to resort to the far-out, the exotic, the glamorous, in order to make his identification known, rather it is manifest as an inner beauty that radiates in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

What are the identification marks for covenant youth in whom Christ lives?

First, the praying youth wrestling with God in tears and supplication seeking forgiveness of sins.

Secondly, the attentive youth who drinks deeply of the pure milk of the Word and begins to digest some of its meat, in order that he may be strengthened by the living Christ and so by faith serve the purpose and will of God.

I hear some bad things about you, that is when you live according to the flesh.

Let's confess together, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me!"

We sing this so lustily in one of our favorite songs, "He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today, He walks with me and talks to me along life's narrow way. He lives, He lives, salvation to impart. You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart."

And God is glorified in the days of our youth.

(Upon request, this article is published as the substance of a speech delivered to the Youth Mass Meeting, held Easter Sunday, April 6, at Hudsonville Church.)

From Holy Writ

The Book of Hebrews

Rev. G. Lubbers

THE CONCLUSION CONCERNING CHRIST'S MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY BRIEFLY STATED.

Hebrews 8:6

The writer will now draw the inference from what he has written concerning the ministry of Christ in the true temple. He will state this briefly, yet in such a way that he prepares the way for a more deep and broad elucidation of the subject as this appears from the Holy Scriptures themselves.

"But now . . ." The adverbial particle "*nun*" (now) in the Greek language sometimes indicates time. If this were the meaning here the writer would wish to express that now in the New Testament dispensation we have a ministry which we did not yet have in the Old Testament times. This in itself is true enough; however, this is not the sense here. The term "now" is

logical, and states a conclusion. The sense is "since the case stands thus," namely, that Christ cannot offer gifts in the earthly temple, it must needs follow that we have a high priest who hath obtained a more excellent ministry!

There are two terms here which claim our attention. The first is that Christ's ministry is called "more excellent." What does this imply? It certainly means that in the comparison of the two ministries referred to both are considered "excellent." This is not a comparison of what is evil and what is good, but this is a comparison of two excellencies! Both of these ministries were wonderful. They both had a glory of the sanctuary of God. The one ministry has a greater glory than did the other. (See II Corinthians 3:1-10) That the comparison here expressed is a comparison of

excellencies ought to be clear from what we read in Hebrews 1:4 "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a *more excellent name* than they." The name here refers to the place which the Son has at God's right hand, far above all principality and power; He is head of the angels. (Colossians 2:10) And such a high priest, who is the Son of God, has a ministry which is far more excellent than the ministry of Aaron and the Old Testament priesthood. The term therefore expresses "an exceptional excellence in that which is surpassed." If the ministry therefore of Aaron was glorious, how much more glorious is this ministry. In the second place, we must notice the term "better." Christ is the mediator of a *better* covenant. Perhaps the observation of Westcott is most aptly stated when he says "Perhaps 'better' has regard to intrinsic superiority and 'more excellent' to a superiority which is manifested directly." Page 218, *The Epistle To Hebrews*. If this distinction holds, this means that the covenant of the New Testament is intrinsically better than the covenant of the Old Testament. And this latter the writer shows in the verses 7-13.

The very *nature* of the New Testament is better than the Old Testament!

The reason why the covenant is better in the New Testament is briefly stated by the writer: It is of such a nature (*eetis*) that it is established upon better promises. Yes, the promises in the Old Testament covenant were good, they are of an excellent nature. However, these are better promises, of a more exalted nature, bringing about complete and everlasting salvation. The covenant is as good as the promises. The promises in the Old Testament were connected with works of the ceremonial law, with washings, sacrifices of goats and bullocks. But these promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God the Father. (II Corinthians 1:20) Here the promises do not merely point to the coming salvation, but they are the bringing in of salvation itself.

And because the former covenant of Sinai did not bring in salvation itself, could not remove the guilt of sin, and renew the elect unto life eternal, therefore it was subject to criticism. God Himself "finds fault" with it. It perfects nothing. Wherefore the Hebrew Christians are not to return to that which is old and, even in the days of Jeremiah the prophet, was about to vanish away.

THE BETTER COVENANT FORETOLD BY JEHOVAH GOD. (Hebrews 8:7, 8a.)

Surely God Himself would not criticize His own work and covenant if it were blameless. If that covenant had brought about the perfection which the priesthood was to realize, surely then He would not have spoken of another covenant, another priesthood, and the mediator of a better covenant. But now God

Himself did exactly that by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah. Says the Lord through Jeremiah "Behold the days are coming, saith the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31)

Here we see the Lord speaking of a "second covenant" in contradistinction from the "first covenant." There is something very significant even in the phrase in Jeremiah "the days shall come." The truth of the matter is that these days are coming so very, very surely. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of this prophetic word shall pass away. This very word "saith Jehovah" is the guarantee. It is a faithful promise to Israel, and not merely a foretelling of the future concerning Israel. Faithful is he who has promised it!

There was good reason for the LORD to proclaim this word through Jeremiah to both the houses of Israel and Judah. Both were at the time of this prophecy carried away into captivity; Israel about the year 710 B.C. and Judah about 600 B.C. The curses of the law had come upon both as foretold by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. Says Moses "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God." (Deut. 28:1, 2)

That was one side of the covenant which God made with Israel when he brought them out of Egypt by the hand of Moses!

However, there is another side to this covenant which is called in Hebrews the "first covenant." It is that Israel would only receive these blessing should they be obedient. However, should they not be obedient, curses would come upon Israel. Thus we read in Deut. 28:15 F.F. "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day: that all these curses shall come upon them, and overtake thee: cursed shalt thou be in the city"

In the days of Jeremiah this latter had become the horrible reality for both Israel and Judah. Does this mean the end of God's promises made to the Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Indeed not. God has better promises than those given at Sinai. They are the immutable promises of God which cannot fail—better promises. They are the promises which are yea in Christ, and in him amen to the glory of God the Father. (II Cor. 1:20) The promises at Sinai came later by some 430 years! (Gal. 3:17) And this law which came later (Covenant at Sinai) could not make the promises of God to be annulled, or make them ineffective. When God therefore "finds fault" with the

covenant of Sinai, he does not go back on his Word; yea, rather He establishes it. He will fulfill His promises to Abraham and to His Seed.

And thus we are able to understand that glorious and sure Word of God by the prophet Jeremiah at a time when Jerusalem lies in ashes and rubble. A far brighter future is portrayed to Israel and Judah. Neither the one nor the other shall be carried from their land any more. God will set His tabernacle in their midst forever; they will again be brought back to their land. However, it will be the fulfilment of better promises. They shall not merely return to the earthly land of Canaan, but they shall be brought to the heavenly country which the patriarchs so ardently sought, and for which they are willing to be strangers in the land, dwelling in tents as pilgrims and strangers. Wherefore Jeremiah must write in a book the words which the LORD spake to him. He must write "... For lo the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it." (Jeremiah 30:3) And, again, in Jeremiah 30:17, 18 we read "... For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD: because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after. Thus saith the LORD: behold I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof." Indeed the prophet continues in verse 19 "And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God"

Truly, here we have the better promises!

And therefore we have the assurance of a better covenant to be enacted.

The final manifestation of this we shall see in a heaven and in a new earth where righteousness shall dwell.

Such a high priest we have and a ministry which is more excellent than all the ministering priests of the Old Testament of Sinai.

UPON BOTH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND UPON THE HOUSE OF JUDAH (Hebrews 8:8b-9)

From the viewpoint of the prophecy of Jeremiah the fact that both "Israel" and "Judah" are mentioned is of utmost importance. Israel is the ten tribes, who are more often called Ephraim or Samaria. And Judah refers to the two tribes, also called Jerusalem. Both of these tribes had a resting-place for God's Ark of the covenant. For more than 400 years the ark of the testimony was in Shiloh, a city of Ephraim. It was here that Joshua, an Ephraimite, pitched the tent of the Lord. And, from his day till Samuel, the priesthood of Aaron, the covenant of Sinai was represented at Shiloh in Ephraim. However, the sons of Eli were evil, and God caused the glory to depart from Shiloh never to return. The Ark of the Covenant was taken from Shiloh and was brought after many vicissitudes by David to Jerusalem. Here the Ark is once more under the priesthood of Aaron, only this time not under Eli's house Abiathar, but under Zadok. (I Kings 2:35)

But at the time of Jeremiah's prophecy the Ark of the Covenant was gone. Fact is that the glory was so departed, that the very Ark of God had been destroyed by the Babylonian hordes. However, to both of these there is comfort, the word of God's unchangeable and certain promise which cannot fail. God will restore both Israel and Judah and bring them to Zion!

Contending for the Faith

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

*THE THIRD PERIOD — 730-1517 A.D.
DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH OF ROME
COUNCIL OF TRENT (continued)*

Rev. H. Veldman

At the end of our preceding article, we quoted the fifth canon or chapter of the Council of Trent of its fifth session, held June 17, 1546, setting forth its decrees concerning original sin. In this fifth canon the Council asserts that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted, and everything is removed which has the true and proper nature of sin. It is admitted that

concupiscence remains in the baptized, against which believers are to contend, but it is declared that this concupiscence, although sometimes (as is admitted) called sin by the Apostle, is not truly and properly sin in the regenerated.

This is all that the Council teaches under the caption of original sin. It also declared that it does not intend its decisions to apply to the Virgin Mary. Whether she

was the subject of original sin, as the Dominicans, after Thomas Aquinas, maintained, or whether she was immaculately conceived, as zealously asserted by the Franciscans after Duns Scotus, the Council leaves undecided.

However, in the sixth session when treating of justification (i.e., regeneration and sanctification), the Council decides several points, which go to determine the view its members took of the nature of original sin. Quoting Hodge, Vol. II, 176-177, we read:

In the canons adopted in that session, it is among other things, declared: (1.) That men cannot without divine grace through Jesus Christ, by their own works, i.e., works performed in their own strength, be justified before God. (2.) That grace is not given simply to render good works more easy. (3.) That men cannot believe, hope, love, or repent so as to secure regenerating grace without the preventing grace of God. (4.) Men can cooperate with this preventing grace, can assent to, or reject it. (when Rome speaks here of "preventing grace," it means the grace of God that precedes, goes before—H.V.) (5.) Men have not lost their ability to good or evil by the fall. (6.) All works done before regeneration are not sinful.

From all this it appears that while the Council of Trent rejected the Pelagian doctrine of man's plenary ability since the fall, and the Semi-Pelagian doctrine that men can begin the work of reformation and conversion; it no less clearly condemns the Augustinian doctrine of the entire inability of man to do anything spiritually good, whereby he may prepare or dispose himself for conversion, or merit the regenerating grace of God.

Hodge asks the question, "What was the true doctrine of the Church of Rome as to original sin?" and he answers that this remained in doubt as much after the decisions of this Council as it had been before. Each party interpreted its canons according to their own views. The Synod had decided that all men are born infected with original sin; but whether that sin consisted simply in the guilt of Adam's first sin, or in the want of original righteousness, or in concupiscence, is left undecided.

Some of the older Protestants generally regarded the canons of the Council of Trent as designed to obscure the subject, and held that the real Doctrine of the Church involved the denial of any original sin in the sense of sin, subjective or inherent. If it be true that nothing is of the nature of sin, except voluntary action, or what proceeds from it, how can there then be any inherent or innate sin? As infants are not "knowing and willing" in the sense of moral agents, they cannot have sin. Secondly, another reason urged in favor of the position that the Church of Rome denied original sin, is drawn from what that Church teaches on original righteousness. If original righteousness be a supernatural gift, not belonging to man's original creation, then its loss leaves him in the state in

which he came from the hands of his Maker.

On the other hand, however, it may be urged that the Church does maintain the doctrine of original sin. Concerning this Hodge has the following, Vol. II, 179-180:

(1.) That the Council of Trent expressly declares against the Pelagian doctrine, that Adam's sin injured only himself, and asserts that our whole nature, soul, and body, was thereby changed for the worse. (2.) They assert that we derived from Adam not merely a mortal nature, but sin which is the death of the soul. (3.) That new-born infants need baptism for the remission of sin, and that what is removed in the baptism of infants. (4.) The Roman Catechism teaches that "we are born in sin," that we are oppressed with corruption of nature, and that the virus of sin penetrates to the very bones. This last passage does not refer expressly to original sin, but to the state of men generally as sinners. Nevertheless, it indicates the view taken by the Roman Church as to the present condition of human nature. (5.) Bellarmine is often quoted to prove that Romanists make original sin merely the loss of original righteousness.

From all this it appears that although the doctrine of the Roman Church is neither logical nor self-consistent, it is nevertheless true that that Church does teach the doctrine of original sin, in the sense of a sinful corruption of nature, or of innate, hereditary sinfulness. It is also to be observed that all parties in the Roman Church, before and after the Council of Trent, however much they differed in other points, united in teaching the imputation of Adam's sin; i.e., that for that sin the sentence of condemnation passed upon all men.

PROTESTANT DOCTRINE OF SIN

What is sin? Is it merely a lack, a defect? Is sin merely the loss of original righteousness, which would imply that Adam, when he sinned, simply lost this extra gift of his original righteousness and therefore was left in the state in which he came from the hands of his Maker? Is darkness simply the absence of light; is a dead man merely one who is not alive? Does the speaking of the lie simply imply that one does not speak the truth? What is the Protestant conception of sin? What do the Reformed and Protestant symbols or confessions say of it?

Concerning this Hodge says the following, Vol. II, 180-181:

The Protestant Churches at the time of the Reformation did not attempt to determine the nature of sin philosophically. They regarded it neither as a necessary limitation; nor as a negation of being; nor as the indispensable condition of virtue; nor as having its seat in man's sensuous nature; nor as consisting in selfishness alone; nor as being, like pain, a mere state of consciousness, and not an evil in the sight of God. Founding their doctrine on their moral and religious consciousness and upon the Word of God, they declared sin to be the transgression of, or want of

conformity to the divine law. In this definition all classes of theologians, Lutheran and Reformed, agree.

It is included in these definitions, (1.) That sin is a specific evil, differing from all other forms of evil. (2.) That sin stands related to law. The two are correlative, so that where there is not law, there is no sin. (3.) That the law to which sin is thus related, is not merely the law of reason, or of conscience, or of expediency, but the law of God. (4.) That sin consists essentially in the want of conformity on the part of a rational creature, to the nature or law of God. (5.) That it includes guilt and moral pollution.

Sin is a specific evil. We know this from our own consciousness. If born blind, we cannot know light. If born deaf, we can have no idea of what hearing is. Every man by virtue of his being a moral creature, and because he is a sinner, has in his own consciousness the knowledge of sin. He knows when he is not what he ought to be, when he does what he ought not to do, or neglects to do what ought to be done. And, failing in these things, he is chargeable with sin. He knows that sin is not merely a limitation of his nature, not merely a subjective state of his own mind; he knows that it is not only something which is unwise, or derogatory to his own dignity, or simply inexpedient because it is hurtful to his own interests or injurious to the welfare of others. He knows that sin has a specific character of its own, and that it includes both guilt and pollution.

A second element in our consciousness of sin is that it is related to law. This lies in the nature of the case. The word, ought, is a very prominent word in our lives. This word necessarily implies the idea of law. The word "ought" would otherwise have no meaning. To say we ought, is to say that we are bound; that we are under authority of some kind. Sometimes the word "law" is used in the sense of a controlling power, as when the Apostle declares that he has a law in his members warring against the law of his mind. But very

often the word "law" is used in the Scriptures as referring to that which binds, a command of one in authority. It is in the latter sense that the word is used, when we say that sin stands in relation to law.

Thirdly, the law here is the law of God. There are those who claim that this law, to which we are subject, is the law of our own reason or of the higher powers of the soul. Man, then, is responsible to himself. He is bound to subject his life to his reason and conscience. This, however is obviously nonsense. In that case, man would be a law unto himself. This surely seems to be characteristic of our present lawless age. If this were true, then there would be no guilt. Then man would never be sinning against anyone outside of himself. Then there would be no guilt, no punishment, simply because there would be none to visit such punishment upon the sinner. The Scriptures, however, are very clear in this matter. The law, to which man is subject, is the law of God. God is the living God, and He alone. He is the Personal God, and this means that He is eternally and perfectly conscious of Himself. God knows Himself, is consciously the living God, and maintains Himself as that alone living God. This alone determines and prescribes man's moral and ethical conduct. He must subject himself to that law of the Lord, must serve and love the Lord with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. How vividly the apostle sets forth this truth in his epistle to the Romans! Speaking there of the heathen world and of men whom God had given over to a reprobate mind, he asserts that they not only knew God, but also His righteous judgments, that they who commit sin were worthy of death; this surely means that they were rightfully subject to the authority, and inevitably exposed to the wrath and indignation of the living God. Sin is related to law, and this law is surely the law of the alone living God.

In His Fear

WISDOM THAT EXCELS

Rev. John A. Heys

Few of our readers there are who would care to challenge the statement that the words of Daniel 12:4 are being fulfilled before our eyes today.

In this verse we read, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

With our modern means of transportation there are many that "run to and fro" from our country to Europe and back, to say nothing of many who circle the globe more often in a year than our forefathers in a lifetime left the State in which they resided. Many there are who are reaching beyond this earth to the

moon. We are a people on the move!

But we wish to concentrate at this time particularly on the last part of this verse: knowledge shall be increased! How could we ever doubt that we live in such a day and age?

Man explores the depth of the sea; and he reaches far into outer space. To us he communicates what he has found; and with our present-day methods of communication, we receive that knowledge in a matter of moments. By television and radio, but also by the printed page, knowledge is spread from one corner of

this globe to the other. Books upon books are written on almost every subject conceivable, and knowledge is dispensed to all who will take the time to read or to listen. Educational institutions are crowded with students; and colleges and universities have long waiting lists of applicants for entrance as students who seek knowledge. New buildings must be erected for these as well as for the other schools of preparatory education. Never before have so many children and so many young people received such a concentration of instruction concerning so many subjects.

In the field of medicine new knowledge of the human body and its functions have led to astounding bits of surgery, wherein the organs of the dead are successfully transplanted into the living to take over the vital functions of that new host. Just yesterday the organs of one dead man were transplanted into the bodies of six ailing persons. Not many years ago this was impossible because the knowledge was lacking as well as the skill. Today man has the know-how. And our children, two generations removed from us, share this knowledge with us. They do not need to wait until they reach our age before they know of these developments and achievements and the way that man performs them.

But knowledge is one thing. Wisdom is quite another.

The increase in knowledge does not insure an increase in wisdom. And though men may run to and fro and thus obtain knowledge—yea even fly around the moon to know by a first-hand look what the other side of the moon is like—this does not mean that he has increased one whit in wisdom.

In the Church you will find an increase in wisdom. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning or principle of all wisdom. God is not dead. And His Spirit is very much alive. And we have the promise of this *living* God that His Spirit will lead us into all the truth. There has, therefore, been a steady development of the truth. The Church has steadily become wiser in the things of our salvation.

Using the heretic to prod us on God has brought the Church back time and again to the Scriptures to dig deeper and yet more deeply into the mysteries of our salvation, and has given both knowledge and wisdom of the things of His kingdom. This also is so very necessary. As we approach the days of the Antichrist, the Church must see more clearly Christ and His kingdom. As the lie develops, there must be a parallel development of the truth. And God has not denied the Church this but instead promised this Spirit Who would lead into ALL the truth.

To be sure, there is today a concerted flight from that truth and knowledge. All across the world the cry rises for mergers at the expense of the rich knowledge into which God has led His Church. In order to be able to ride their hobby horse of a social gospel, and not

being interested in preaching SIN against God, and a gospel that speaks of justification by the blood of the cross, these will gladly cut the sharp corners of the truth to attain to bigness which furthers and serves their social programs and projects. Social unrest and disorders they see as being due to poverty and lack of opportunity, but not to man's total depravity and spiritual corruption inherited from Adam. And so they need not the cross and the Spirit of Christ but money, and understanding, and organizations of men of all races and unbeliefs, and freedom marches and the like. Indeed there is a development of the lie as well as of the truth. And there is a cry for folly as well as for wisdom, a yearning for ignorance as well as for knowledge.

Nor is any of this something new. It may never before have reached to the height that it cherishes today, but it was always there since man turned from the living God to receive the "sweet" counsel of Satan and to learn to know something from him rather than to retain the knowledge that man received from God.

The psalmist in Psalm 119:99 could say, and we can say it today, "I have more understanding than my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation." Speaking of this wisdom that excels, the psalmist—and he is not David, nor Solomon—is not speaking of that development of the truth of which we wrote a few moments ago. He does not mean that in the development of the truth he is wiser than his teachers who lived in a former age. He received a richer understanding by meditating in God's testimonies. And the plain implication is that his teachers did not. That is why he has more understanding than they. And it is not Solomon with the greater natural wisdom that God gave him above all men who speaks here. It is a humble child of God who has more understanding, because all his natural knowledge is controlled by and explained by the knowledge which he received by meditating in God's testimonies.

This verse in Psalm 119 is very important and speaks volumes to us as well. It is found in a very interesting trilogy of verses. In verse 98 the psalmist speaks of being wiser than his enemies. The text we already quoted, verse 99, points out that he has more understanding than his teachers. And the last of these three verses, verse 100, contains the observation that he understands more than the ancients, the old men of a generation or two before his birth. Note he says: wiser, more understanding and understand more. But do not overlook: enemies, teachers and ancients. And observe that it is being taught God's commandments, meditating in God's testimonies, and keeping God's precepts that makes all this difference and results in wisdom that excels.

We see then that wisdom, understanding more, and having more understanding all express the same general idea. So do being instructed in God's law, meditating

in His precepts and keeping His commandments. But now note then that the enemies, teachers and ancients also all fall into one category. These teachers are his spiritual enemies. That follows from the fact that they do not meditate in God's testimonies. Such activity would keep them from being his enemies. Avoiding these, despising them, they must become the enemies of God's people. And likewise these ancients, then, were teachers who were enemies of the truth.

How powerfully then does this passage of God's Word speak to us with a view to our children's instruction and the teachers they ought to have! By the time that this series of articles on "Wisdom that Excels" is brought to its conclusion, and perhaps in some localities even before it is ended, you will be faced with the decision of where to enroll your children for the school year that follows this present one. Are they going to be sent to teachers who do not meditate in God's testimonies? Is their instruction going to be based on the ancients, the departed philosophers of the world who rejected God's Word and His precepts. Are they going to sit at the feet of Jesus or of Plato and Aristotle? Are the enemies of the cross of Christ and of the truth of God's testimonies going to be given the opportunity to "convert" your children to that which is not in His fear?

Let it be understood clearly that the psalmist is not talking about men who had less understanding and wisdom simply because they lived—or shall we say? were born—too soon to have the advantage of the latest discoveries of this later age. Not at all! He is speaking of men whose source of wisdom and understanding differs from his. And he is speaking of those who are his enemies, even though they had the opportunity to give instruction to him. His eyes were opened, perhaps, after sitting at their feet.

But what a warning to covenant parents!

Those who close the Scriptures and turn to the scientists of old and of today for understanding the heavens, the earth and that which they contain are *enemies of you and of your children!* The psalmist does not hesitate to call them such. Have we less understanding of the matter than he had, because we will not meditate in God's testimonies? God's testimonies speak of Him as He truly is. The unbeliever draws up his own idea of how God should be and how

he wants Him to be. He then looks at His creation and teaches it as he wants it to come into existence, explains the events of men upon this earth as it serves his flesh, and teaches a new morality that rules God and His law out and satisfies the flesh. But God's testimonies show us this God as He is and explain His creation as He makes it known to us.

The only teachers we can trust, the only ancients we can read with edification and to whom we can turn for instruction are those who know this living God from His testimonies. Only such can teach us and our children our calling before God and to understand our position in this world as God's royal priesthood. Beware of all others. And if, of necessity, you must send your children to such enemy-teachers, such testimony-despisers, you better keep close check on what your children are taught and open to them the Scriptures.

The polished way, the sweet smile, the friendly approach of the learned of the world does not make them friends of God's people. They only underscore the fact that these are enemies of you and of your children. For that smile, that friendly handshake, that pleasant demeanor is not because he is on your side, but because he wants to get you and your children on his side.

We better learn well and learn fast—and if God's testimonies are our meditation, we will—that any man who will not bow before God's Word is our ENEMY! One of the first principles in obtaining a victory in any war is to be able to recognize the enemy. All your armour means nothing, if you are not able to distinguish him from your fellow soldiers. Let us also learn well and learn fast that this is exactly one of our enemy's chief weapons to gain the victory over us. He wants us to think that he is on our side and means no harm. But look and see whether he has been taught God's commandments and loves them. Observe whether he meditates in God's testimonies. Make sure that he keeps God's precepts. If he does not, let him not be the teacher of your children. They, your reborn children, already have a wisdom that excels the "wisdom" of these spiritual fools. And these spiritual fools can only seek to rob your children of their superior wisdom.

Pages from the Past

Believers and their Seed

CHAPTER V — The Meaning of the Covenant

Rev. Herman Hoeksema

In order to arrive at a correct conception of believers and their seed it is highly necessary, first of

all, that we give our attention to the meaning and significance of God's covenant. It is exactly in regard

to this doctrine of the covenant that we as Reformed people differ from Anabaptists and Baptists of every shade.

The basic difference must not be sought in the distinction between immersion and sprinkling: for on this point there is no essential difference. Without any hesitation we concede that the full sign of baptism is that of a bath into which we descend and are immersed and out of which we emerge, as a sign of our being buried with Christ and of our arising with Him unto a new life. Only we would also maintain that the essence of baptism may not be sought in the external washing with water, and that therefore he whose feet are washed or he whose forehead is sprinkled is wholly clean.

Neither is our difference with Baptists to be settled by citing a few isolated texts, as is so frequently and facilely done by defenders of the Baptist view. They imagine, then, that the whole argument is really settled when they have pointed to that which the Lord commanded His disciples shortly before His ascension, namely, that they must preach the gospel to all creatures, adding to this, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." They emphasize in this connection that the Lord here places faith before baptism, and not vice versa, and that therefore only those who first confess their faith may receive the sign of baptism. But this matter is not so superficial as that, and the question is not to be settled in such a simplistic manner. God's Word is not like a dictionary, from which one can quote according to the mere sound of the words. After all, even apart from the fact that little children as well as adults can possess a true faith, and even apart from the opposite fact that adult confessors can very well be devoid of a true faith just as well as little children, it nevertheless remains true that the above-quoted words of the Lord Jesus, according to the context, can only refer to the bearing of the gospel into the world of heathendom. The Lord is sending His disciples into the world with the proclamation of the gospel, with the testimony of His death and resurrection, with the promise of forgiveness and life through His blood. And it lies in the very nature of the case that then the rule must always be: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Also those of Reformed persuasion abide by this rule when they go to the heathen with the testimony of Jesus Christ.

But all this says nothing at all with regard to the propriety of infant baptism. No, the difference lies squarely in the area of the doctrine of the covenant. Baptists simply have no eye for this truth, especially not for the truth of the historico-organic development of God's covenant on earth in the line of generations. And thus they close their eyes to one of main lines of Holy Writ. To this doctrine, therefore, we shall have to give our attention. We shall have to ask wherein the

essence of God's covenant is to be sought, how God realizes that covenant in history, and why and in what sense the seed of believers is comprehended in that covenant.

First of all, then, we would proceed from the idea that God is a Covenant God. He is that in Himself, even apart from any relation to His creature. From eternity to eternity the infinite God lives a divinely perfect covenant life in Himself. This follows from God's triune subsistence. God is one in Being. He is one with regard to all that belongs to the divine nature and with regard to His essential attributes. There is one divine mind and one divine will. There is one divine life and one divine heart. And in all His attributes of omnipotence and wisdom, of eternity and omnipresence, of immutability and independence, of goodness and grace and love, God the Lord is perfectly one. Moreover, God is good, the Perfect One in Himself and the Fountain of all good. For He is a light, and in Him is no darkness at all. He is the Holy One, Who dwells in an inapproachable light and before Whose face the seraphim must cover their faces. There is in God, therefore, one divinely perfect, eternal, and infinite light-life of love.

But God is also three in persons. For there are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit. There are in the one divine Essence three I's, three subjects of that entire divine life. One divine Being, but three Who bear that Being. One divine life, but three Who live that life. One divine mind, but three Who think in that divine mind. One divine will, but three Who will in that divine will. One divine love, but three Who love with that divine love. Thus the Scriptures reveal God to us. To this must be added that these Three Persons, although essentially perfectly one and equal, are nevertheless distinct according to their personal attributes. They all bear the divine Being, but not all in the same manner. For the Father is Father, out of Whom are all things. Of Him are also all things within the divine Being eternally. From eternity to eternity He generates the Son and eternally gives Him to have life in Himself. And from eternity to eternity He breathes forth the Spirit Who eternally testifies of Him. Hence, the Father lives and thinks and wills and loves in that full, eternally perfect divine love-life as *Father*. The Son is Son in all of His divine living and loving. He is eternally generated of the Father and is therefore the express image of the Father's being. In an infinitely perfect manner He reflects the image of the Father. He thinks and wills and loves and lives eternally as *Son* in the infinite Being of God. And He also breathes forth the Spirit, Who also eternally testifies of Him. The Holy Spirit is *Spirit*, that is, He is breathed forth of the Father and the Son. He proceeds from both, and then in such a manner that the Father and the Son meet one another in the Spirit. In the Holy Spirit the Father faces the Son, and the Son faces

the Father. For the Word is with God, and the Son is in the bosom of the Father. The Spirit searches the deep things of God and lives and thinks and wills and loves as Spirit. He is the Spirit of truth; and He testifies, and He is the connecting-link in the divine love-life.

Thus, then, God is the eternally living One in Himself. There is the most perfect unity of Being in God, and nevertheless personal distinction: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, willing and thinking, living and loving in the one, eternally-good and perfect divine Being, thinking and willing and loving always the same, and knowing one another perfectly, and yet so, that each of the three Persons lives that divine life according to His personal attributes. It is herein that the essence of the covenant is to be found. That life of God is a covenant life, a life of the most intimate communion of love and friendship, resting in the unity of God's Being and living through the personal distinction. The Lord God is a covenant God.

Now it has pleased God, according to His sovereign good pleasure, according to the counsel of His will, to reveal this covenant life outside of Himself and to make the creature a partaker of that divine covenant life, and that too, in the highest possible sense of the word. For He is pleased to dwell with His people and to spread His tabernacle over them. He wills to walk with them and to cause them to walk with Him. He desires to speak with them as a friend with his friends, and to cause them likewise to speak with Him. He is pleased to make them partakers of His life and to make them walk in His light. He wills to be known by them, even as He knows them. He desires that they shall see Him face to face. He is pleased to have them dwell with Him under one roof, to eat and drink with them, to have most intimate fellowship with them, to reveal to them His secrets. Beautifully this is expressed in the versification of Psalm 25: 14:

Yea, the secret of Jehovah
Is with those who fear His Name;
With His friends in tender mercy
He His covenant will maintain.

(Note. This version of our *Psalter* is not a completely accurate English equivalent of the Dutch versification which the author always loved to quote in this connection; for those who can appreciate it, we also cite that Holland rendering.)

Gods verborgen omgang vinden
Zielen, daar Zijn vrees in woont;
't Heilgeheim wordt aan Zijn vrinden,
Naar Zijn vreeverbond, getoond.

Those friends of God are, according to the counsel of His will, at the same time His servants in that friendship. For God is eternally God, and there is none beside Him. No one ever becomes equal to God, though His creature may bear His image and may be like Him, yea, may know Him even as he is known and

may live with Him in covenant friendship. When God, therefore, establishes His covenant with creatures whom He in His sovereign grace has chosen and prepared thereunto, then in that covenant He is the Friend-Sovereign while the creature is His friend-servant according to the ordinance of that covenant. The covenant is God's, and God's alone. He establishes it. He forms the creature who will share in that covenant. He imparts His life, and He writes His law in their hearts and sheds abroad His love in those hearts. He eternally blesses them in that covenant with the full, rich life of His fellowship. And the creature thus formed by Him is the work of His hands, the revelation of His grace. That creature serves Him in love and consecrates Himself as friend-servant of the Lord God with his whole existence and with all things. Thus that friend of God also becomes prophet, priest, and king under God. He is prophet in order to love God with all his mind, to know Him and to glorify His great name. He is priest in order to love the Lord with all His heart and from the sanctuary of His heart to offer up himself and all things in consecration to Him. He is king, in order that with all his strength he may cleave to the Lord his God, ask after His ordinances, and rule over all creatures in His name. To this must be added that according to that same counsel of His good pleasure, the Lord realizes this covenant along the antithetical line of election and reprobation, of grace and sin, of light and darkness, unto the higher revelation of His glory and the greater glory of His covenant friends. For God the Lord not only forms the light, but He also creates the darkness; He not only has mercy upon whom He will, but He also hardens whom He will. He has made all things for His own name's sake. For this reason His covenant friends must for a time be in the midst of a world that knows them not, that hates them because it is of the darkness while they, through God's grace, are of His party. For this reason, too, there is in this world a struggle for the sake of God's covenant: a struggle, however, which takes place according to the counsel of His will and in which everything, both in heaven and on earth, must serve to bring the people of His choice to everlasting victory.

For this reason, moreover, God's covenant is not a mere way unto salvation. It is eternal! And it shall then only be fully revealed when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come again and when God shall forever spread His tabernacle over all and when they shall dwell with Him in everlasting perfection, knowing Him and seeing Him face to face. For now are we the children of God; but it is not yet revealed what we shall be; but when it shall be revealed, then shall we be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is. And therefore God's people in the midst of the world must never grow weary. For it is given them of grace in behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. And the victory is certain!

BOOK REVIEW

SCRIPTURE UNION BIBLE STUDY BOOKS, by various authors (Eerdmans, 1968, each paperback volume approximately 100 pages, \$1.25). Included in this review are volumes on: *Proverbs to Isaiah 39, I Kings to II Chronicles, Ezra to Job, The Psalms, Joshua to II Samuel.*

The claim of this series, as stated in the Introduction found in each volume, is a large one: "This series of books forms the intensive study level of the graded, daily Bible reading plan of Scripture Union, the well-known and long established organization for the encouragement of Bible reading and study. Bible Study Books are designed to provide basic study material for the Christian who wishes to have a mature and organized guide for the whole of the Bible. The series is

written by a team of evangelical scholars each of whom has earned a reputation for sound and competent biblical scholarship. . . . Taken together the books provide a simple and complete commentary on the whole Bible."

Frankly, these books are of little value. As commentaries, they are a complete failure, if for no other reason that they are so scanty as hardly to qualify as commentaries at all. Certainly, material of this kind can only with a great deal of imagination be called "basic study material" and a "mature and organized guide." Nor, mainly because of the scantiness, is there much evidence of "sound and competent biblical scholarship." Not recommended.

H.C.H.

ATTENTION STAFF MEMBERS

The Standard Bearer Staff will hold its annual meeting the Lord willing on Monday, June 9, 1969 at 8:00 p.m. at the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church. All department editors please take note of this meeting and reserve this evening. If unable to attend, please contact the undersigned.

Rev. J. Kortering, Secretary

IMPORTANT NOTICE!!

Notice is hereby given to our subscribers, the societies of our churches, and all other groups and individuals that beginning with the July issue of The Standard Bearer the cost of placing resolutions of sympathy, anniversary notices, and all announcements will be \$3.00. Please bear this in mind when sending in your announcements to the Business Manager.

The Board of The R.F.P.A.

CALL TO SYNOD

By decision of the last Synod, the Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois, notifies the Churches that the 1969 Synod will convene on Wednesday, June 4, at 9:00 A.M., the Lord willing, in the above mentioned Church.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Tuesday, June 3rd., at 8:00 P.M., Rev. John A. Heys to deliver the sermon.

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

Those in need of lodging please contact Raymond L. Bruinsma of South Holland, Phone (312) 333-1622.

Consistory of the Protestant
Reformed Church of South Holland
Daniel Poortinga, V.P.
Raymond L. Bruinsma, Clerk

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

Seminary and Pre-seminary Students

All young men desiring to begin their studies this fall in either the pre-seminary or the seminary department of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches are requested to appear before the Theological School Committee at its meeting to be held, D.V., on Tuesday, May 27, at the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich.

The qualifications requisite to enrolling in the Seminary course are:

1. You must present a letter from your local consistory certifying that you are upright in walk and pure in doctrine.
2. You must present a certificate of health, signed by a reputable physician.
3. You must be a graduate from high school, being able to show that you have completed a one-year course in General History and in Church History, and that you have completed the following College courses: Latin-2 years, Greek-2 years, German-2 years, Dutch-2 years, Philosophy-1 year, Psychology-1 year, and Logic-1 semester.

The qualifications to enter the pre-seminary department are the same as above, except that "3" should read, "a graduate from high school."

In the event you cannot be present at this meeting, please notify the undersigned secretary of your intentions prior to the meeting.

Rev. J. Kortering, Sec'y
1551 Wilson Ave., S.W.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

News From Our Churches

April 30, 1969

Rev. Vanden Berg, of our Oak Lawn Church, was injured April 17 when his car overturned while on his way to Randolph, Wis. where he was to fill a Classical appointment. He suffered a dislocated hip, a broken shoulder and head lacerations. He was hospitalized in Fon du Lac Wis. and was released after one week. He is now at home, but immobilized because of a body cast from the chest down to the knee of one leg and down the whole length of the other leg. This cast must remain in place for six weeks, then to be replaced with a walking cast. At this writing his pain has subsided, and he is as comfortable as can be under those circumstances.

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Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers and Mr. and Mrs. Meulenberg are in Jamaica, having left the Grand Rapids airport Tuesday morning, April 8, at 8:30 and landing in Montego Bay at 4:30 in the afternoon. They received a warm send-off by the Mission Committee and many friends and relatives, meeting in one of the conference rooms at the airport for prayer and personal well-wishing. They were not met at the Montego Bay airport because they arrived some hours before their letter of information did. But they were enthusiastically welcomed at the church at Lucea the next Sunday morning with a song of greeting by the whole congregation. Elder Meulenberg wrote: "When we consider how limited our efforts have been in Jamaica, then looking back to 1963, they have advanced wondrously, and by God's Grace stand firmly in the truth even as they grow in grace and knowledge."

* * * *

Friday evening, April 25, was an important date in history for our Southeast Church in Grand Rapids. All societies and the Sunday School cooperated in rendering a program to commemorate the retirement of the mortgage on their church property. A social hour followed with refreshments served in the church parlors.

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Rev. Harbach, of Kalamazoo, occupied the pulpit of Hull, Iowa Sunday April 20 when the sacrament of Holy Communion was celebrated. A congregational meeting was scheduled for April 21 when the members were called to name a minister-elect from a trio which included the Revs. Decker, Engelsma and Woudenberg.

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Hope's pastor, Rev. Kortering, is at present considering a call extended him by our congregation in South Holland, Ill.

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The Western Ladies' League met on the afternoon of April 10 in Doon's Church. Rev. Lanting, of Edgerton, Minn. addressed the League, speaking on, "The New Heavens and the New Earth." This subject is growing dearer to God's people in these days when the old

earth is becoming increasingly more corrupt until it seems that its measure of iniquity is full enough to bring it to the brink of destruction.

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The congregation of First Church met Friday evening, April 18, to dedicate the new organ and re-dedicate the remodeled auditorium to the service of our faithful Covenant God. The three church organists and the Reformed Witness Hour organist rendered beautiful organ music in such varied styles as to demonstrate the versatility of the new instrument. Mr. R. Petersen, of the Music Committee, described the organ as to its component voices separately and in conjunction with one another. Mr. T. Newhof, Jr., of the Building Committee related some of their experiences in the huge task of remodeling the auditorium and the kitchen, and happily announced that it was done at less than the estimated cost. Rev. Van Baren read a liturgy of dedication and offered the dedicatory prayer. After the program the people were invited to inspect the consistory room and the kitchen, and to be served refreshments by the young people.

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Southwest's congregation is enjoying their public address system and its two outlets in the consistory room and the cloak room where a mother may take her crying baby and can still hear the sermon.

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The Hope Mr. and Mrs. Society met in First Church April 15 in a combined meeting, and the after-recess program featured Prof. Hanko speaking on, "Extrasensory Perception."

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Isabel's small congregation rejoiced April 20 in the public confession of faith made by two of their members; this makes a 12% increase of their communicant membership listing in the Year Book!

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The League of Mr. and Mrs. Societies scheduled their Spring Meeting for May 2 in Hope Church. Dr. D. Monsma was secured to speak on a subject being discussed in State Legislatures, in politician's conference rooms, and rather fearfully in our circles—"Federal Aid to Schools." It is generally conceded that it is advisable to inspect the anchorage of the far end of the string which is attached to this gift from Uncle Sam.

* * * *

Rev. Engelsma, of Loveland, lectured in Forbes in March and was privileged to preside at a consistory meeting, and to preach the sermon when two of their young people made confession of their faith. So we of larger congregations share with Isabel and Forbes the joy experienced when "souls are added to the church."

. . . see you in church,

J.M.F.