

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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The Question: Shall We Sin Again?

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Our Schools and Government Subsidy

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(see: All Around Us)

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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Meditation

The Question: Shall We Sin Again?

Rev. M. Schipper

“And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and has given us such deliverance as this. Should we again break thy commandments, and join affinity with the people of these abominations? Wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?”

Ezra 9: 13, 14.

Shall we sin again?
Pertinent question!
Occasioned by the fact that the returned captives,

and particularly the priests, Levites, and rulers of the people had inter-married with the wicked of the land.
Seventy long years had the kingdom of Judah been

held captive in Babylon, where the Lord had chastised them greatly because of their sins. And now the prophecy of Jeremiah was accomplished, so that they might return to their own land. Cyrus, the king of Persia had given commandment that the enslaved captives should be released to return to the holy city under the leadership of Nehemiah and Zerubbabel. The walls of the city again with great difficulty had been repaired, and the house of God rebuilt. Cyrus also instructed Ezra, the priest-scribe, to return with the vessels of the Lord's house which Nebuchadnezzar had confiscated, and with firm orders to instruct the people in the Law of God. Upon Ezra's arrival the princes of the people disclosed to him the popular but very grievous sin where the religious leaders had allowed the holy seed to mingle with the unholy, to intermarry with the heathen. Not only did they thereby violate the solemn dictum that Israel shall dwell in safety alone, but they also were committing the abominations of the heathen — a most grievous sin in the eyes of the Lord. Ezra was dumfounded when he heard of it. What lover of God's Law would not be? His astonishment was so great that he rent his clothes, plucked off his hair, and sat down to mourn until the evening sacrifice. Then he appeared before the face of the Lord to spread out the matter before His throne of mercy in intercessory prayer. A most beautiful prayer, in which he confesses in shame this sin, admitting Jehovah's righteous judgment for sins that were past, remembering God's mercy that He had again given a season of relief and a nail in His house, and rehearsing the law which militated against the present evil. And in the words of our text raises the important question which is the subject of our present meditation.

Shall we again sin?

A most proper question in the light of past sins!

Israel was a people that was born in sin. By nature ethically no better than the heathen which surrounded them. In spite of all the gracious dealings God had with this ancient people, Israel did not shake off the old man of sin. In spite of the fact that God had revealed Himself to that nation as to none other, they sinned yet more and more, committing all the abominations of the wicked. Israel had incurred great guilt. Yet the merciful Jehovah stretched out His hand through the prophets to warn His disobedient people to repent and return, until He is described as having become weary of it. But Israel did not listen. Hence, the Lord brought them into captivity, where under the cruel bondage in Babylon the remnant felt His chastening rod. Verily the sinner cannot play with God and get away with it. In His indignation He chastised them with the rod of Nebuchadnezzar and the wicked kings that succeeded him. And, O, what suffering they had endured. They became the gazing stock of the world, ridiculed and mocked, despised and forlorn. Worst of all they were separated from Jerusalem and the house of God.

Verily, they experienced that to live apart from God is death. No wonder they wept when they remembered Zion, and hung their harps upon the willows when they were asked to sing one of Zion's songs.

In the light of all this: Shall we sin again?

You, O Israel, and you, O sinner! You who have learned what it means to be bound in the shackles of sin and death! You who have known what is the experience of being enclosed in the prison-house of sin and death, and separated from the house of Jehovah's service! Should we sin again?

Pertinent question, indeed!

Also when you consider it in the light of the present deliverance!

O, how wonderfully Jehovah had kept His Word to send to His beloved deliverance from the house of bondage! Seventy years after His people had broken His covenant, He remembered it. He moved the heart of the king of Persia, Cyrus His servant, to send His people back to their own land. Once more they would have a nail in His sanctuary. He had not dealt with them as they had deserved. For if He had done so they would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah. They would have perished from the earth. Never would they have come into His presence again. But He had not reckoned with them according to their deserts. Their deliverance should have been a cause for everlasting rejoicing.

A proper question for Israel!

Do you think it right, O people of God, to sin again after you have been so wonderfully delivered? Does it seem just and proper that you should sin against God after He has dealt so graciously with you? Would you not by your very sin be reproaching the grace whereby ye were saved?

And dear reader, forget not that what happened to Judah was but typical of what has happened to us. Do we not also exclaim: that He has not dealt with us after our sins, but that He has removed our guilt as far as east from west is distant? Has He not laid on Christ the iniquity of us all? Did not our Saviour stand under the vials of His holy wrath, in order that we would never have to endure it? Does it then seem right to you and to me that we should then go out and sin again?

Also a most serious question!

Should we continue to break His holy commandments? Should we deliberately violate His Law, that Law which He has ordained for our life, and which must now serve as the norm for our faith and practise? For that is the implication of the text. Not simply does Ezra mean that we should disregard the commandments, but as the English version expresses it: break, i.e., deliberately break off. God's Law is a harmonious whole. When we transgress a certain commandment, we break off, we reject that commandment, and thus destroy the whole of the Law of God.

Here the question is: Should we break off Thy

commandments by joining affinity with the people of these abominations? With that people whom the Lord at the entrance of Israel into the land of Canaan had expressly instructed that they should be utterly destroyed? A people, such as Moab and Ammon, who were godless and full of abominable idolatry? Shall we just join ourselves to them in marriage, which can mean not only that we give our sons and daughters to them in wedlock, but join in on their idolatrous practises? Such sin would not only be a breaking of the Law of God, but it would lead to Israel's downfall, and bring upon them a curse. We could put the question this way: Should we, God's redeemed people, after we have been delivered from sin and death by the blood of Christ seek affinity with the world, with its scheme, with its things? Would we then not be breaking not only the Law of God, but deliberately violating the tenure of all God's Word which admonishes us: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers;" "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin;" "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to live after the flesh?"

Indeed, a serious question!

The seriousness of which lies not only in the fact that it is asked of us, but it is a question which is asked before the face of God. Understand it well, Ezra does not ask his contemporaries that question. O, indeed, they heard him pray, and therefore they too were confronted with the question. That would make the question serious enough. But the seriousness becomes all the more serious when you consider that it is asked before the throne of God. Ezra and Israel, you and I, stand before God with this question. Would you have the boldness to ask God whether you should sin again?

Awful question!

But answered question!

Answered it is with another question. Wouldest not Thou be angry with us till Thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?

God's anger is His holy indignation!

The antithesis of His love and mercy!

Would not God be so angry that not one of the sinners should escape? The implication of this question should be understood as signifying that all the sinners would be destroyed.

And this is exactly the teaching of the Word of God.

Consider what Peter writes in II Peter 2:20 - "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." Or again, listen to what the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes: (Hebrews 6:4-6) "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Would not such incur the guilt of those described in Hebrews 10:29: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

What is the proper answer then?

Indeed, not! By the grace of God we will fight the good fight of faith! We will mortify the old man of sin which is still in us, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. We will not allow fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, to be named once among us. For once we were the children of darkness, but now are we light in the Lord, and will therefore walk as children of light.

We shall no longer delight in breaking one of the least of God's commandments, nor will we seek affinity with the world. For how shall we, who have become dead to sin, live any longer therein?

And on the basis of the perfect sacrifice and redemption accomplished for us by our Saviour, we will steadfastly look for our final and perfect salvation in the new heavens and new earth, where righteousness shall dwell.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Editorials

EDITOR'S NOTES

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Publication slightly delayed. The Publication Committee regrets to announce that the previously announced publication date of April 1 for the book,

"Behold, He Cometh!" could not be met. We encountered some unavoidable delays with the printing and binding, due apparently to the fact that this is a busy

season in those trades. As of this writing, the book is at the printing plant; but it appears that work will not be completed until some time in the first part of May. To those who placed their pre-publication orders we advise: Have patience! We will send your copy as soon as possible; and the wait will be worthwhile.

* * *

About Social Security for Clergy. Your attention is called to an item about this subject in the report of Classis West which appears in this issue's news columns. I assume that the report on the Oak Lawn overture and of the classical decision both appear here in condensed form; and therefore it is difficult to say anything in detail about them. It appears to me, however, that there is some merit in the suggestion of

Oak Lawn, and that this subject will stand some careful synodical attention. I also believe that there is merit in the suggestion "that Synod review our emeritation program," even apart from the Social Security question. Personally, I am inclined to think that our synodical Emeritus Fund is not operated with sufficient foresight.

* * *

Fellow Editors: Before long it will be time for our annual staff meeting, to be held, D.V., when synod meets. At that time plans must be made for another volume-year of the *Standard Bearer*. Please give this matter some thought. Should it be impossible for you to attend the staff meeting, send your suggestions to our staff secretary, Rev. J. Kortering.

Our Schools and Government Subsidy (4)

A Question of Justice or of Money?

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

More Basic Considerations

As stated last time, the *Standard Bearer* editorially takes the position that the present proposals for government subsidy of private schools are not based on justice. Certainly, a study of the Joint Legislative Report of the Michigan legislature reveals that the entire approach to the question is not one of justice. It is rather the approach of utility. It is argued that the financial load on the public school system will be too great if the private schools must shut down. It is argued that therefore it would be folly not to render some aid to private schools. It is also argued that the striving to build up the educational level of the inner cities will be hampered if the private schools in those inner city areas are not helped financially. One looks in vain in this report for a good, solid argument which proceeds from righteousness and justice. In fact, here in the Michigan legislature the whole question of parochial aid has become one of money; and also the foes of parochial aid are arguing either that the public schools will be deprived of funds or that there simply is not enough money available to pay the added \$40 million which parochial aid will require.

The same is true of the two organizations which support parochial aid in Michigan, the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools and Citizens for Educational Freedom. As might be expected when we judge from the very names of these organizations, about which there is nothing Christian, one looks in vain in all the argumentation which has appeared for any hint of Christian principles of justice and righteousness with

respect to government or with respect to education. These movements present strictly secular, that is, carnal arguments. They have a secular conception of freedom. They have a secular conception of education. When they speak at all of the place of religion in education, they assume either a neutral stance (and speak of non-public schools) or they assume an all-embracing stance (and speak in general of religious education).

Even in the light of the above, I cannot understand how the Christian can in good conscience accept any government subsidy obtained or granted on such a basis.

But it is my contention that the entire concept of government subsidy is also *positively wrong*, contrary to Christian principles of righteousness and justice. In support of this contention I offered sundry arguments in the April 1 issue. In the present article I begin to offer more basic considerations.

The first such consideration which I offer is that the whole concept of government subsidy is contrary to the fundamental principle of parental education of covenant children. The positive implication of this principle is that it is the duty and responsibility and privilege of the parents, and of the parents only, to educate the children which the Lord has given them. The negative implication of this principle, for our present discussion, is that it is not the duty and responsibility and privilege of the government to educate our children.

This has long been recognized among Reformed

people as the formal principle at the basis of Christian education. We are distinct in this regard, certainly, from the public schools. But we are also distinct, let us not forget, from those who hold to parochial education, the system of church schools. It is true that this principle has been compromised by some, so that it is claimed, for example, that if the parents fail in this duty, then the government may step in; but this I consider a compromise and without any Scriptural foundation. It may even be questioned, in the light of this principle, in how far the government has any right before God to exercise any control whatsoever over the education of our children. By what right, before God, does the government stipulate, for example, that a high school education is compulsory? However this may be, the fact remains that everywhere Scripture places the responsibility of education upon the parents; and also our Baptism Form places the responsibility there in its third question to the parents.

Now let us remember that this is not an unimportant matter. We call this the *formal* principle of education in distinction from the *material* principle, which is concerned with the fundamental spiritual direction and the content of education. But let us not be deceived by that term *formal*. There are no mere formalities before God. This principle implies that God Himself, our covenant God, holds us responsible for the education of our children. That responsibility you and I *can* never abdicate, even though we may attempt to escape it. The Lord our God still holds us responsible. Even when parents band together to establish a covenant school, they are held responsible for the education of their own children. Even when they elect a school board, they cannot “pass off” that responsibility to that board. Even when they hire teachers, it is ultimately not the teachers but the parents who are responsible before God. Let us never forget this. We do well, in fact, to bear this in mind in the actual life and operation of our covenant schools. I am afraid that sometimes we tend to think that we can “pass the buck” and shed our responsibility when we have a school and elect a board and send our children off to school for the biggest part of the day. But this is never the case. And our schools must always remain very really and very actively *parental*.

But the question confronting us is: what, in the light

of this basic principle of Christian education, must be our attitude toward government subsidy of our schools?

Shall we campaign for such government subsidy? Shall we tacitly consent to it by accepting such subsidy if the legislature approves of it? This could only be done by either openly or tacitly denying this principle of parental responsibility and by admitting that the government either must or may share that responsibility with us. Mind you, I am not talking now about the danger of government control on the part of a government which shares financial responsibility. I am only speaking of the principle of parental responsibility which is at stake. This is a sacred principle, one which may not be sacrificed on the altar of the dollar.

If we desire to let our Christian testimony go forth, a testimony founded on what is right before God, then let us testify to the government that it should get out of the business of education altogether. Let us testify to the government that it has only the God-given authority to rule in the sphere of things civil and to wield the sword, that it has no calling to operate schools. You say, perhaps, that such a proposal is preposterous? You object that those who occupy the seat of government would laugh hilariously at such a proposal? You point to the fact that public education is part and parcel of the American system, guaranteed by the law of the land? I remind you that we are talking about principles and about living from principle, not about the question whether our sacred principles will find favor in the eyes of the rulers of this world. And if, then, we are going to accept the fact that public education is part of the American system and that we cannot succeed in changing that system, let us also be glad that this same system still allows us room as people of God to hold to and to practice our principle of parental education. Let us exercise that right as long as it is possible to do so. Let us not engage in self-pity about the great expense and the tremendous sacrifice involved. By all means, let us not exchange our heritage for a mess of dollars. Let us rather be glad and thankful to our God that we may still exercise this parental responsibility. Let us count it a privilege as well as a sacred responsibility!

This, to me, is living from principle.

(to be continued)

Question Box

ABOUT BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Question

From a Michigan reader, brother Peter De Young, comes the following question: “Some time ago we read in “The Banner” (Feb. 14) an article on “A Contem-

porary Translation” by Edwin H. Palmer. He gives a long list of incorrect translations, which does not mean much to me or the average reader. My question is: Are they forever trying to do away with the sharp points in

Scripture with all the new translations and trying to bring the Word of God in line with their scientific conceptions?

Reply

I no longer have the Feb. 14 issue of "The Banner" at hand, and so I cannot reflect on the article mentioned. I will, however, make a few general remarks in connection with the question submitted:

1) There certainly are new translations which try to do away with "the sharp points" in Scripture. Whether or not this is done in an attempt to bring the Word of God "in line with their scientific conceptions" is not so much the question. But it indeed makes a world of difference whether the scholars who engage in the work of translation do so in faith or in unbelief. In the latter case, the attempt will be made to bring the Word of God in line with their *unbelieving* conceptions.

2) Personally, I am not pleased with today's multiplication of translations and versions. At best, if carefully used, some of these can be of help in Bible study; at worst, they only serve to confuse the Bible student. Also for public reading of the Scriptures these multiple translations serve to be confusing. For one who is accustomed to the old King James Version or the American Revised Version, some of the contemporary translations are so unfamiliar as to make one

wonder whether he is hearing Scripture or not.

3) There is a movement afoot to produce a new translation by conservative, or evangelical, scholars. Perhaps the scholarship necessary for such a project is available. Personally, however, I have grave doubts whether the spiritual and doctrinal condition of conservative scholarship is healthy enough to produce a truly good new translation.

4) I think that the King James Version has served us admirably. It has stood the test of time. It is reasonably accurate. It is beautiful and majestic. And as for the argument that its language is archaic and cannot be understood by the present generation, I would answer that the fault does not lie with the King James Version but rather with homes and families in which the Bible is not regularly read any more. Certainly, — and I speak from experience now, — in those homes where the Bible is regularly and systematically read there is no serious problem with understanding the King James Version. On this score we may all take warning. The Bible must not be a dust-covered book in our homes. Nor must the Psalms be the only pages which give evidence of use. We and our children must be thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures through daily use of them.

H.C.H.

News Feature

A Worthwhile Conference



The above picture (courtesy of Mr. L. Lubbers) was taken at the conclusion of a conference of the ministers and elder-delegates of our Western churches, held at South Holland, Illinois on Tuesday afternoon, March 4. To this conference the ministers of Classis East and also the faculty and students of our seminary were invited; some of the ministers and all of the seminary personnel accepted the invitation. At this

meeting the Rev. D. Engelsma presented a paper on the genealogy of Jesus, and this paper was then made the subject of the group's discussion. Rev. Engelsma's paper, by the way, will be published in the spring issue of our Theological Journal, along with a summary of the discussion prepared by Prof. Hanko.

I would describe this as a worthwhile conference. In the first place, it was worthwhile because of the fellowship which we might enjoy together. There are very few occasions when our ministers get together on other than the formal, usually busy, official occasions when our assemblies meet. This meeting went at a rather leisurely pace; it was conducted on a rather informal basis; and it was a meeting not characterized by the "must" which always marks a meeting like those of classis or synod. Moreover, instead of official ecclesiastical business, the paper and the discussion were devoted to something which ought to have the love of any minister's heart, an exegetical subject. At the end of the meeting there was time left for those informal chats with friends and colleagues, chats which were continued at the delicious dinner served by the South Holland ladies. Yet, in the second place, a

meeting like this is far from a waste of time. Not only were there the intangible benefits of fellowship and contact of brethren; but there was instruction and discussion of a very solid kind about a Biblical subject. This I count worthwhile for all concerned.

By an informal motion it was decided to have another such conference at a time when Classis West meets in Illinois. It was also agreed to distribute the paper in advance, in order that all may come prepared for discussion. The brethren of Classis West hold such a conference before every meeting of Classis, I understand. And those in charge of arrangements for those

meetings will also make the arrangements for the denominational conference. We of the seminary look forward to the next meeting, the Lord willing. And once more I strongly recommend that *all* our ministers make it a point to attend in the future. Such meetings are a time of refreshment. I am sure that I express the sentiments of all who were invited when I say "Thanks" to our brethren of Classis West.

I am sorry that I cannot furnish identification with the photo: who would think that Reformed men would form such crooked lines?

H.C.H.

All Around Us

A Relevant Liturgy

Prof. H. Hanko

A RELEVANT LITURGY

Ought we to revise and revamp our liturgy? This is the burning question which is presently stirring the churches in this land and abroad. Many Churches are not content to talk about it; they have begun to do something about it. Not minor revisions in the order of worship are being introduced. Not a few additions to or subtractions from the regular liturgical practices are deemed sufficient. Fundamental changes in the very structure of the liturgy which involve complete alterations are being tried. Experimentation, innovation and basic change characterize "liturgical renewal".

It is not without significance that these liturgical experimentations are characteristic of the Church. The Church is bent on doctrinal alteration and Biblical apostasy. The Church is frantically engaged in ecumenism. The Church is exchanging the ministry of the Gospel for social, political and economic involvement. This is what characterizes the Church scene. It is not an accident that in this ecclesiastical climate there is much discussion of liturgical change as well. And, if we should find that the suggestions made for liturgical change are closely associated with the general upheaval within the Church world, we should not be surprised.

In the February, 1969 issue of the *Reformed Journal* Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, professor of philosophy at Calvin College, writes an article entitled "The Young Person and Liturgy". While discussing the problems of liturgy from the vantage point of the young people in the Church, he makes a strong plea for basic and drastic liturgical alteration.

His starting point is the general dissatisfaction to be found among young people with the worship services within the Reformed Churches:

It is no secret that many of the reflective young people who are members of the Reformed Churches

are intensely dissatisfied with the current form and manner of worship in their churches. The fact is known to anyone at all who has listened to them. They do not conceal their dissatisfaction. . . .

. . . I am convinced that they mean their objections so seriously that unless we listen to them and institute reforms they will either leave the Reformed churches for some church which has, in their judgment, a more soundly Christian liturgy, or they will become the sullen, custom-ridden church members which we in the Reformed churches are so adept at producing. They will not become vital, energetic participants in our churches.

It is true, I think, that the objections of young people to whom Dr. Wolterstorff has bent an ear are objections rather current among young people. I have, from time to time, heard objections raised among our own people and young people about the liturgical practices of the Church. Many times the objections were raised that the liturgy of the Church has become so familiar that it is practiced automatically; it has become a worship of the lips and of outward form. The true worship of the heart is all but absent. This has been used as an excuse to make alterations in our liturgical practices so as to construct a liturgy more meaningful and to guarantee a more spiritual participation in the service.

We do well to consider the problem. Our young people especially will do well to give their thought and discussion to this matter.

Dr. Wolterstorff's basic thesis is that the most important feature of worship in the Reformed liturgy is "dialogue".

To understand what the young person is driving at, I think we must dig into the fundamental structure of a Reformed liturgy. That fundamental structure, it is generally agreed, is a dialogue, a dialogue between

God and His people. The Reformed liturgy, indeed, the *Christian* liturgy, consists in its basic structure of a series of acts in which God addresses His people and His people address God — the people confess their sins to God, God gives to the people His assurance of pardon, God speaks His Word to the people, the people respond with thanks and praise to God, and so forth, back and forth in dialogue.

Here is a key point. We must not lightly pass over this and accept Dr. Wolterstorff's definition of liturgy without some thought. His contention that the *structure* of the Reformed liturgy is essential to an understanding of what ought to be included in a proper liturgy is surely sound. But is "Reformed liturgy" to be characterized as essentially "dialogue"? Dr. Wolterstorff says that this "is generally agreed" upon.

It is true that there is an element of fact in this definition. But the word "dialogue" strikes me as being singularly inappropriate to describe what happens at a worship service. A dialogue is carried on between equals. Two people may engage in a dialogue. Two groups of people may have a dialogue. Even two committees, each representing a particular denomination, may conduct a dialogue if they choose. This is, in fact, rather fashionable in our ecumenical age. But can a man have a dialogue with his pet dog? Or if the analogy strikes you as unsound, is it even possible for a mature adult with the wisdom of many years to hold a dialogue with a little child of one year old? Is there a possibility of dialogue (with all that that implies) in such a situation? Is it not far more impossible for the God of heaven and earth to hold a "dialogue" with a man? There is speech from God to man and from man to God in a worship service. There is speech which implies closest fellowship. But "dialogue" is exactly not the word to describe this unique exchange of words which is characteristic of a worship service.

And here, I am convinced, we have hit upon a fundamental point in the discussion. If there is one thing which characterizes all the discussion of doctrine, of church unity, of the church's calling, of liturgy, it is a growing disregard for the awesome majesty and supreme glory of God. Every effort is made to make God common, to bring Him down to the level of man, to make Him a next door neighbor with Whom we can chat over the backyard fence. The vision of Isaiah 6 is forgotten. God is filled with such great glory that before Him the angels cover their faces. God is infinitely exalted above man. It is because of this fact that God's revelation of Himself to man is so essential. He cannot be known apart from His revelation. Yet it is precisely this revelation which men consistently ignore. The Church does this. It does this when it denies the infallible inspiration of Scripture. It does this when it turns away from the truth of Scripture to say what Scripture does not say concerning doctrine. It

does this when it seeks to find its calling in the world not in what Scripture says, but in what a given man (or group of men) at a given time happen to think their calling is.

And here is the big disappointment in Dr. Wolterstorff's article. He listens to the young people. They have various objections against the liturgy. He ought not to be doing this. He ought to be listening to God. Yet the article makes no mention of God's Word — not even once. There is absolutely no indication in it (you may search all you will) that the author has even given any thought to the matter that God ought to have the say in all this matter of liturgy.

After all, God tells us Who He is. He is the only One Who can tell us. And because He tells us Who He is, He is the only One Who can tell us how He ought to be worshipped. The very fact that we call our church services "worship" services already suggests that God is higher than one with whom we can have dialogue. If there is a king who rules over a vast empire and expects obedience, allegiance, respect and honor from his subjects, he is the one who has the right to determine how his subjects shall conduct themselves in his presence. This is not the prerogative of those who will come from time to time into his throne room. They may not decide on the matters of conduct which become them as citizens in his realm. The king has the right to determine whether his subjects must bow before him, what words they may rightly say, how they must address him and behave in his presence. Above all, only the king has the right to determine the all-important question of *who* may come into his presence. The sceptre is not held out to all. And one who presumes to come without the king's permission suffers the loss of his head.

How much more is not this true of the living God. Because He is Who He is, He shall determine how men shall worship Him in His presence. This is surely the basic principle of liturgy. We must expect then that our liturgy will be, in its essentials, prescribed in God's Word.

Essential to this liturgy is *worship*. And worship is not dialogue. Perhaps we need to learn once again the meaning of the Scriptural idea of fear. I am aware of the fact that fear in Scripture is not terror. The wicked must be afraid of God. They do not show this terror in their life. They are careless and incredibly foolish blasphemers. Because God does not strike them in the moment of their blasphemy with sudden bursts of judgment they think they can say about God what they please. But this shall some day change when the awful cry goes up pleading for the mountains to cover them from the face of God. But fear is not terror. Fear is characteristic of God's people Who know God and know of His love for them. But while fear is not terror, neither is it familiarity. Even the intimate fellowship of God's covenant into which God takes His people is

always characterized by fear. It must forever remain so. Nothing can bridge the chasm between the Creator and the creature. God must and shall remain God. Indeed, this is the only thing which makes worship worth while and wonderful. If God is like us in any respect, there is nothing to it at all. It all becomes an exercise in futility and self-delusion. *Worship*. That is the key word.

It is but natural that the conception men have of God will be reflected in their liturgy. The point is that God tells us Who He is. He will also tell us how He must be worshipped. And what He tells us as to the manner of true worship is the only kind of worship pleasing to Him.

Men will not listen any more to God's Word. They will not accept the Scriptures as God's Word. That is, they will not accept the Scriptures as the verbally inspired record of God's revelation of Himself. It is easily predictable what will then happen. Men begin to think of all sorts of ideas which arise in their own minds as to Who God is. They make inventions. They make idols. They construct philosophical and theological systems which are of their own thinking. They will not and do not listen in humble adoration to what God says. They speak to God telling God what kind of being they think He is and ought to be. And this will surely be reflected in their liturgy. It cannot be otherwise. Forming their own ideas of what God ought to be, they lay down their own rules of worship. They themselves define how they will worship the God they have constructed. The heathen have always done the

same. After constructing their idols of wood or stone, they invented their own rules of worship. But the god they made was their creation. And the rules of worshipping this god were their own regulations.

Characteristic of this kind of thinking is always a tendency to cast large and dark shadows on God's awesome majesty and glory. That God is great and greatly to be praised is forgotten. That He is a consuming fire is ignored. The sermons preached, the songs written and sung, the prayers offered — all simply reflect man's urge to drag God down from His high throne. Worship has become man-centered, world-oriented. The reason is that man's god is little more than a man.

Paul concludes his discussion of the election of Israel in the last verses of Romans 11 with the words: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

No man can tell us how God ought to be worshipped; much less the young people. It ought to be engraved deeply upon the hearts of anyone who walks the hallowed courts of God's presence: "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth."

In His Fear

" . . . And Back Again"

Rev. John A. Heys

The full expression of which the above is but the last phrase is, "To the moon and back again."

Man did that in an amazing piece of precision of calculation and of skillful manipulation of a powerful rocket and an ingeniously equipped space ship.

It had been done before without the precious cargo of human passengers. Therefore we knew that it was possible. And yet there was that moment of suspense, because there was so much that had to function exactly right, and because there were men in that relatively small craft that was so far away from the earth. Now man has reached the moon, circled it ten times and returned safely to the planet on which God created him.

There were some spectacular firsts on that trip. Man left the gravitational pull of the earth for the first time to enter into the gravitational pull of another globe

that "hangs" in the space of this universe. Man saw with his eyes the dark side of the moon and viewed the earth from the distance that it has been placed by God from the moon. Man attained to speeds never before achieved by any man on any voyage before this one. It was indeed an amazing achievement. It all went so smoothly and easily that our fears during the event seemed rather foolish.

These lines are being written and must needs be written far in advance of the day they appear in the homes of our subscribers. And already — mid-January — new achievements in the race to put a man on the moon have taken place. Who knows what may yet appear before these lines appear in print! Still, this was an event of great importance historically; and it has been likened by some to the voyage of Columbus, when he boldly set out to prove that the earth was

round, and to find a way to the East by going west. That which not too long ago was still considered only a dream, and was by others classified as impossible, has transpired before our very eyes. And that last is something that we ought not overlook. This whole amazing feat could be viewed around the world, and in the comfort of our homes, by that astounding invention of the more recent past, the television set. From way out there not only could these three astronauts be heard, but they could also be seen in their history-making journey to the moon and back again.

If it indicated anything at all, it surely revealed that man's calculations about the distances of the heavenly bodies are extremely accurate. In this field the unbelieving scientist is very accurate. Here he is not guilty of the guesswork and philosophy of Evolutionism, which arbitrarily sets lengths of time and "periods" of the "development" of this world. Here he has correctly read the work of God and has seen some of the wisdom of God. As far as computing these distances is concerned, he has been very scientific; and he has invented some amazing instruments to take his measurements and has relied on some amazing man-made computers to arrive at the exact figures required for an adventure such as this one to the moon and back again.

We, of course, were pleased with the safe return from the back side of the moon for our astronauts. We are pleased that they are back with us on this earth and made it safely through that narrow corridor which to miss would mean agonizing death due to lack of oxygen in the outer reaches of space. The title above was not chosen to express any such disappointment. That would be wicked. We may not wish any man such suffering and grief. That would be to have murder in the heart.

And yet the quotation of nothing more than the phrase, "... and back again," is meant to express a disappointment. Not that disappointment mentioned above do we mean, but this disappointment as you might guess: It was not *in His fear*. Indeed, we are aware of the fact that Scripture was read way out there in space, and a most significant passage of the Word of God at that! We did rejoice to learn that one item that circled that moon and came back to this earth was the Bible, the written record of the Word of God, and to learn that it was quoted from way out there to an earth that for the greater part has rejected it completely. We did rejoice that millions who otherwise would silence it or flee as far from it as they can, now were caused nevertheless to have their attention called to that portion of God's Word that infallibly proclaims Him the Creator of heaven and earth. Truly, God does not leave Himself without a witness, even in a generation that says that He is dead and behaves as though this is the case.

We are not going to sit in judgment either over the

three men who read that Word of God to so many millions of people. They had an audience far greater than many a God-fearing minister of the Word ever addressed. There was, however, no gospel message, no testimony of the Christ in that brief message from the outer reaches of space, and that at the very time that the Church was preparing to celebrate the birth of this Son of God. But it is the whole program of going to the moon and back again that we claim is not in His fear.

That statement will no doubt be challenged, even though the command of God to man in the beginning was to subdue *the earth*. It will be argued that the fuels used on this and similar expeditions are in or on this earth and were there for man to discover and master in order to subdue the entire earth with all that which it contained. But must we have war in order to subdue the metals that are in the bowels of this earth? Must we use that iron and steel to make swords and cannons and bullets? Had man not turned from the living God in paradise and had he subdued this earth in a state of righteousness, would he not have found another use for iron and steel and for the intricate and dangerous fuels of our rockets? Would man in the state of complete dedication and consecration to God as His royal priesthood have had interest in going to the moon? These, of course, are questions that we cannot answer today. We cannot know what would have happened in a world that had remained sinless. Man would have subdued the earth in obedience to God's command. Of that we may be sure. He would have had interest in the moon, we may also believe. And interest in any creature — be it the moon or some earthly object — is not in itself necessarily sinful. It, that moon, is placed there for us to behold and not to ignore. God has created it for His own glory and wants us to see it in order to realize how glorious He is. With all this we have no problem.

But departing from the physical and literal going to the moon and back again, we are at the moment interested in and concerned about the spiritual going to that moon and back again. We are interested in two matters which cause us to say that we are disappointed because the whole project is not in His fear. Those two matters are, first of all, the motive, man's reason for going there, his design upon that moon, or rather what he intends to accomplish by it. The second matter is the execution of that grandiose ambition.

We may rule out at once any idea of a "missionary" journey. This trip was not to bring the gospel to a fallen people that they may have the joy of salvation. Christ did not ride in that spaceship — even though that Bible was there — in the soul's intent of the passengers, nor of those who sent them. And those who follow will not appear on the surface of the moon as those whose feet are beautiful upon its mountains because they bring glad tidings of salvation. The reason

for going to the moon is not a spiritual one in the sense that man is seeking to dispense some spiritual blessings there or even to witness concerning Christ.

This need not be the motive to make it pleasing in God's sight and to be in His fear. Few there are that have the privilege of preaching the gospel and of bringing the Word to those who walk in darkness of the truth. And elders and deacons have besides their work in their offices their vocations which they pursue. The idea is not that in the one they perform a work that is purely spiritual and in the other they are out of the sphere of the spiritual. In both they must walk in His fear. In both, according to the new principle of life, they do walk in His fear. In the one they directly serve the cause of God's kingdom here below. But in the other they also serve God by performing their labors in the way of His commandments and in thankfulness to Him for all His gifts. And in their daily toils they seek to subdue the earth and bring it to God in works of praise and in acknowledgment that it is His and is to be used to serve Him.

And because this particular labour, that is outside of direct service to further the cause of God's kingdom, has anything but the motive of serving God with His creation, the necessary praise which God commands is lacking in this whole project of going to the moon and back again. Spiritually it should be going to the moon *but not back again* to mankind on this earth. Spiritually it should be going to the moon (If indeed this belongs to man's calling to subdue the earth) and then onward to God! That is the way it must be with all of our works. Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. Romans 11:36. Therefore the rational-moral creature, who was created in God's image, must receive all from Him in the consciousness that it remains His, must confess that it is all through Him, and he must render it unto Him in praise and thanksgiving. What ends in man misses its mark. And one of the chief words for sin in Scripture is exactly "missing the mark." That is what we regret about this whole moon project. The moon which is of God and is through God held in existence and in its place, did not in this project return unto Him in praise by man. Man came back to this earth to praise the thousands of men who made this event "possible." The God, Whose this moon is, and Whose also are the men who circled it, together with all the equipment used in this achievement, was ruled out when once the astronauts were safely on this earth again.

This is exactly the vanity of which Solomon speaks in the wisdom which God gave him. There is on this earth — even when man looks up to and circles the moon ten times — in the lives of fallen man (and in the flesh of the believers) a vicious circle parallel to the earth. All things go around in a circle that goes from east to west, or north to south, west to east, or south to north. A man is born on this earth, and he travels

around lauding man, and returns in silence to the grave. The world may for a time say that he contributed something to the world. Well, maybe so. But that is not the question. That does not spell out an activity in His fear. The question is, Does your circle go in a vertical direction, beginning in heaven, descending on this earth and then rising up again to God in heaven? And do you see all things as coming from God together with your calling to return them to Him? It is not a question as to whether you beam your voice, even from the heavenly vantage point of an orbit around the moon, back to man and admit that He created the heavens and the earth. It is a question as to whether you beam this to Him. It is not a question of using the television and radio media to tell men that this is God's world. It is a question of whether you use the spiritual media, which God has provided, to come to *Him* in prayer and in songs of praise, to extol Him and thank Him and serve Him with it all.

Our circle must be like the rainbow, or better still (for the rainbow we see is but half of a circle) like a huge hoop or wheel standing on the earth, reaching up to God in heaven, and then back to the earth again. That is the idea of Paul's words in Romans 11:36. "Of Him" brings the circle from heaven down to this earth. "Through Him" continues it along the length and breadth of the earth, embracing every creature and all time. The "to Him" continues that circle back up to God in praise, thanksgiving and service. And that is in His fear. That also is keeping from sin. For this is not missing the mark. It is not vanity and emptiness before God. These are not weighed and found wanting. Our moon project is exactly that and will be shown to be that by the living God in the day of judgment. A lunatic, according to the very derivation of the word (Luna is the Latin word for moon) is one who has become moonstruck, one suffering madness because of the effect of the light of the moon upon him. And going to the moon and back again rather than lifting up one's whole life to God is spiritual folly and madness. God grant that we may be SONstruck, smitten by the Word and Spirit of His Son with His majesty to walk in His fear, and that the new Jerusalem be our goal rather than anything here on this earth or on the moon.

Indeed, we may contribute something to *this* world, and men may laud us for what we have done. But if our contribution circles around this earth, or around the moon, and never goes in the heaven-to-earth-to-heaven orbit of receiving from God with thankfulness, using it in His service and according to His commandments — which begin by declaring that we have no gods beside Him — and of returning to Him with praise, we have accomplished nothing that will last or go with us into the everlasting life to come. But if all in our lives is consciously and willingly of Him, through Him and unto Him, we are walking in His fear; and we

are performing deeds which shall not be stopped by our death or the rolling up of the heavens, to the destruction of the moon, as a scroll but which shall

continue in an endless life of reaching the mark, when heaven and earth are united as one glorious realm wherein God is all in all.

From Holy Writ

The Book of Hebrews

Rev. G. Lubbers

THE HEAVENLY PATTERN SHOWN MOSES ON THE MOUNT

It was none other than Jehovah God Himself, who appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai, and warned Moses with a Divine warning as to the architectural plan of the tabernacle and its furniture. The writer to the Hebrews mentions this in our text here in Hebrews 8:5, quoting what we read in Exodus 25:40 "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount."

It ought not to escape our notice how the writer to the Hebrews speaks of this divine warning, as though God is still speaking this warning to Moses. Up till the present moment this warning of God stands in all its awesome import. When one reads Exodus 25:40 one *hears* God speaking to Moses. No, one does not simply read Moses' *account* of what he heard the Lord tell him. Most emphatically *we hear* the Lord warn Moses; this warning still stands across the ages. And we ought to take notice of this. For do not forget that the issue at stake is: the exactitude of the form of the gospel, lest the tabernacle of God would be a common building, differing not principally and radically from the temple of idols. One cannot eat of the table of God and of the table of devils. God will not have His holy name profaned. God is ever very jealous of the architectural design of His tabernacle, the revelation of the triune God in His Son Jesus Christ through the Holy Ghost. It is basically the warning of Paul: other foundation can no man lay than what is laid: it is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against this tabernacle of God; nothing may mar its beauty.

A close look at the text in Exodus will shew that the Lord warns Moses twice. The first time He warns Moses prior to telling him how to build. The text there reads "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments (furniture) thereof, even so shall ye make it." (Exodus 25: 8, 9) This meant that the furniture too must have a certain pattern. When we look at the sacred record here you will notice that there are three pieces of furniture (instruments) mentioned. They are (1) the ark of the covenant (2)

the table of (the face) shewbread (3) the seven golden candlesticks. It is of interest to notice not only that it was these three pieces of furniture, but also to notice the order in which they are given. Personally, I believe that the order here in which they are made is the order in which they were shown to Moses on the mount.

The latter point we ought to note a little more in depth.

What Moses saw on the mount was the "pattern" of the heavenly things. This was the pattern of God, the archetype of the heavenly things themselves. No, Moses did not see the heavenly reality in their perfected form itself. This was not yet realized at that time. What he saw was what God had designed in His eternal counsel of peace, and the place of the Son as Mediator in the works of salvation. And this pattern being shown was already the revealing of the secret counsel of God concerning our redemption. And the pattern on the mount was that after which the tabernacle was to be built.

When Moses saw this pattern as related to him by God in the spoken Word, he saw this perhaps as did John on the Island of Patmos. John too was shown the vision. (Rev. 5:1) And the first thing which John sees is a "throne." Thus also here in the case of Moses. The first piece of furniture which must be made after the pattern shown Moses on the mount is "the ark". This ark of God, the ark of the testimony, is a small representation of the throne of grace. It is in the throne upon which God will dwell in the midst of his people, between the cherubims. And thus the Ark is the great Shepherd on Israel's place of meeting his flock. This was first to be made. It is the foundation piece of furniture in the temple. When the ark is removed from the tabernacle then the "glory is departed" — Ichabod. Truly, then the glory is departed from Israel!

Hence, this was the first piece of furniture.

It is made after the pattern of the heavenly throne, called the right hand of the majesty of God, who dwells in the Most Holy place. And this piece of furniture was placed in the Holy of holies. From out of this Holy Place the Lord will come to dwell with his people.

Secondly, Moses must have seen a "table." It was the table of the face of the Lord. It was the table whereon the loaves of bread were placed, a sign and symbol of God fellowshiping with us at His table. Here it is proclaimed: come to the feast for all things are ready.

And, thirdly, Moses saw seven golden candlesticks. It was the representation of the seven Spirits which are before the throne of God.

When we look at this a certain "pattern" emerges. It is the pattern of the triune God, our heavenly Father, as he dwells with us from his throne of mercy. For the Ark of the covenant was at once the place where the blood of atonement was sprinkled once a year by the attending and ministering high priest. And the table makes us think of the Son of God, who is the true Bread which came down from heaven, from the throne of grace. And the seven candlesticks likewise makes us think of the Holy Spirit as He is the Spirit of God in Christ, and through which Spirit the covenant fellowship is wrought in our hearts, since this Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts. (cf Rev. 1:4-6)

Here we see the "pattern" emerge: it is out of the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit that the tabernacle of God is with men. Here we see the pattern of *Immanuel*, God-with-us!

It is in this *pattern* that Christ fits!

We ought to observe that it was already symbolized in the very furniture (instruments) that from this ark of the testimony, the Lord Himself ministered to our needs in his High Priest. The Lord Himself is the great LITURG! Notice that in this Ark of the Testimony there must be deposited the covenant Words of the ten commandments. This was no after-thought. Fact is that it belonged to the divine pattern. It fit into the design of God's covenant ministry. Yes, in this Ark too there was the pot of Manna, a remembrance of God feeding his people from heaven. And, lastly, there was the rod of Aaron which had miraculously budded. Taking these three together you will see another "pattern" emerge according to New Testament phraseology. It is that the true ministry of the High Priest in the temple is before God's throne, and that there are three things which belong to this ministry. These three are (1) the pure preaching of the Gospel of the Covenant of grace (2) the proper administration of the Sacraments (3) the exercise of Christian discipline. That these three are the earmarks of the true church in the world is not any man's guess, but it is the basic pattern of the temple ministry.

Now, let us not forget that it is Christ who is the real preacher of the Word of God; He is the one who makes the Sacraments efficacious by his Spirit; He also makes the Aaron's rod to blossom in the church and makes the spiritual discipline to be fruitful in repentance. That is His work.

And, now, let us underscore once more: it is above

all things important that we see that we *have* such an High Priest who ministers in the tabernacle of God, not pitched with man's hand. And where this Christ ministers, the Son perfect forever, there we have the true tabernacle. Here the reality is seen of Balaam's parable "How goodly are thy tents, o Jacob, and thy tabernacle, o Israel. As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, . . . And His kingdom shall be exalted." (Numbers 24: 6 f.f.)

THE SYLLOGISTIC PROOF OF CHRIST'S HEAVENLY MINISTRY (Hebrews 8:3)

The writer to the Hebrews more than once employs a certain syllogistic form of reasoning to prove his point. We need not repeat here what we stated in an earlier essay concerning the fact that such use of a syllogism is not rationalism, whereas both the content of the "major" as well as of the "minor premise" is taken from the Word of God. The same also holds for the "conclusion." The christian religion and the pattern of the heavenly temple is a reasonable "pattern." It has in it the logic of God's house.

We call your attention to verses 3 and 4 of this Chapter, where we read,

"For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have also somewhat to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests who offer gifts according to the law."

Yes, it belongs to the very nature of a high priest that he minister at the altar. Thus we read in Joel 1:8, 9 "Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn." (See also Isaiah 61:6; Jeremiah 33:21.) However, the point is that the priest which we have does in no sense of the term have any appointed tasks from his heavenly Father in the earthly temple which was pitched by Moses. His gifts and sacrifices are different.

We have this expressed in a kind of syllogism in the text:

1. In an earthly temple there are gifts and sacrifices offered by the priests appointed.
2. Christ is not an earthly priest appointed to stand in the earthly temple.
3. Conclusion: there were no earthly sacrifices for him to minister. He could not minister in the earthly temple.

Christ is a high priest in a temple, the real and the true tabernacle. He is made higher than the heavens. Hence, the readers must see that Christ does not fit in the earthly temple at all. He never brought any sacrifices in the earthly temple. Had He done so He would have been guilty of transgressing the temple ordinances, as was Uzziah, who was smitten with leprosy. Christ did not attempt to usurp the place of

Aaron. He came to fulfill the law and thus dissolved Aaron's priesthood. The zeal of God's house consumed him so that he came to take away the first that he might bring in the second. Hear Him say to the Old

Testament temple-authorities "break down this temple and I will build it in three days." (John 2:20)

Such an high priest we have who is sat down on the right hand of the majesty of God.

A Cloud of Witnesses

The Revolt of Absalom

Rev. B. Woudenberg

But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

II Samuel 15:10

Working quietly and effectively, Absalom turned the allegiance of the people away from his father and to himself. It seemed that everything was working in his favor. His father was sick with a severe and extended illness which prevented him from attending to his customary duties. Already advanced in years, it may well have been that many had concluded he would never recover and were looking about for the logical heir. Meanwhile, Joab, the one who would have been most likely to detect the subtlety of Absalom's actions, was busily preoccupied keeping the kingdom in order and had no time to spend watching over the sons of the king and their actions. It left full opportunity for Absalom to advertise as broadly as possible his most apparent virtues, and he had plenty to show. There was a handsome beauty in his appearance, with a flair for style and taste in whatever he did. His personality was warm and attractive with an underlying cleverness of mind and ambition. All of it he used in personal contacts with every person he met, no matter how humble, until the heart of the nation was held in his hand.

At last the time came when Absalom determined that he should act more decisively. Perhaps it was the fact that his father was recovering from his illness and threatening thereby to regain the attention and the allegiance of the people. Perhaps it was merely the fact that he felt that he had done all that he could in the way of winning the people without more overt actions. In any case, he deemed the time ripe for action and he took it.

In the first place, Absalom felt that he had to get away from Jerusalem. There David's power was still too strong and it was too easy for his actions to be watched from the royal palace.

The place which Absalom chose for the staging of his plans was Hebron. There were many things to be said in favor of this city. It was far enough removed

from Jerusalem that news did not spread from one to the other too rapidly. Moreover, it was a city which already had somewhat of a royal status inasmuch as David had first been crowned there himself. In fact, it was actually more a part of the background of Israel than was Jerusalem because it had always been an important center in the nation while Jerusalem was rather newly captured and established. The result was that even the inhabitants of the city would be inclined to appreciate any recognition which he gave to their city in favor of Jerusalem. And then, above all, Hebron was still close enough that he could march with an army from there to Jerusalem quickly enough so that his father would not have sufficient time to strengthen his relaxed defenses.

In order to get to Hebron without arousing suspicion, Absalom went to his father and set forth this request, "I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron. For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, if the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD."

This was a request that was sure to be granted by David because the king was always most anxious to recognize and encourage any indication on the part of his children that they were dedicating themselves to religious commitments. Even more, this was the one type of activity in which his father would approve of his taking a large company of men with him. Ordinarily his father had no interest in or sympathy for anything involving great pomp and show of any kind. To this there was only one exception — services of religious worship and dedication. Absalom by this time had a large number of men, over two hundred, who were in on his plot to overthrow the kingdom. These had to go with him, and to take such a large company along for any but religious purposes would have aroused his father's suspicion, or at least his disap-

proval. Now instead, he eagerly said to his son, "Go in peace," only too happy to find in him some indication of spiritual dedication.

Neither was this the extent of Absalom's preparations. Besides the two hundred intimates which went with him personally to Hebron, there were others whom he trusted sufficiently to send as messengers throughout the land of Israel. The message which he gave them contained the heart of his plot. It was this, "As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron."

Absalom's coup was surely the most clever that had ever been planned at that early stage in the world's history. Always before, a man seeking to gain control of a country had to start at a certain point or center and gradually work outward in an effort to broaden his influence. It was a dangerous move, providing a defender time to try to cut off the spread of this influence. Absalom, however, had established his influence all through the land before his plans were as much as known to his father against whom he was plotting. Now, he was ready to set off the revolt almost instantly in every corner of the country, leaving the defender no time to try to cut him off in his advance. David's opposition would surround him completely from the very first moment that he himself learned of the approaching danger. One blast of a trumpet taken up and repeated over and over again from hilltop to hilltop would spread the revolt through the land faster than anyone could possibly prepare to defend himself.

And still there was one more move in Absalom's preparations. He was not going to rely completely even upon his own reputation and influence among the people. He was determined to have other men of already established reputation with him, men whom the country recognized and would be most inclined to follow. It was not an easy thing to do, for David the king was well liked and respected by even the wisest and mightiest in the land. Nevertheless, there were men of ambition who would be able to recognize the thoroughness and ingenuity of Absalom's preparations and would be willing to join because it would be to their own advantage. One of these was one of David's most intimate counselors, Ahithophel of Gibeon.

Ahithophel held a position of greatest importance to the kingdom. Under David and under Joab, he shared with Ittai the Gittite the position of wiseman of the court, adviser to the king. Both of them, he and Ittai, were extremely well informed and clever men; but there was a difference between them. Ahithophel was a citizen of Giloh, a city of Judah, and thus a member of David's own tribe. Given his wisdom, it was to be expected that he should rise to such a high place within the kingdom. But Ittai was another matter. He was a foreigner, a Philistine from the city of Gath. He

had risen to his position of authority only because he had followed David over a period of many years proving himself faithful to David, to Israel, and to their God. And accordingly there was yet another difference between the men. Ahithophel was a man of pride and self-possession; he knew who he was, how to take care of himself, and where he wanted to go. Ittai, on the other hand, realized full well how completely dependent he was upon the good graces and kind consideration of the king; and he was meekly grateful for it.

At the time that Absalom left for Hebron, Ahithophel was away from Jerusalem too. He was at home in Giloh. Thus, one of the first things that Absalom did was to send a well-informed delegation to him and lay before him the whole plan that Absalom was about to set in motion. He had confidence in Ahithophel's discretion. He would be able to recognize a well worked out plan, and he was not one to neglect so evident an opportunity to continue his position of power and influence in the kingdom.

Neither was Absalom wrong in his evaluation of Ahithophel. No sooner was it made evident to him how successful Absalom was sure to be than he left his home in Giloh and came to Hebron to join Absalom.

Absalom would have liked to gain Ittai also; but his loyalty to David and to the nation of Israel was too deeply established to warrant the risk of trying. One had to be sure of men who were to be taken into such a dangerous conspiracy.

At last all was in readiness. It began with an elaborate sacrifice at Hebron. There was something almost blasphemous about it, starting a rebellion against the Lord's anointed king and one's own father with a sacrifice in dedication to God. But Absalom was indifferent to that. He never had been one to give much concern to the proper worship of Israel's God Jehovah. For himself, he maybe preferred the idolatrous worship which his mother's family practiced in Geshur. But this was Israel, and the people expected it to be a theocracy in dedication to Israel's God; and now was no time to make radical innovation in that regard. Rather, he should try to show that he was as much inclined to the worship of Jehovah as his father was.

It was at the height of this sacrificial feast that the trumpet sounded to be carried on in successive trumpet calls throughout the land. It was the appointed signal and all those who were in on the conspiracy knew what it meant. When the signal came to their villages and towns, they were to announce for all to hear, "Absalom reigneth in Hebron." It was not something planned, not something hoped to be; this was in fact the vow which he had made to himself for many years, he, Absalom, was to be king in Israel. And so in Hebron he had himself crowned Israel's king.

In all of the land of Israel, there was only one place that the message was not brought by Absalom's

preparations. In fact, he had as much as possible tried to prevent the news from coming there. Only when some loyal subject of his father's would come by foot to the royal city and report what was happening in the rest of the land would it be known; and, even then, it would be subjected to all kinds of question and doubt because of the apparent impossibility in what Absalom was doing. It all would give time for Absalom to gather his forces and to begin his march upon the royal city. The more time he had the better it would be.

The complete successfulness of Absalom's every move is hard to imagine. The fact was that David was not assured of what was taking place until Absalom was actually on the move from Hebron toward Jerusalem. It left him in an almost impossible position. Just recovering from his illness, he was hardly prepared to put up a struggle. In fact, it may well have been Absalom's hope to be able to take his father in his bed and put him quietly out of the way without anyone knowing exactly what had happened. If so, that part at least of his plan did not succeed. David was strong enough to travel; and that was all he could do. The

army was scattered through the outskirts of the empire keeping it in order, and it would take days and weeks to bring even a minimum fighting force together. Meanwhile, the city of Jerusalem had not even been prepared for defense, so strong had David's hold upon the kingdom seemed to be. But, perhaps more than anything else, the king did not have the heart to fight against his own son. The treachery hit him so deep that he could not even imagine resistance. In utter despair, he could only turn to his servants and say, "Arise, let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword."

Truly David was tasting what the prophet had meant when he said in the name of God, "Because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife, behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house . . . For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."

The Strength of Youth

INVOLVEMENT IN DISSENT

Rev. J. Korterling

Dissent is not an option, it is a duty.

A duty that confronts covenant youth wherever and whenever they see evil, injustice, and wrong.

A duty that has its motive not in hateful revenge, but the love of God and the neighbor.

A duty that is not bogged down in negative self destruction, but in the positive expression of the principles of one's Christian faith.

A duty that is to be expressed not in lawlessness, but within the framework of the existing laws.

Since dissent is a matter of conscience and duty, we should address ourselves in this last article on this subject, to the question, how should covenant youth become involved in expressing dissent.

We must keep in mind the important distinction between the involvement of the institute of the church and the organism of the church.

It is especially true in our day, that the church as institute is getting much too involved in social — political issues. The modern church has virtually abandoned her calling to preach the Word of God, and instead adopted a program of social action and involvement. This takes on many forms, pronouncements by the official church bodies on social — political issues, sports programs for the underprivileged in the neighborhood, demonstrations on

behalf of a certain cause, clergymen becoming so involved in civil rights organizations that they have no time for their duties as a minister of the Word of God.

This is not to say that the church institute has nothing to do with issues that are of a social or political nature. The calling of the church is to preach the Word of God and the Word of God speaks on many of these issues. The people of God need the guidance of the Word as it applies to problems relating to their daily lives. These include such subjects as labor unions and their evil, rioting and its corruption, the political implications of world government as it relates to the coming of anti-christ, war and the Scriptures, lawlessness or obedience to those in authority, witnessing to our neighbors concerning our faith in God, racial unrest and what the Christian attitude toward his neighbor must be.

Besides this, the institute of the church must decide concerning issues of dispute between brethren, and sometimes these issues pertain to social and economic questions, or for that matter any aspect of our life. Hence in the past our assemblies have considered the issue of labor unions, of training the military on the Sabbath day, etc. If for example one of our young people would become involved in a public demonstration and be consequently thrown in jail, his consistory

would have to take a position whether that was right or wrong of him.

Here, however, we deal with the organism of the church.

By this we mean that we are members of the church in living relationship with our living Lord through faith and that because of this we do not shut ourselves off from the world, but live in the world testifying by word and deed that we are partakers of the anointing of Christ. This we must do in every sphere of life. Within the most intimate circle, the home, covenant young people reveal their Christian identity by loving obedience to their parents, by contributing to the family bond as e.g. respecting the place of brothers and sisters in the homelife, helping with the many chores that must be done in every household, etc. This same Christian identity carries over to school life. A Christian young person should reveal his identity by an eagerness to learn. Just think of the importance of these years for all of life. We have the opportunity not only to apply ourselves full time to learning, something which will perhaps never happen again, but to take advantage of the knowledge explosion under the guidance of instructors who will place these facts within the framework of the Word of God. Likewise, we must speak to the world outside our homes and schools. We are born as citizens of this country and thereby have certain rights, privileges, and duties. Since we are born in the sphere of a Republican form of government, we have the added responsibility to become involved in social and political issues. The voice of the people forms the basis for laws and policies in this country. As Christians we are part of that people and must exercise our calling to speak out as those who are influenced by the anointing of Christ. It is not first of all a question whether we will get anywhere with our influence; more than likely it will be very little. We who have our conscience bound to the Word of God may not use that as an excuse to remain silent. We must testify to the world that they err in the things they do contrary to the Word of God and they must be shown what the Word of God demands. It's quite easy for us to criticize the American public and American government *among ourselves*, but it takes a great deal more courage to direct that criticism to those who are guilty and to tell them so.

We must be involved in dissent!

Must we go it alone or are there others with whom we can join in expressing this dissent? From our observations and conclusions in former articles, there definitely are organizations with whom we cannot join. All organizations that advocate "love" as interpreted by humanism or christian brotherhood should be off-limits. Our joining with such groups would constitute a denial of the Word of God itself. All attempts on their part to assist the poor or those discriminated

against leave the poor in their misery. Unless the atoning and saving blood of Christ for His elect Church forms the impetus of all dissent against evil and promotion of truth and justice, such attempts necessarily fail. Still more however, joining with these organizations will prove themselves an unequal yoke which will drag the "well meaning" Christian into the pit of anti-christ. The Christian will not be able to steer such organizations to a right course; on the contrary he will soon be walking in the wrong direction with them. History speaks loud and clear of this fact.

Are there then organizations with which the Christian may very well cooperate? It is beyond the scope of this article to offer any conclusions on this score. It stands to reason that every organization would have to be carefully studied and evaluated. If there are some of our readers that have suggestions in this connection, it would be definitely advantageous to investigate this possibility and evaluate them in light of their purpose, basis, and methodology.

More importantly for now, we would like to propose to our covenant youth a method of getting involved in expressing dissent. This you understand is simply a suggestion and should be discussed thoroughly before followed.

Would it not be a good idea if the Federation Board of Protestant Reformed Young Peoples Societies would formulate a statement concerning any one of the moral, social, or political issues, as e.g. the racial problem of segregation or integration, war in this nuclear age, or such like and that such a statement be discussed in the societies during the year and then presented to the summer convention for consideration and adoption.

There are some problems with this, but also some advantages.

First, it seems to me this would avoid the problem of the church's involvement in matters that are not her concern, since it would arise out of the organic church. Our young people would be doing this as covenant young people who also must act as citizens.

Secondly, this would give our young people a reason to become interested in issues that are vital to their lives, or if they are already interested, an outlet for expression. From all practical points of view it makes a great deal of difference as far as *interest* is concerned, whether one discusses a subject just to add his opinion to a lot of others, or whether they are discussing a subject in order to come to a conclusion.

Thirdly, this discussion would take place within the framework of responsible leadership. For the sake of all concerned, the greatest apprehension one might possibly have in going in this direction would be the real possibility of dissention over dissention. Not only this, but youth themselves can become rather far out at times. Yet, I am sure that these fears must not extinguish the zeal that is kindled in our youth for

getting involved in issues that will affect their entire life. For the sake of an informed church of tomorrow and a church that is not lulled to sleep by indifference, our young people must become very much alert to these issues. For this reason I am sure that if this method could be followed, there are enough responsible people involved who can guide the youth in their thinking. Consider how this would add to the interest the society leaders would take in these discussions; the advisors to the Federation Board can guide in the formulation of any position, all our young people and ministers would be given opportunity to discuss any issue in the Beacon Lights. Only through free and open discussion can we ever come to any meaningful conclusions.

Fourthly, if after discussing an issue during the society season and after formulating a proposal to be considered by the convention, and the convention adopt such a statement of position this could serve as a guide for the conduct of our young people. This statement would be a well reasoned position based upon the Word of God which would show to our covenant youth how and why they are to act the way we expect them to do.

Finally, this same statement would serve the useful purpose of expressing before the world around us what and why we act the way we do. There are many organizations, social and political as well as religious who have a wrong position on important issues

dividing our country. One often hears young people, and many adults for that matter, ask, how can we express our views to others? We do not feel right in simply letting the world go by and smugly criticizing the status quo among each other, but saying nothing to those who are in positions of leadership. It seems to me such a statement of position could be used very well in informing our congressmen, our President, or anyone else where we stand. If we believe that other organizations do not take a proper position we can forward our convictions to them.

As was said before, this idea is presented for discussion. To every issue there are pro and cons, so there must be many more than have been brought forth in this short article. May I suggest that if this idea warrants further consideration, it be taken up in our youth paper, the Beacon Lights.

In conclusion, the thought of expressing dissent against evil is a sobering one to say the least. Neglect of expression will guarantee to us, at least for a time, a place in the midst of this anti-christian kingdom. The more we become involved in a proper form of dissent, the more we must be willing to bear the reproach of the world. Christ tells us, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," Matt. 10:28.

May God make our covenant youth fearless defenders of the faith.

From our Mission Committee

Mission Progress

Rev. J. Kortering

Strictly speaking there always is progress in missions.

The Word of God never returneth void; God always accomplishes His will through the Word preached, since the Sword of the Spirit is a double edged sword and is a savor both of life unto life and death unto death.

Yet, it is significant for us to recall the joy that flooded the early church when they witnessed the salvation of souls through the preaching. Before the questioning church, Peter told of the saving power of the Spirit upon the house of Cornelius, and their reaction was expressed in these words, "They held their peace and glorified God saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life," Acts. 11:18. Similarly, Paul rehearsed before the church at Antioch all that God had done with them and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles, Acts 14:27.

Numerical growth means something to the church. Not as if this becomes occasion for boasting, for then it would be sin. Rather, the joy in growth is centered in God, for He addeth unto the church daily such as should be saved. This is accomplished either by God's act of saving from darkness into the light, or by lifting up one of His children who have a meager expression of faith unto a more complete and rich expression in the truth. By the preaching of the Word the entire church is prepared for the return of Christ in glory.

Today, we may share in this same joy that marked the early church.

Evidence of God's blessings upon the ministry in Jamaica and in our own land abound in many ways.

Most significant is the fact that for the first time a minister has received the call to become missionary to the island. This does not mean of course that now we have a missionary to devote full time to this field. Rev. J. Heys received this call through the calling church,

First Church of Grand Rapids, only recently and he is now considering the call. Yet, this is meaningful in itself and certainly is progress concerning this phase of the work on the island. We as churches have declared before God that it is our desire that a man work full time on the island. We realize the needs of these people and take into account the fact that they have a willing heart and a listening ear. We also believe that these needs have been directed to our churches and that we have the calling to provide for them to the utmost of our power. Hence, the significance of extending a call for missionary to Jamaica is this, we believe it is the will of God for our churches to be busy in ministering to these people even to the extent of having one of our ministers work there full-time; we now must humbly seek the guidance of God *who* this man must be. We can easily realize the magnitude of considering such a call; our prayers as churches must arise before God that He guide Rev. Heys in this decision. Since there are many facets which will involve Synodical decisions, he will have until after Synod to make this decision.

The Synod of 1968 instructed the Mission Committee to make arrangements to have men work on the island as much as possible. All consistories were contacted to enquire whether their minister of any of the elders would be available for working on the island for a 3-6 month period. In evaluating the response, it appeared that this was not feasible, so the Mission Committee decided that we should send 2 emissaries, Rev. G. Lubbers and Mr. H. Meulenberg of First Church, to work for about 2 months. We requested Southwest Church to release Rev. Lubbers for the 2 months of April and May. Their decision was heartening to the Mission Committee and should be to all our churches. Even though Rev. Lubbers had labored for 6 weeks in the Pella area, in fact was still there when the request for Jamaica arrived at the Consistory, they, after conferring with Rev. Lubbers, decided that they felt constrained to help the Jamaican churches with the confidence that God would use their minister to further this cause.

The Lord willing Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Meulenberg will leave April 8 by plane and arrive the same evening in Montego Bay, Jamaica. Since this is the first time that our emissaries will leave from Grand Rapids, the Mission Committee decided to meet this same morning in order that we can first gather at the airport and see these brethren and sisters off, with the prayer that God will use them and care for them.

Their work will be more concentrated than previously. Since the labors in the past have still been of an investigatory nature, we now believe that more intense work should be done in one area, rather than preach in so many churches across the island. This will take place D.V. in Lucea. This church was the one with whom we had our first contact and is strategically located, being

near to a larger number of other churches. The schedule of work includes preaching Sunday mornings in Lucea and evenings in one of the other churches in that area. Sunday afternoon will be occupied with a Bible study group in Lucea and Thursday evening there will be a catechism class in this same congregation. Perhaps during the earlier part of the week there will be time to visit some of the other churches. Elder Meulenberg will be investigating details as to the housing for a man who would accept the call, his status on the island if he would work there for a number of years, and what is required to get government recognition of the churches there. The importance of this later matter is connected with the licensure of the ministers to perform marriage ceremonies. If these churches become recognized by the government, we will be able to ship goods to them duty free.

Since our last article, more letters of thanks were received from the various congregations for the 40 pounds sent to them to help with the care of their poor. A representative letter follows, "To our synod, and our mission committee, Dear and Esteemed Brethren and Friends, We the Consistory of elders and deacons and the whole congregation of Cave Mountain Prot. Ref. Church send many many thanks for the 40 pounds to be distributed to the poor and needy, widows, orphans, sick, and some who cannot obtain work for some time. This amount has been distributed quite satisfied to us as the whole congregation. May our covenant God who is the Giver of all things who has provided this out of His great treasure for the poor and needy ever bless the store basket that it shall never go empty as you give to the poor and needy brethren of the Protestant Reformed Churches in Jamaica." Similar letters were received from the following churches: Bel Mont, Castle Mountain, Mahoe, Hope Hill, Port Maria, North Hampton, Fellowship Hall, Islington, Crowder, and Cambridge.

Interest among our people in helping the Jamaicans is very high. This is evident from the gifts received from societies, schools, and individuals. Rev. Heys informed us that he has contacted a Bible society who will match every dollar we invest in the purchase of Bibles, if we use them for distributing to people that do not have their own Bibles. The price of each Bible is only \$1.35 and this includes a better binding, more suitable for that climate.

Rev. G. Vanden Berg has prepared Baptismal Certificates and Membership Cards with the name of the Jamaican Church on it. These also have been distributed among them.

More details will be presented D.V. to the Synod as well as the report of our emissaries who plan to return prior to the meeting of Synod.

Our hearts were also gladdened when we heard that the Word was well received in Pella. Since the first of the year, Pella has had the presence of a minister

continuously. Rev. Lubbers labored there for 6 weeks and this was followed by Rev. Veldman for another 6 weeks. Future plans are to have Rev. D. Kuiper succeed Rev. Veldman, since Rev. C. Hanko was not able to be away from home for that length of time, and Rev. Engelsma is planning on laboring in Pella for part of May and June. This little flock has experienced the fastest and greatest rate of growth than any of our churches. Prior to a more concerted effort of labor, they numbered about 3 or 4 members and now they have 24 souls, 7 families. At last report there have been from 24 — 38 individuals attending the afternoon service and mid-week lectures.

From the above report, it is obvious that mission work is becoming more and more a joint effort of all our ministers and churches. When we had a "Home Missionary" this work was from every practical point of view left to the Mission Committee and the missionary. Now however, mission efforts are shared by a larger number of our ministers who are available for this work. This touches our local congregations when the minister is gone for an extended period of time and when those who do not leave home to labor either in Pella or Jamaica have to assist in the supply of the pulpit of the minister who is away. Sometimes this involves reading services in the local congregation while their minister is away from home. Other times this involves having services a different time of the day so that available ministers can preach 3 times and each congregation can have their own service and still have a minister present. All of this speaks well for our churches in that there is a willingness to work together and share in this important ministry.

The pamphlet that deals with a testimony concerning the Dekker Case, written by Prof. Hoeksema, has been distributed. About 10,000 copies have been sent to various individuals throughout this country.

The Literature Publication and Distribution Committee has made progress. They are having printed about 5,000 copies of the pamphlet, *What is Truly Reformed*, by Rev. Hanko. This will be a 4 page leaflet available to our local committees. This same committee has drawn up a list of subjects and writers for more pamphlets. These will treat the doctrine of the last things and should prove interesting to our people and be useful in distributing to others outside our churches. Such subjects as the idea of the end of all things, the four horsemen, the great tribulation, the apostasy in the church, pre-millennialism, etc. will be forthcoming.

The radio sub-committee has considered the station at Yankton, South Dakota whether this should be continued or not. The Mission Committee adopted the advice that before we change our present broadcasting arrangement we should have a basis of evaluation. The only request for response that is directed to the listening audience is to send in for a copy of the broadcast sermon. It is impossible to evaluate the listening audience on the basis of the number of people that send in for the sermon. So we advised Synod that a "letter month" be conducted over all our stations requesting the listeners that if they desire the broadcast to be continued over their station, they notify the station or a Grand Rapids address that they so desire. With this response, we will be able to evaluate the listening audience and have a basis of comparison between stations.

May the prayers of our churches arise to God that He continue to guide these efforts and in a special way provide Synod with wisdom as they meet and decide the future of this work.

Jehovah is a faithful covenant God. The progress in missions is His work; to Him alone be the glory.

Pages From The Past

Believers and Their Seed

Chapter IV

The Theory of Presupposed Regeneration Evaluated (continued)

Rev. Herman Hoeksema

Now it is our conviction that we cannot arrive at a correct view of the seed of the covenant as long as we hesitate to accept the clear teaching of the Word of God that it is not all Israel that is called Israel, that not all the children born in the historical manifestation of God's covenant on earth are also actually children of the promise, but that the line of election and reprobation also cuts right through the visible manifestation

of the covenant and makes separation, always and again separating between Israel according to the flesh and Israel according to the promise. Or, to put it negatively, we shall never be able to hit upon a pure, Scriptural conception of this truth as long as we try to hold fast to the view which wants to presuppose that all children born in the covenant in its external form are regenerated.

In the first place, we may certainly point out that

infant baptism and the propriety of infant baptism cannot rest upon a presupposition. It is true, as Kuyper remarks and as others also have often remarked, that also the Anabaptists and Baptists cannot attain to any certainty with respect to the spiritual condition of the members of the church who are to be baptized, for the simple reason that no one can look into the heart, that it can never be determined with absolute certainty with respect to someone else whether he is regenerated, much less elect, or not; and that, as a consequence, also for the Baptists this must remain a presupposition. They want to baptize only believers. But whether someone is to be considered a believer or not must certainly depend upon his confession. That confession, however, might not be genuine. In fact, there is every ground in Scripture to believe that there are confessors who are not believers. And thus one nevertheless arrives ultimately at a presupposition. True as this may be, however, this does not yet give us the right to base our baptism of little children upon a presupposition.

Much rather does all this lead to the conclusion that if it be true that the visible church may only administer baptism to those who are regenerated or to believers, and to no one else, then, strictly speaking, the church should cease baptizing altogether. The baptism of infants must rest upon much firmer ground than that of a mere presupposition. But even apart from all this, it remains true that the presupposition of which we are here speaking is a spiritual and psychological impossibility, for the very simple reason that we know beforehand that what we wish to presuppose is not true. It is altogether impossible to presuppose something of which we are certain that it is not in harmony with reality as revealed in God's Word and as we learn to know it from history and from our daily experience. Now we *know* that not all the children of the covenant in the external sense of the word are regenerated. We *know* that not everyone who is born in the church is also elect. That knowledge leaves this presupposition without any basis, therefore; and indeed, it makes this presupposition impossible.

That the intended presupposition is not in harmony with reality will be clear to anyone who is willing to learn from and to live by God's Word. Historically the line of God's covenant runs from Adam through Seth to Noah; from Noah through Shem to Abraham; from Abraham through Israel and Judah and David to Christ, in order from Christ to affect children of Abraham among all nations of men. But wherever one may view that historical line of God's covenant as it runs in generations, never is all that is called God's people truly the people of God. The children of Seth intermingled with the children of Cain, something which presupposes, of course, that not all the Sethites were also real, spiritual children of the covenant. In the tenth generation the children of Shem, out of whose

midst Abraham was called, are idol-worshippers: a proof that also at that time the carnal seed was mixed with the spiritual seed. And how is it later with the children of Abraham and the generations of Israel? Sometimes the Lord addresses that people and causes His prophets to complain about that people as though there were no spiritual element among them whatsoever and as though they were all reprobate before His face. Indeed, they are called God's people; indeed, they are the people who have the covenants and the promises; but they are nevertheless not children of the promise. Concerning that people the Lord complains that all day long He has stretched forth His hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people, (Isaiah 65: 2; Romans 10: 21). It is a people that do err in their hearts, and that have not known God's ways. They are worse than the heathen: for the latter are uncircumcized in their flesh, but Israel is uncircumcized of heart, (Psalm 95:10; Jeremiah 9: 26; Hebrews 3:10). They were stiffnecked and uncircumcized of heart and ears, who always resisted the Holy Ghost, (Acts 7:51). The prophet Isaiah is sent to this people to proclaim the Word of the Lord to them with the express purpose that hearing they shall hear and not understand, and seeing they shall see and not perceive. He must make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, in order that they may not hear and may not see and may not understand and be converted and God should heal them. And all this must continue until the land is left without inhabitant and until the cities are laid waste and until the Lord shall have removed them far away, (Isaiah 6: 9-12). It is a people that kills and stones the prophets, that always and again despises their word, that follows after strange gods, that imitates all the abominations of the heathen, so that they become like Sodom and Gomorrah, crucify the Lord of glory, and thus are themselves rejected, their house being left unto them desolate. Who, with an eye for the history which God's Word has revealed to us, would have the courage to say that we must presuppose of all the children who are born in the covenant that they are regenerated? In the old dispensation they all drank of the same spiritual rock, which was Christ, after they had all been baptized into Moses; and they all ate the same spiritual food. But in the majority of them God was not well-pleased; and He struck them down in the dreadful wilderness, having taken offense at them.

The question is: How do you explain all this? How is it to be understood that those who were born in the line of the generations of God's covenant, to whom pertained the adoption, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, nevertheless finally did not obtain the promise? Is it perhaps thus, that God's covenant is conditional and the realization of it depends upon the free will of man? Is there after all, in the historical

sphere of the covenant on earth, a certain general covenant grace which can be either accepted or rejected? Must we after all speak of a well-meant offer of grace and salvation on God's part to a people who were in such a dreadful manner rejected by their God? The apostle is also occupied with this question in Romans 9. But there God's Word offers us an altogether different conception. And the conception which Scripture there offers comes down to this, in brief: God's people, according to God's covenant here on earth, come to manifestation in the line of successive generations; those generations, according to God's

own appointment, bear the sign of the covenant and are called by the name of God's people, with whom in a natural-organic manner they are intertwined; but this does just exactly not mean that everyone in those generations, head for head and soul for soul, is also a true child of God. All who are of Israel are not Israel. And not the children of the flesh, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For the line of election and reprobation cuts directly through the generations of the covenant.

Along this line only can we arrive at a Scriptural conception of believers and their seed.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Sunday School teachers and pupils of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to one of our teachers, Mrs. Floyd Jansma, her husband, and children in the loss of their son and brother,

WALLY LORNE

whom the Father took to His house of many mansions at the youthful age of 15 years.

May the bereaved family be comforted with the Word of God found in Rev. 14:13, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" and in Rev. 20:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Egbert Gritters, Pres.

Mrs. T. Jansma, Sec'y.

ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT

On the eighteenth of April, the Lord willing, our beloved parents,

MR. and MRS. PETER B. REITSMA, will celebrate their thirtieth wedding anniversary. We thank the Lord that He has so richly blessed us with their covenant home, and pray that we may ever be worthy successors to the Truth they have so diligently taught us.

With Deepest Affection,
Their Children and Grandchildren:
Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Reitsma
and Richard
Mr. and Mrs. Dale Reitsma
Mr. and Mrs. James Huizinga
and Sharon
Karen and Gary
Marilyn
Charles

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School of Grand Rapids, Michigan will need teachers for the 1969-70 school year. Needed will be a Kindergarten

teacher, a First Grade teacher, and one Junior High teacher. If you can consider one of these positions, kindly contact the school.

Clare Kuiper, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to fellow member E. Van Egdom and family in the passing of their mothers:

MRS. HATTIE STELLINGA

and

MRS. PETER VAN EGDOM

May the comfort of the Word of God as found in Psalm 84:7 — "They go from strength to strength, everyone of them in Zion appeareth before God" — sustain them in their sorrow.

Rev. Robert Decker, Pres.

Henry Bleyenbergh, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church extends its deepest sympathy to Mrs. Floyd Jansma in the death of her son

WALLY

May the God of all grace sustain her in her sorrow. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." II Cor. 5:1.

Mr. Egbert Gritters, Pres.

Mrs. Bert Van Maanen, Sec'y.

STUDENT AID

Notice is hereby given that students who attend our Seminar the final three years and qualify are eligible for financial assistance.

Please contact the secretary of our Student Aid Comm.

Gerrit Pipe Sec.

1463 Ardmore St.

Grand Rapids, Mich.

News From Our Churches

March 18, 1969
Loveland, Colorado

Report of Classis West, held in South Holland, Illinois
on
March 5, 1969

Rev. C. Hanko presided over the Classis which met all day Wednesday. Thirteen elders and eight ministers represented the twelve churches of Classis West. For the first time, the congregation of Isabel sent to Classis a minister of her own, Rev. R. Moore.

Classis drew up the following schedule of classical appointments, which includes the appointments which Classis West asked Classis East to provide. **FORBES:** March 23 & 30 – R. Moore; April 13 & 20 – R. Decker; May 11 & 18 – G. Lanting; June 15 & 22 – C. Hanko; July 13 & 20 – Classis East; August 10 & 17 – G. Vanden Berg; September 7 – R. Moore. **PELLA:** July 13 & 20 – G. Lanting; August 10 & 17 – Classis East; August 31 – R. Decker; September 7 – G. Vanden Berg. **HULL:** March 23 & 30 – G. Vanden Berg; April 13 & 20 – Classis East; May 11 & 18 – Classis East; June 15 & 22 – R. Decker; July 13 & 20 – Classis East; August 10 – G. Lanting; August 31 & September 7 – B. Woudenberg. **LOVELAND:** May 25, June 1 & 8 – R. Moore. **SOUTH HOLLAND:** Classis East is requested to supply South Holland during the next six months.

Oak Lawn's consistory brought an overture to Classis, that Classis decide to reject the program of Social Security for ministers, recently established by the government. Oak Lawn pointed out that our churches themselves have a fund for emeritus ministers, and that it is the responsibility of the churches, not of the government, to care for needy ministers. Classis decided that it could not reject the Social Security program because the law now is that all ministers must pay social security tax, unless one has conscientious objections to governmental insurance. This overture, however, will be on the Agenda of Synod, with the request of Classis West that Synod review our emeritation program in the light of the recent development of Social Security for ministers.

The subsidy requests of Doon, Edgerton, Forbes (with a minister), Isabel, Loveland, Lynden, Oak Lawn, Pella (with a minister), and Randolph were approved and forwarded to Synod. Classis also approved the request of Isabel to ask for collections in the churches of Classis East. The purpose of these collections will be the assistance of Isabel in buying a home for their minister and his family. This request

also goes to Synod for final approval.

There were elections for various positions: Stated Clerk (3 years) – Rev. D. Engelsma; Assistant Stated Clerk (3 years) – Rev. R. Decker; Classical Committee of Classis West (1 year) – Elder A. Hendriks; Delegate ad examina, primus (3 years) – Rev. C. Hanko; Delegate ad examina, secundus (3 years) – Rev. D. Kuiper; Church Visitors – Rev. C. Hanko and Rev. G. Lanting; Minister delegates to Synod – D. Engelsma, C. Hanko, G. Lanting and G. Vanden Berg (Alternates – R. Decker, D. Kuiper, R. Moore and B. Woudenberg); Elder delegates to Synod – T. Feenstra, G. Griess, H. Huiskens and C. Van Der Molen (Alternates – G. Broekhuis, J. Haak, L. Nelson and B. Worries).

The cost of this Classis was \$1730.14.

Classis West will meet next in Randolph, Wisconsin on September 3, 1969, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk
Classis West

First Church gave Rev. Heys an extension of time to consider his call to be Missionary to Jamaica until after Synod meets in June. Synod must make certain decisions pertaining to this call, which awaits information to be gathered by our emissaries, Rev. Lubbers and Elder Meulenberg who will be working there from April 8 to May 26.

Rev. Veldman, while working in the Pella, Iowa area, has conducted services twice each Sunday and a Prayer Day evening service, has lectured three times on, "The Child and the Promise"; "The Reformation and the Modern Merger of Churches;" and "Our Future." He writes that he has thoroughly enjoyed his work and has appreciated the response upon his labors. Their new building was formerly a medical clinic comprising several rooms, one ample in size for public worship services. This room is furnished with a pulpit, pews, piano, and wall clock. Rev. Decker declined the call Pella had extended him, so that they again face making a new choice for a minister to serve them.

... see you in church,

J.M.F