

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Meditation

The Church's Unity in Rich Distinction

Rev. M. Schipper

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

Ephesians 4: 4-7.

As God is!
As it is by Divine ordination in creation!
So also it is by the intention of the same decreeing

God with the church!
Unity revealed in multiplicity!
God is one, but also three! The richness of the glory

of the life of God is revealed in Scripture as consisting in a threefold distinction of Personal existence in a most absolute unity of nature and essence.

Indeed, God is one!

One in essence is He! One in thinking and willing and acting. One in all His adorable attributes. One in truth and faithfulness, one in righteousness and holiness, one in grace and mercy. One in all the wonders of His might and radiations of His majesty. The one simple, not complex, God is He; in Whom all the glorious virtues of His Holy Being are one. Like the white sunbeam shining through the raindrop appears to our eye in sevenfold color, while the seven colors are still the one sun-ray; so is God the richness of glorious virtues, but all these together are yet the one, eternally to be praised Being. And this unity of Being is the very ground for the perfection of His unending covenant life.

Yet God is also three in Persons! The Father living that one life as Father. The Son as Son, and the Holy Spirit as Spirit living that one life with the Father. So that of the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit the eternal God lives the unending, glorious life of the only true covenant God. Were He three and not one, there would be no bond of perfect fellowship. Were God one and not three, there would be no interchange of life, but stark monotony. The distinction of Trinity of Persons on the background of unity of Being is the richness of the life of God which He purposed to reflect also outside of Himself in all the works of His hands.

Thus it is also with the life of all creatures! There is in the individual existence of the creature as well as in the creatures mutually a rich distinction with harmonious unity according to the mind of the Creator. This unity with distinction is the law of the life of the creation. Also here the lack of unity would break the harmony of fellowship, while the lack of rich distinction would leave only a stark monotony.

So it is also with the life of the church of Jesus Christ!

This is what the Word of God in our text is all about!

Two things must be kept in mind as we meditate on it. The text is highly instructive; but in the light of its context is also extremely practical. The church is to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith she is called. (Verse 1). In all humility and meekness, and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. (Verse 2). The richness of goodness and grace of God which is her portion, she is to reveal in the unity of the Spirit. (Verse 3). But shall she be able to comply with this admonition, it lies in the very nature of the case that the richness of the unity of the Spirit must be real, spiritual, reality. Of this ideal, and reality in principle the apostle speaks.

Behold, then, first of all, the unity in which the rich distinction rests!

There is one body! Not many, but one body is she! The realization and revelation of one Divine thought!

An organic whole! Nor is she an aggregate of different unrelated parts, but an organism of dependent members. Quite different is she from a society. The latter comes into being in a mechanical way, the members adding themselves to each other and to other members by agreement — while the former, the church, has one life principle from which she has her existence. The society consists of a membership which can be increased or diminished — while the church as organism cannot be increased or decreased without destroying her unity. All the members of the church serve the whole, while each is dependent on the other. The members have significance only when they are in their proper place in the whole and so long as they serve the whole. As in the human body “the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; and the head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you.” So it is in the church, the body of Christ! The members are dependent on the whole and on each other. How important it is for the church in the world that she thoroughly understand this to fulfill her calling!

And one Spirit!

As there is one soul in the body, which thinks, wills, desires; which brings the whole body into subjection, which rules the movements of the body, directs and leads it, so there is one Spirit, the Spirit of God, as He is given to the ascended and glorified Redeemer, and therefore is the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ Who lives and has taken up His abode in the church.

Mark well, there are not all kinds of opposing spirits which live in the members of the church, but there is one Spirit. One Spirit is in all, ruling the thinking and willing of all the members of the whole body of Christ. There is therefore in all the members only one mind; and this one mind is the mind of Christ. Moreover, to be noticed too is the fact that no one possesses this Spirit of Christ alone and separate from the body. Each has the riches of the Spirit only in connection with and in his own place in the body of Christ.

Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling!

The apostle brings the unity of the Spirit into immediate connection with the one hope to which we all are called. The reason for this is not difficult to discover. The one hope we have, to which we aspire, comes from that one Spirit of Christ. Hope, you understand, not first of all in the sense of an activity on our part; but more particularly as object to which we are called — is the glory merited by Christ and prepared by Him for His people. Through this one Spirit of the glorified Lord comes the hope as the object of our expectation and longing. This object of hope is for all alike, namely, the perfect conformity to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as complete deliverance from the body of this death in which we now dwell.

One Lord we have! Whose possession we are! To Whom we belong in life and death, in body and soul. To Whom we were given of the Father, and Who purchased

us with His own blood. Who rules over us and in us by His Word and Spirit. The Church, therefore, has not many lords, and heads. Nor are there in the Church lords and subjects — but all are subjects of that one Lord.

One faith! Many things may cause the unity of the church to be hid from our vision but there can be no question that the essential unity of faith exists among all true believers in Christ. And that unity of faith is seen, first of all, in its object and contents. The church has one confession which she holds up as a banner in the midst of the world describing what she believes. But her faith is not limited to her confession. It is also as a living, spiritual bond uniting her subjectively to Christ, and to all the members of His body. Out of that one faith she lives out of Christ and becomes partaker of all His benefits.

One baptism! Not does the apostle have in mind here the form, but rather the essence of baptism. By this one baptism we are separated from the world, and ingrafted into Christ, having part with Him in His suffering, death, and resurrection. We are become the friends of God and are of His party in the world of darkness. We have been clothed with His uniform, and are designated as lights in the world, walking worthy of our vocation.

One God and Father of all! This is the apex, the highest point of all, the vertex to which all the other aspects of unity point, and in which they all find not only their source but also their purpose. God Himself is the fountain, cause, origin of the glorious unity of the church. He willed this beautiful unity before the world began in Divine wisdom. He chose us in Christ Jesus. He ordained the Son to become Head and Mediator of that one church. He prepared Christ and sent Him to suffer and die, but also to rise again and ascend to highest glory for the church. He gave His one Spirit to Christ and dwells in Him and through Him in the church, filling her with all spiritual blessings. To this the apostle climbs in revealing the great unity. He, one God and Father of all is above all — above the church with her Head. He is through all — i.e., through all the glorious body, working and filling with His grace. And He is in you all — living in us through the Spirit of Christ, and tabernacling with us.

Such is ideally and principally the unity of the church!

A unity richly distinguished!

Unto every one of us is given grace! The entire body and each member of the body of Christ receives grace.

Grace! That spiritual gift which God through Christ gives to the church! It includes all spiritual gifts, all the grace, in which the church participates and to which she falls heir. The entire church receives grace which is essentially one. The reference undoubtedly is to the reception of the one Spirit, one hope, baptism, communion of friendship with God, the Father of all. Grace includes justification, sanctification, forgiveness of sins,

adoption unto children, spiritual knowledge of God, life of the resurrection, eternal life. This all is the one grace which all receive and in which all participate.

Yet all do not possess this grace in the same way and in the same measure! That all do not receive in the same measure is due to the fact that in the body of Christ all do not occupy the same place. Each receives grace in such measure as coincides with his place in the organism. As in the human body all members are not the same but are richly distinguished; so it is in the body of Christ. All the members are not the same. All serve the same purpose, but not in the same manner and in the same capacity. One is great, another small; one is on the foreground, another on the background; one teaches, another is taught; one rules, another serves. There is communion and exchange. Thus each member is in particular blessed and increases and grows in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Thus the church shines in richly distinguished beauty. Each member receives and uses the one grace in his own manner and place. This goes to the smallest particular. Though we cannot now see the place which each has, yet we know it is true to the smallest detail — the simple housewife to the greatest prophet — the smallest babe to the greatest apostle.

But is not the apostle speaking too idealistically of the church? Where should we look for the church which is so wonderfully united, and so richly distinguished? How is it that where'er we look we see the church most usually in history a divided and a splintered group?

Indeed, there are several factors which explain not what she is, but how the church so often hides this unity and the unity is disturbed! First of all, we should mark that the church is not yet perfect according to the Divine plan. Is it not true that part of the church is triumphant in heaven, while another part enjoys this victory only in principle and is therefore militant on earth? Is it not also true that part of the church is not yet born and must still come into historical existence? And, are there not various conditions which hinder the church in the realization of her unity? such conditions as include the elements of place, time, difference of language, separation of race and color. And, most of all as we look at a particular manifestation of the church such as our own, where we would expect to see more of this unity richly distinguished than anywhere else — is not the element of sin the disturbing element disrupting the unity and withholding her from reaching perfection? Sin — that disturbing factor that brings with it separation, corruption, and death — which still dwells with us as a body and as individuals. Sin — whose intent is to destroy, disrupt the peace and unity of the church and disturb the love-life of the church. Sin — that seeks the honor of self, not that of Christ; that would rather see the destruction of the brother than to humble itself and to be long-suffering and forbearing.

And for the same reasons often the rich distinction

that ideally characterizes the unity of the church bedims the radiations of those distinctions. When the eye will no longer see, but is jealous of the ear; and the foot will no longer bear, but wills to be borne; and the hand will no longer work because it wants another place in the body. When all would be teachers, and no longer to be taught; when all would be rulers, and no longer subjects; when there are those who seek no longer what is in Christ, but seek themselves.

But so it should not be! And so it shall not forever be!

Therefore the apostle admonishes to strive to keep the unity in the bond of peace, and sets before us the

ideal for which each by grace and all together by grace should seek to attain unto it.

When you look in on a battle-ship cruising along you do not see its symbolic unity, nor the wonder of its rich distinction. Some men are reading books, others are sunning themselves, and others are playing games. But when the command comes: Man Your Stations! then all run to their places whether they be high or low. Then you see the unity and rich distinction of the battle-ship. And the apostle very really sounds the command: Man Your Stations! No more clearly is this order sounded than in our text. And no more necessary is obedience to this command than today!

Editorials

Publication News

“Behold, He Cometh!”

The very title tells you immediately that in his thorough-going exposition of the Book of Revelation the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema discerned the key-note of this part of Scripture. And this key-note of Revelation is sounded again and again in the course of the exposition which runs through some 53 chapters and 725 pages. In my editorial work of preparing this book for publication the thought struck me repeatedly that this exposition is so “relevant” in the healthy sense of that misused term that it seems as though it could have been written with today’s situation in mind.

In the above paragraph you have the two main reasons, in my opinion, why you will want to read “Behold, He Cometh!” It is expository, and it is up-to-date for today’s Christian and today’s church.

Add to this the fact that there is hardly available a good commentary on the Book of Revelation, and much less a commentary written from an “amillennial” viewpoint. And you have sufficient reasons for purchase.

When and where can you buy this book?

The Publications Committee has decided to conduct a

pre-publication sale. In the next issue of the *Standard Bearer* you will be provided with a return envelope by means of which you may place your order. The book should come from the press in early spring, about April 1. Before actual publication you will be able to buy this book for \$7.95 postpaid. The regular price will be \$9.95. A real bargain!

By taking advantage of this bargain you can kill two birds with one stone. For by means of this pre-publication sale the Publications Committee wants to raise the balance of the money needed to meet costs of publication.

For your information, this book is written in popular style. You will not be troubled by any foreign languages in it. Nor is this an ordinary, verse-by-verse commentary. The chapters of this book are essays on large sections of the Book of Revelation, rather than running, verse-by-verse commentary. This makes for easy and interesting reading.

Hence, watch the next issue of the *Standard Bearer* for your order envelope.

We will keep you posted on further developments.

The Erring Views of Dr. H.M. Kuitert (11)

An Evaluation of Kuitert’s Dogmatical Views

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

More On The Christ-Creation Relationship

Previously I have referred to and quoted the Rev. H. Hoeksema’s explanation of Colossians 1: 15, ff. as a clear instance of a sound and Scriptural delineation of

the relation between Christ and creation by one who holds to the literal interpretation of the creation account in Genesis. You will recall that Dr. Kuitert indicts the so-called traditional theology on this count,

and at least by implication claims that this serious fault of not connecting Christ and creation is to be traced to its holding to the traditional view of Genesis 1-3, with which Kuitert wants to do away completely.

Over against Dr. Kuitert's position, I maintain, — apart from the question whether there has been any weakness on this score among Reformed theologians, — I maintain that any such possible weakness is not *inherent* in a literal understanding of Genesis. Any weakness which there may be is not to be traced to a Reformed conception of Scripture and to a strictly Reformed conception of creation. And as *one instance* of a plausible and Scriptural explanation by a Reformed theologian the late Rev. Hoeksema's thorough-going exposition of Colossians 1 was cited.

Now I want to demonstrate, in addition, that this explanation of Colossians 1 is not an isolated, aphoristic idea in Hoeksema's theology. On the contrary, it is a central thought. It occurs again and again in his thinking, and at very crucial points. In fact, it is exactly the view developed from Colossians 1 which is one of the unifying factors in all of Hoeksema's theology. Anyone who is thoroughly acquainted with his writings will be able readily to guess where this conception of Christ as the firstborn of every creature is likely to occur in his thinking. Permit me to point to various passages from his writings.

As might be expected, in the second volume of "The Triple Knowledge, An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism," in connection with Lord's Day IX, in the chapter entitled "The Eternal Father Creator," (pp. 165, ff.) there is extensive comment both on the doctrine of creation and on the relation between Christ and creation. Before I quote with respect to the latter subject, let me quote a few lines which are pertinent with respect to the whole subject of creation which is so much discussed nowadays.

Very properly and beautifully the Heidelberg Catechism, speaking of God's fatherhood with respect to all things, as the Creator of heaven and earth, mentions God's eternal counsel. It is true that it introduces this counsel here, strictly speaking, not in connection with creation, but as the power whereby God still upholds and governs all things; but this necessarily implies that the same universe that is thus upheld by God's counsel *was also created according to and by the same eternal decree.*

And let it be understood from the very outset that it is of utmost importance to speak of this eternal purpose and counsel of God as logically preceding the act of creation, and to present the whole universe, all that exists in space and time, as the revelation and unfolding of this eternal counsel. For only in this way can we maintain a clear and correct conception of God's relation to the world as its Creator. Only then can we maintain and somewhat understand, that God, as the Catechism expresses it, "out of nothing made heaven and earth," and that creation reveals Him as the One Who "callethe the things that be not as though

they were," or again, "that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Rom. 4: 17; Heb. 11: 3. And understanding this, we will be in no danger to exchange the teaching of Scripture on this point for the philosophy of man with regard to the origin of the world, and, therefore, also with respect to God. Then we will have no inclination whatever to compromise with the theory of evolution, nor admit that it is capable of offering a solution of the problem it claims to solve, for it can never understand that "things which are seen are not made of things which do appear."

The above is worth contemplating for those who are interested in the theological roots of the current departures in the direction of evolutionism. Somewhere, somehow, you will discover, those theologians who are forsaking the truth of creation have first departed from or forgotten the truth of God's eternal counsel.

But now to the specific point. In developing the truth of the relation between God's counsel and creation, Rev. Hoeksema writes as follows, p. 171:

... All the individual moments in that counsel are conceived and arranged in their relation to one another according to infinite divine wisdom and logic. And this means that in God's mind all these individual moments are so conceived that all in their own position serve the one purpose: the highest possible revelation of God in the glory of His majesty and the beauty of His triune covenant life. In this sense, I would never hesitate to maintain that the supralapsarian view of the counsel of God is the only true, and biblical, conception. There is, of course, no time element in God's decree. It is eternal. We cannot properly speak of *before* and *after* when referring to the eternal good pleasure. But there is perfect subordination of means to ends, and of all means to the one end: the glory of God. And this means that in God's counsel Christ, and that, too, as the incarnated Son of God, as the crucified One that rose again, as the first begotten of the dead, is in that sense "the firstborn of every creature." Of Him God conceived "first." In Him He purposed to reveal all the fulness of His glory. And unto Him, i.e., in order that the glory of His grace might become fully manifest in all its manifold riches, the Church is given as His body by the decree of election. And all the rest, the counsel of reprobation and the counsel of creation, the counsel concerning the fall and the counsel of providence occupy in God's eternal purpose the place of means unto the end of the realization of the glorious Christ and His glorious body dwelling in the tabernacle of God in the new creation. All things exist for the Church, the Church exists for Christ, and Christ exists for God!

At this point the author points out that this conception of God's counsel is derived from Scripture. First of all, he points to the fact that Proverbs 8: 22, ff. speaks this language beautifully. Concerning this passage, which speaks of "Wisdom" in such a striking manner, he writes as follows:

It is not our purpose now to give a complete exegesis of this most profound and rich portion of

Scripture. For our present purpose it may suffice to observe the following: 1. On the one hand, it should be plain that Wisdom in this section is not identical with the Logos (the Word) of John 1: 1-3. For the Logos is the infinite Word God speaks, the personal Image of the Father, and is *begotten* of the Father. But in this passage Wisdom is distinguished from God, the Lord, and is created, or formed, i.e., conceived in God's mind (*Canani*, in the LXX: *ektise*). 2. On the other hand, the language forbids us to think of a mere figure of speech, when throughout Wisdom is presented as having personal subsistence. This Wisdom, then, though not itself the eternal Word, has its personal subsistence in the Logos. In other words, it is the whole implication of God's eternal counsel with respect to all things, the decree of God as the living and eternal conception of God, conceived by the Triune God "before the world was," and that, too, of the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. The eternal Son of God, Who is the perfect and expressed image of the Father, is also the "Mediator of the decree of God," in the sense that in Him, in Whom the Father beholds the infinite perfections of the God-head, He now also eternally conceives the reflection and revelation of those perfections in the created world. Wisdom, then, is the "world-idea" as eternally conceived by the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

After this the author turns to the passage in Colossians 1, the well-known "firstborn of every creature" passage; and this time he writes as follows:

To be sure, He of whom the apostle here speaks has His personal subsistence in the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. And yet, even as was the case with Wisdom in Proverbs 8, it is evident that all that is predicated here of this Firstborn cannot be said of the Son of God in the divine nature. Whatever attempts have been made to explain the expression "the firstborn of every creature" so that it might be applicable to the divine Son of God, it is very clear that this phrase does not apply to the second Person of the Trinity. He is not the "firstborn of every creature," for He is neither born nor a creature: He is the eternally begotten God! Nor is the Son as such the head of the body, or the first begotten from the dead; nor even can it be said of the Son of God in the divine nature, that He has the preeminence in all things, or that by the good pleasure of the Father all the fulness dwells in Him. But all these predicates are readily understood if we apply them to Christ, and that, too, as He appears in God's eternal conception of all things, that is, in the counsel of God. In that counsel Christ, and that as the firstborn from the dead, the glorified Christ, in whom all the fulness should dwell, is the beginning (the *archee*; the *reshith* of Prov. 8), and the firstborn of every creature, Who, in the counsel of God is not only logically first, but Who as the firstborn, also opens the womb of creation, and prepares the way for all creatures; and again, Who as such holds the preeminence above them all. The eternal Son of God, the Word that is with God in eternity, and Who is the express image of His substance, is, as it were, the infinite pattern according to which all things are

conceived, and in Whom as the Christ exalted all the fulness must dwell. God is first the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and as such He is also the Creator of heaven and earth. As the Catechism expresses it: "The eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" made of nothing the heaven and the earth and all things that are therein, and still upholds them by His eternal counsel and providence!

Nor is all this mere theory and the kind of sterile supralapsarianism which has often characterized other theologies, concentrating on an abstract theory of the order of God's decrees. The author had very little interest in that abstract question; but he never tired in his preaching and teaching of referring to the beauty of the above conception. And in the chapter from which I have been quoting he points to the implications of this idea for our view of the significance of creation and, in fact, for our whole world-and-life-view. I would like to quote all that he writes in this connection; but that would be too long a quotation. Let me enumerate some of the points which he makes, first of all. He points to the following: 1) That in this light we can begin to understand how creation reveals God as the absolute Sovereign of all, and as the Father Omnipotent. 2) That this truth of creation teaches us that God's will and counsel are the only *raison d'être* of the whole universe. The world is exactly as God willed it to be. Creation is an act of absolute freedom and sovereignty. 3) That this means that the world, as it was called forth in the beginning, as it develops in time, and as it will be perfected in the "ages of ages," is the revelation of perfect divine wisdom, the highest possible revelation of the glory of God, that it is also a *complete* revelation of God, and that it is the best possible world. 4) That the world in the "beginning" was adapted to the end with perfect wisdom, i.e., was so created that, through the deep way of sin and death, it could be raised to the highest possible glory by the power of grace in Christ. Here the author explains as follows:

... God knows the end from the beginning, and the latter is adapted to the former. When He created the world, He had that end in view: the highest realization and revelation of His tabernacle with men in Christ Jesus our Lord! When God in the beginning saw that all things were good, the meaning is not simply that they were perfect and flawless, without defect, as they had come forth from His hands, but also that they were perfectly adapted to the end He had in view. And that end is the Kingdom of heaven, the heavenly tabernacle of God with men in Christ. It is because of this that the things as they were made in the beginning are an image of things to come, and that things *are done* or take place in parables. It is true, of course, that without God's revelation in Christ as we have it in the Holy Scriptures, we could never see this reflection of things to come in the things that are made, and that Christ only could point out the parables that take place round about us; but the fact remains that the earthy creation reflects the things of the kingdom of

heaven, is an image of things heavenly. Adam is an image of Him that was to come, and Christ is the last Adam. The First Paradise is an earthly picture of the Paradise of God in the new creation, and the original tree of life is to be fully realized in its heavenly beauty when all things are made new. The seed that falls in the earth and dies and is quickened again is a parable of the resurrection, both in its spiritual, and its physical sense. The sun that dispels the darkness of the night is an image of the Sun of righteousness, and the moon that floods the night with its mellow light, and assures us that the sun is still there, though we do not see her, is a silent preacher of the promise of God that the Sun will rise again in all its glory in the Day of the Lord. And so all creation, the lion and the lamb, the soaring eagle and the strong ox, the tall cedar and the sturdy oak, the mighty mountain and the barren desert, the flashing lightning and the rolling thunder, storm and zephyr, earthquake and eruption, color and number, as well as man in all the relations of man and wife, brother and sister, father and son, king and subject, — all speak the language of redemption to us, if our ear is only attuned and made receptive by the Word of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And so, all the works of God are one, even as He is One. They were one in the beginning. For God did not create a mere number of creatures, but a cosmos, rising by His creative power from the darkness of the chaos in a succession of creatures higher and higher, until they reached their pinnacle in man, in whose heart the whole cosmos was united with the heart of God: a kingdom, in which all creatures must serve man, that man might serve his God. But they are also one, in that the beginning is connected with and adapted to the end: the new creation that will forever be united with God in the heart of Immanuel, God with us!

Finally, in this chapter Rev. Hoeksema relates all this to the Christian's faith and to his only comfort in life and death, as follows:

What does it all mean? . . . The central idea the Catechism here expresses (in Lord's Day 9, HCH) must be grasped clearly: it is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that, too, not only as the eternal Father of the eternal Son, but also as the Father of Jesus Christ, that created all things according to His eternal counsel; and Who as such is my God and Father for Christ's sake; hence, by faith I may put the present evil moment in God's perfect counsel of wisdom and love, and believe that all is well!

God is the eternal Father of the elect. O, it is true, He is the Father of all in the sense that He brought them forth, created them. But in the true, spiritual sense, He is the Father only of His own, whom He gave to Christ in His eternal counsel. For through sin men became the children of their father the devil, and do his will. They neither have the right nor the power to be children of God. We must not follow modernism in its boast of a universal fatherhood of God. But in Christ, and for His sake, we obtain the right to be called children of God, and by His grace we are also conformed according to the image of His Son. And all this is realized according to God's eternal purpose, that

same purpose and good pleasure according to which He created all things and governs all things. What then? Knowing that He is my Father for Christ's sake, I know that in His eternal wisdom He so arranged all things that all things must cooperate unto the final revelation of Christ, and the salvation of all that are in Him! Knowing that He is almighty, I am assured that He will surely accomplish all His good pleasure, so that nothing can betide me but by His will. And knowing that He loves me, and that, too, with an eternal and immutable love, manifested in the death of His Son, I trust that He will surely cause all things to work together unto my salvation. And so, the believer in Christ relies on Him entirely, confident that all things always work together for good to them that love God! The eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator omnipotent, the only Potentate of potentates, the God of our salvation, is my God and Father!

This, I submit, is solid stuff! It is Reformed. It is Scriptural. It is relevant for the present evil moment, — much more relevant than all the universalistic, social gospel tripe which is being passed off as so highly relevant today in Reformed circles. And here is a word for those who are forevermore talking about the kerugma, the message: here, if you please, is the kerugma of creation! But remember, if you take creation (and I mean *Biblical creation*) away, you at once destroy the kerugma too. And no vague philosophy of a Kuiterian teaching model will serve as a substitute for the evangel!

I promised to show how this concept recurs in the late Herman Hoeksema's theology. I have already quoted at length, however; and I cannot take more space for quotations. Besides, I have amply set forth his conception of the relation between Christ and creation in the quotations already given. For the rest, let me merely point the reader to several more instances where this same concept occurs. First of all, this idea is found repeatedly in this same series, "The Triple Knowledge, An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism."

1. In Vol. 2, pp. 209, ff., in connection with the doctrine of God's providence.

2. In Vol. 3, pp. 44, ff., in connection with the idea of the office of Christ, Lord's Day XII.

3. As might be expected, in Vol. 4, pp. 32, ff., there is a detailed explanation again of Col. 1: 15, ff., in connection with the idea of Christ's resurrection. And of the Colossians passage Hoeksema himself writes this time: "Glorious, all-embracing conception! Here is a 'world-and-life-view,' a truly divine philosophy, if you please, as you could never expect to arise in the heart of man!"

4. In Vol. 5, pp. 37, ff., in connection with the subject of the election of the church.

Also in "Reformed Dogmatics" by the same author this same view repeatedly occurs. I will not mention all the references, but only point to the chief one, the very thorough and beautiful exposition of the "Pactum Salutis" in the section on Christology, Chapter 1, pages

285, ff. This, in my opinion, is one of the finest chapters in that entire work, and worthy of careful study.

Once again, therefore, in conclusion, let no one say

that Reformed theology, holding to the strict and literal interpretation of Genesis, is not capable of connecting Christ and creation.

All Around Us

Reactions to Liberalism

Contact Between the C.R.C. and the Canadian Reformed

Seminary Students Not Interested in the Ministry

Prof. H. Hanko

REACTIONS TO LIBERALISM

The *Standard Bearer* has carried many articles in its columns which demonstrate the increasing liberalism in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands. Men like Prof. Kuitert, Prof. Augustijn and Drs. Baarda lead the way in introducing in the Church the most liberal views.

But there are those who raise their voice in protest. From the December 17 issue of the R.E.S. Newsletter we quote the following:

Like many a church today, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have an 'association of concerned.' They claim that a "great landslide is on the move in the Reformed Churches." There are also those who are troubled about how the 'concerned' express themselves and make charges against persons in the church.

Meetings were held in October in Middleburg and Urk by a group of 'concerned' Christians. Miss T.E. N. Ozinga, who helped organize the meeting, reported the following:

"On October 3rd a meeting organized by a local committee in which five Reformed denominations were represented was held at Middleburg, Zeeland, The Netherlands. The meeting was presided over by the Rev. Paul Van Til, senior pastor of the Reformed Church of Middleburg. The speakers were: Dr. Arntzen (Reformed): "Freedom of Exegesis"; Dr. Douma (Reformed Liberated): "God's Revelation in Word and Fact"; Rev. Op den Velde (Christian Reformed): "Adam, the first Man and Head of the Human Race." Each spoke for 15 minutes on his topic under the general theme "The Authority of Holy Scripture."

"The Free University came into special focus because Prof. Augustijn, Drs. Baarda and a number of student supporters had come to Middleburg by special coach.

"The organizing committee had hoped for a good

discussion between the panel and the Zeeland audience, but the main discussion occurred between Prof. Augustijn, Drs. Baarda and the three panel members. It was striking that the two Free University lecturers did not take time to subscribe at any point to the Reformed position set forth by the panels.

"Dr. Arntzen had referred to an article written by Dr. Augustijn in answer to Prof. H. N. Ridderbos' criticism of the "Reliability of the Gospels" (by Drs. Baarda). At the time Prof. Ridderbos refuted academically both Drs. Baarda's N.T. study and Dr. Augustijn's views (Gereformeerd Weekblad, May/June 1967). The two professors, though they did not change their views, took no offence at Prof. Ridderbos' rebuke. However, at the Middleburg meeting Prof. Augustijn showed himself deeply hurt by Dr. Arntzen's words. He said, "I do not recognize myself from the account given by Dr. Arntzen." There was an absolute short-circuit between the two. . . ."

In reply to questions by Dr. Arntzen and Dr. Douma, Prof. Augustijn said he did not believe that Adam was the first man. Nor did he believe Christ's resurrection body was identical to his previous body. Particularly at this point the discussion was confused and confusing. . . .

At a rally at Urk the 'association of the concerned' listened to Mr. H. W. Maaskant who made a strong appeal against the "growing stream of unbelief." "Whoever wants to solve the problem of Scripture with a criticism of Scripture will pay the price of his belief in Scripture," he observed.

The meeting sent a telegram, according to Kerknieuws, to the Curatorium of the Free University to express "concern and indignation" at the statements of Prof. C. Augustijn, in particular with regard to the historicity of Adam.

The same issue of Kerknieuws reported that a

society was organized to publish a new christian newspaper. The new organization "Koers" finds the present christian dailies "generally christian, broadly ecumenical and strongly world conformists." Earlier a new radio association had been formed in protest to the christian radio association now operating.

In response to the expressions of concern, Prof. R. Schippers answered in *Vrije Universiteitsblad* to 26 persons who had written in to explain that they could not longer support the Free University. He expressed regret that so many of the concerned persons who live so close to the Free University understand so little of what is going on in the church, in christendom today and in the world.

Following meetings in Middleburg and Urk, four week-end conferences were organized in the northern provinces to reflect upon the teaching and life of the Reformed churches.

A feature article in *Centrall Weekblad* by the Rev. J. Overduin spoke of the two kinds of concern in the Reformed Churches. Mr. Overduin found it "oppressive" that many in the church view sin, guilt and the sense of sin as strange entities and feel little need for grace in Christ. . . .

There is more; but this is sufficient to give some general idea of the form opposition is taking in the Netherlands to the liberalism running wild in the Church. As we read these various news items, our reaction is along two lines. First of all, we have great sympathy for those who are fighting against the evils in their Church. Especially is this true because the battle seems so hopeless. And the hopelessness of the battle is to be found in the fact that there is no willingness to discipline those who teach heresy. Where discipline is gone, the battle is lost. But secondly, our reaction is one of mild surprise. Not surprise that the battle is being fought at all, but rather that the battle is being waged in what appears to be minor skirmishes. It would seem that the deadly seriousness of the errors being taught in the Gereformeerde Kerken would require greater vigor and more forthright opposition than the above article suggests is actually taking place. But perhaps it is difficult to tell from our side of the ocean.

CONTACT BETWEEN THE C.R.C. AND THE CANADIAN REFORMED

We have recently read in the church magazine of the Canadian Reformed Churches the latest which their Synod decided on contacts with the Christian Reformed Church. Some of these decisions are of interest.

The issue was whether Synod would appoint Deputies to continue contact. There were overtures for and against. The overtures against continuing contact listed several objections:

1) That the Christian Reformed Church had not entered into the Appeal of the Canadian Reformed Churches sent in 1963. This appeal had to do especially with the fellowship the Christian Reformed Church maintains with the Gereformeerde Kerken. This was a major issue in the whole debate.

2) That the Christian Reformed Church "had adopted a new approach to Church-correspondence and Ecumenicity on the basis of a theory of "pluriformity" of the Church, in which ALL existing Churches, even the Roman Catholic Church, are called 'Churches of Christ' and 'parts of the one and indivisible Body of Christ' "

The arguments for continuing contact were:

1) The fruitfulness of previous contacts. Obstacles have been taken out of the way; especially the obstacles of the Conclusions of Utrecht (1908) and the Three Points of Common Grace (1924). Not everyone, however, was happy about the way in which these obstacles were removed.

2) The new Church Order of the Christian Reformed Churches was essentially what the Canadian Reformed Churches wanted.

3) Since contact had been started, it could not suddenly be cut off.

The one big issue therefore, remained the contact between the Christian Reformed and the Gereformeerde Kerken. The Synod was agreed that contact could not go on if this matter was not dealt with. Hence the final decisions included these elements:

1) "1908", "1924" and the new Church Order need no longer be discussed. These obstacles have been removed.

2) The new deputies were instructed to put, before any thing else, the issue of contact with the Gereformeerde Kerken to the Christian Reformed delegates. If the Christian Reformed Church would not discuss this matter, contact had to be discontinued.

3) In case the resolution of point 2 was successful, the Deputies had to bring up the matter of the principles of the Christian Reformed Church to Church-correspondence.

Our readers will recall that the obstacles of "1908" and "1924" were removed by the Christian Reformed Church by declaring the Conclusions of Utrecht no longer binding and by taking approximately the same decision on Common Grace which was taken in the De Wolf return. Hence, it seems that the Canadian Reformed Churches are ready, at least in a measure, to submit to the decisions on Common Grace. To these Churches, the real obstacle is contact with the Gereformeerde Kerken. It is not surprising that this should be the issue. It is from the Gereformeerde Kerken that the people of the Canadian Reformed Church were expelled. It would be a denial of their separation to join with a Church which maintains fraternal relations with the Gereformeerde Kerken.

SEMINARY STUDENTS NOT INTERESTED IN THE MINISTRY

We have before us an interesting quote from *Lutheran News* which we give without comment.

Rev. Lester Kinsolving, a liberal Episcopalian minister who rejects the Christian doctrine of Hell wrote . . . : "New York's Union Theological Seminary an-

nounced recently that less than one quarter of its graduating class planned to enter the parish ministry.

"This should have sent a shock wave rolling through the churches, especially as it was disclosed in a time when more men are leaving the parish ministry than ever before."

Other liberal seminaries, such as Concordia Semi-

nary, St. Louis, are experiencing the same problem. An increasing number of graduates are simply not interested in becoming parish pastors and foreign missionaries. Why should students, who are taught that the heathen can be saved without Christ, be interested in mission work?

The Strength of Youth

The Basis for Dissent (1)

Rev. J. Kortering

Anything can become an object of dissent.

The reality of this is all too obvious to us. You name it and we've got it in this country: anti-segregation, anti-communism, anti-war, anti-bomb, anti-population explosion, anti-poverty, anti-illiteracy, anti-cruelty to animals, anti-semitism, anti-crime, and so on.

I suppose covenant youth could compose their own list: anti-parental snooping, anti-Covenant Christian High, anti-30-week catechism season, anti-hypocrisy in the church, anti-opponents of drama and so on.

One wonders whether anyone is *for* anything.

As we treat the general subject of the right of dissent, we must now pin-point our subject. We must ask the question, against what are objections expressed, what is advocated as a replacement, and on what basis.

In order that we may zero in on the heart of the issue, we must admit that the unrest in our country revolves around the interpretation and application of our Constitution. This is expressed most succinctly in the 14th Amendment, Section 1, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

The issue of dissent, as it is popularly discussed in our day, concerns itself with eradicating injustice and promoting justice for all the citizens no matter what race, ethnic group, social standing, economic status, or creed. In a word it concerns itself with civil rights.

Closely related to the rights of each individual citizen and the protection of these rights as stated in the 14th Amendment, is also the right to express disagreement with the present status and advance views which are not popularly accepted. This involves the 1st Amendment,

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

We conclude that the problem of dissent involves two things, whether there is a basis for the accusation that the 14th Amendment is being violated, — in other words is there a proper *reason* for dissent, — and whether those who express their dissent are doing so within the framework of the 1st Amendment of the Constitution, — in other words must they be given this right and protection according to the law of our land.

In this article we would like to begin considering the first aspect of the problem and formulate our inquiry this way: should covenant youth make it their concern whether or not all the citizens of our land have in fact the protection of the 14th Amendment, to investigate this, to express dissent if they do not, and to advocate proper protection so that all do enjoy the rights of citizenship?

On what basis will we determine this?

HUMANISM A FALSE BASIS

A great deal of clamor surrounds the current issue of civil rights. This movement has put into focus the guarantees of the 14th Amendment as they apply specifically to the concrete situation of black America and poor America which most frequently are synonymous. Are we doing justice to them or are we guilty of violating the 14th Amendment as it applies to their situation? Justice is considered from 2 points of view. The first is the legal aspect. Do we have laws, state or federal, that do not give black America the same privileges as white America? Are these laws interpreted and enforced differently, all depending whether a black or white citizen is involved? The second aspect of justice concerns itself with the moral application of these laws by the citizens. This involves the knotty problem of

equal opportunity. It is conceivable that good laws prevail in our land, that the courts interpret these laws consistently no matter who is involved, and that the judicial branch of our government enforces them without regard to color or economic standing, but that the people, the citizens themselves, negate the effect of these laws by discrimination. Morality involves more than legislation; it includes the free and willing observance of laws that have been enacted. The law may, for example, guarantee fair employment, but if the employer refuses to hire the colored man or the fellow workers refuse to work next to him, the effect of the law is obviously nil. Discrimination is a moral issue that relates to justice.

All the problems that surround these basic issues in our society today are one thing. We must ask, on what basis must a Christian be concerned with these issues, particularly as they apply to his neighbor.

Let's notice that the "civil rights movement" has taken on the glamor of "human rights." As covenant young people we must conclude here and now that this cannot serve as a basis for our concern with the problem of civil rights.

In order to keep this reasonably brief, let's point out a few salient "principles" of Humanism. First, the goal of the Humanist consists in the realization of an ideal society here on earth. This means that all men must have equal rights, all people over the whole earth must have equal opportunity, all must share in the wealth, power, peace, and freedoms of the human race. Emphasis must not rest on the white, black, red, or yellow race, but the *human* race. Secondly, to consummate this perfect society of Man, all people must co-operate to eradicate obstacles to its realization. This must take place in all spheres of human existence, governments must use diplomacy, scientists must use ingenuity, educators must use proper methodology, etc. All men everywhere must co-operate in this venture in order that the ideal human society may be realized. Thirdly, the possibility of success rests upon the innate goodness of man. Man still possesses some instincts of his animal ancestry, but in due process of the social evolution, he will outgrow these and mature into the kind of human being that will gladly accept his place in the universal human society. The Humanist is optimistic. He is confident that man's rationality will convince him that it is better to share his wealth with the poor than to be selfish and expose the human race to nuclear warfare. He will hold to his ideology, but grant the right to others to have their views as long as they all agree on the basic rights of the human family. Nations will finally grow up and grant the right of co-existence to all powers, thereby freeing billions of dollars now spent on defense and allowing this to be used for the care of the poor, education of the illiterate, and the solving of social problems.

Listen to the eloquent voice of Humanism, "But today the differences and disproportions between vari-

ous parts of our world community are so great that agreed policies of cooperation run into reefs of hostility and envy. The gaps in power, the gaps in wealth, the gaps in ideology which hold the nations apart also make up the abyss into which mankind can fall to annihilation. It is on these disproportions that world policy has to concentrate — restoring a reasonable balance of power between continents, a reasonable balance of wealth between the planet's developed Nations and underdeveloped South, a reasonable balance of understanding and tolerance between the world's rival creeds. Then when the grosser inequalities have been remedied, there can be more hope of building the common institutions, policies, and beliefs which the crew of Spaceship Earth must acquire if they are to have any sure hope of survival." *Spaceship Earth*, Barbara Ward.

Humanism is obviously anti-God. We cannot join the civil rights movement on this basis. It is so diabolical because it denies the curse of God upon the sinner, Rom. 1: 22-32. It claims the possibility of establishing a good society on the quagmire of human corruption, thereby denying the redemption and restoration of the people of God in Jesus Christ, Eph. 4: 24, 25. Hence the words of II Peter 2: 12, 18, and 19 apply, "These, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption . . . for when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption, for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

HUMAN BROTHERHOOD A FALSE BASIS

There is no essential difference between Humanism and what we here call Brotherhood. Rather, it is a further development of the basic tenets of Humanism wrapping them up in the cellophane of religion.

In many ways this approach to civil rights is more deadly for Covenant youth. This is at once apparent when we consider that it assumes to itself a "christian" basis. The advocates of human brotherhood put on a cloak of piety, but in reality are wolves in sheep's clothing. They speak at length of Christ and Christianity, but deny the blood of the atonement and clamor for a Christ who is not very God, but a mere man who nevertheless is a worthy example of human kindness.

It is this influence in America, that propels the civil rights movement into the arena of the "church." Many churches spend hours in torrid debate concerning what position the church must take on the latest issues. Clergymen spend their time getting involved in local committees in order that they may avoid the charge by a militant segment in society accusing the church of preaching pious platitudes, but being hypocrites in the cities.

Brotherhood has become the shibboleth which admits a church or individual into the local club of "in" people. They are "with it."

Brotherhood that flows from the "milk of human kindness" is the greatest farce of our generation. Not only does it not exist (see Col. 3: 5-8), but it stands opposed to all that God gives in His Word. The ominous call of brotherhood that resounds from shore to shore in our America the Beautiful must be discerned by covenant youth as the roar of the beast that comes forth from the earth who "exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed," Rev. 13: 11-18. This is anti-christ. His movement is described by Paul in II Thess. 2: 3, 4, "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." These are the "false prophets . . . who privily

shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction," mentioned in II Peter 2: 1.

Next time D. V. we shall show how this applies to such a man as the former Dr. Martin Luther King, the World Council of Churches which spells out the "Ten Commandments" for youth who are involved in civil rights, and others.

We must see why brotherhood cannot serve as a basis for covenant youth to become interested and involved in social justice and arise in dissent to that which one considers injustice.

There is and must be a much deeper basis, a basis that does not throw covenant youth into the arms of the false prophets, but causes him to stand diametrically opposed to him.

This we find in the Scriptural injunction, "Love thy neighbor as thyself". If there is to be dissent, it must be for God's sake or it is vanity.

The dissent of covenant youth is like a voice crying in the wilderness.

A Cloud of Witnesses

Absalom and Amnon

Rev. B. Woudenberg

Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant.

And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded . . .

But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.

II Samuel 13: 28, 29, 37

Absalom had always despised Amnon. Amnon was simply by every measure his inferior. Not only was he of inferior birth with a mother who was an ordinary commoner while his mother was a princess from Geshur, but Amnon was inferior in intelligence, appearance and bearing too — a crude man, however a person looked at him. It was that which to the mind of Absalom had always constituted the irony of the whole situation for Amnon was the older and the proper heir to the royal throne. It just did not seem right that one so all-over inferior should have the preference because of a mere matter of age. Even David their father, Absalom had every reason to believe, preferred him over Amnon. For

years Absalom had mulled over these thoughts until they formed a deep well of bitterness and resentment within his soul.

It was the rape of his sister Tamar, however, that finally brought everything to a peak. Here was brought out and thrown in Absalom's face everything that he despised in his brother. Here was that rough crudeness that marked Amnon's inferior nature; here was that arrogant presumption that made him so unworthy to be a king; here was that selfish presumption that could only make him despicable in everybody's eyes; and, above all, here was the ignoring of the fact that Tamar was the daughter of a princess, just as he was her son, —

a slight which Absalom could never forgive. For days upon days Absalom found himself consumed with suppressed fury while he waited for his father to do justice to Amnon as the law demanded. But no, his father did nothing, and it only increased his internal fury. Where was his father's sense of justice? Where was his father's commitment to the law? Why was not Amnon put immediately to death for such a heinous sin? Slowly the rage of Absalom began to grow and broaden out until it included in its sphere also his father.

Absalom was by nature, though, a careful and thorough man. Outwardly he did and said nothing at all. In fact, he even tried to calm the feelings of Tamar by saying, "Hold now thy peace, my sister: he is thy brother; regard not this thing." But inwardly he began to lay his own plans.

It was a full two years before the opportunity came for which Absalom was waiting. As it was, their father had given to each one of his matured sons a farm or large plot of land from which they could take their living. Absalom's portion included a stretch of pasture land upon which he grazed a large flock of sheep. It meant that each year at sheepshearing time, after the custom of the nation, a large feast was held for all of the workers and for whatever friends one might like to invite. For Absalom his problem regarding Amnon was simply this — how could he get his brother to come into his own home where his servants would be able to give to him his just deserts. It was not an easy thing to do, for Amnon was quite aware of Absalom's animosity toward him, particularly because ever since the rape of Tamar Absalom had absolutely refused to speak to him. But the way he had it planned, Absalom was quite sure that in the sheepshearing feast, he could find the opportunity he was looking for.

The plan of Absalom was to get Amnon to come down to his farm by inviting all the brothers to the sheepshearer's feast. In fact, he went even a step further to alleviate any hesitancy which Amnon might have to come along with the rest; he invited also their father David to come along. Surely no one would suspect his intended violence when the king himself was being invited to be among them. Possibly Absalom had suspected already that David would not be able to make the trip, and maybe his fury had reached such a peak that he wanted even his father to witness what was in his mind, an execution of perfect justice. As it was, though, David was quite aware of Absalom's sensitive and conniving nature, so that he suspected that there must be some ulterior motive that brought forth this gesture of generosity from his son. Thus he answered with the excuse, "Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee." And, although Absalom pressed him, he would not change his mind. In fact, he did not even like the idea of letting Amnon go down into the stronghold of Absalom; but upon this

point, Absalom was even more insistent so that finally David gave his consent at least to that.

Only when all had reached the stage where the plans had been laid and his brothers were actually gathered together at his feast did Absalom share his intentions with any other. He called to him several trusted servants and instructed them, "Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant."

It was a cowardly move, as justice taken into one's own hand is always cowardly. It was almost as though Absalom had taken a page from the example of his father who had used the stupefying effects of wine, albeit unsuccessfully, in his efforts to ensnare Uriah. One can only imagine the shock which came to the rest of the sons of David as, in the midst of a most light-hearted and jovial occasion, they lifted their eyes to witness the execution of their eldest brother and the heir apparent of Israel's throne. To their minds, there could be only one intention — that was, to kill all of them one by one. The result was that rather than turning upon Absalom they all fled from the room and from the farm as quickly as they could.

For David the shock was even greater. In that day there was, of course, no faster means of communication than what could be carried by word of mouth. Accordingly it was considered to be a great attainment and often worthy of great reward to bring an important message first to the ears of a commander or king. Thus it was that as soon as the first thought arose as to the intent of Absalom to slay all of the king's sons, one of the messenger servants left the room and ran as swiftly as possible to bear the message to the king. To him it did not seem to be too much of an embellishment to state the massacre which he had seen begun with his own eyes with the slaying of Amnon, as an already completed fact. Thus the word delivered to David was, "Absalom hath slain all of the king's sons, and there is not one of them left." It was a stunning blow which came with such numbing force that all David could do was to tear his outer garments and to fall in near faint to the earth.

There David might well have lain for some time except for the presence of Jonadab. Jonadab, a nephew of David's, was one of those cold and calculating but extremely clever men who often do so well in the presence of the mighty. This man had been living in the court and watching with detached but careful interest the feud which was developing between Absalom and Amnon. In fact, he had been the one who had suggested to Amnon how the opportunity for the rape of Tamar might be set up; and then, once it was an accomplished fact, he had watched with keen interest the reaction upon Absalom. To him the message of the servant came with absolutely no surprise at all. He had been expecting it. But at the same time, he was absolutely sure that the

design of Absalom was directed exclusively against Amnon and no one else. So confident was he of this evaluation that he did not as much as hesitate to step forth to contradict the messenger that had claimed to have seen all and say, "Let not my lord suppose that they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead."

It was strange, but the deductions of Jonadab seemed to carry more conviction in them than did those of the messenger who had come directly from the scene. Even more, there was something about his cool, calculated bearing that seemed to carry across the feeling that what had happened was not really so serious after all. To be sure, it was with tears and weeping that the sons of the king were greeted as they began to arrive terror stricken and trembling at the palace very soon thereafter. Nevertheless, there remained the feeling underneath that it was a wonderful thing that only Amnon was dead of them all.

Nevertheless, a terrible thing had happened in Israel which could not be ignored and forgotten. David knew this, and Absalom knew this too. His plan from the beginning had included the realization that he would have to flee from the land of Israel, at least for a time. But that was not so bad. His mother's father was king in Geshur and he could stay there with as much ease as he had known in Jerusalem. Moreover, although David would have had it completely within his power to pursue him there for the sake of justice, he would undoubtedly hesitate to endanger friendly relationships with another king, even one who was subject to him.

Beyond this, there was also another factor which Absalom was counting on considerably. This was the very special favor which he had always held in the eyes of his father. It had always been there for as long as he could remember, and it was perhaps this that had first

aroused within him the conviction that he was the natural successor to the throne rather than Amnon. From his earliest youth David had taken to his son Absalom like he had never taken to any of the others. Possibly it was the prettiness of the child together with his cleverness of mind, the intensity of his feelings and the winning nature of his personality. All told it had made of Absalom a child which David could not resist. To have the child with him and to keep him in a happy smiling mood was one of the greatest pleasures the king ever had. Here was something Absalom remembered, and upon which he was sure he could count to return him to favor in the end.

What Absalom had anticipated was actually very true. It was not long before Amnon, being dead, was almost forgotten by the king; but Absalom was never far removed from his mind. Again and again David's thoughts went out in longing for this favorite son far removed from him in banishment. So intense were his feelings of longing that soon all evidence of pleasure and happiness were removed from the face of the king, and accordingly also from the court which gathered before him. Absalom did in very deed hold a very special place within the king's heart.

Nevertheless, in one thing Absalom had underestimated. Not having himself any real sense of justice, he had failed to allow for the intensity of his father's commitment to God's law. As much as David loved Absalom, he could not forget that he was a murderer. It was all that he could do to leave the young man in banishment without pursuing after him; but to bring him back without exacting punishment was more than David's conscience could bear. Thus it was, that rather than being soon recalled into the presence of his father, year after year passed by with Absalom left in banishment away from all of the activity of the great city of Jerusalem and the splendor of the court. It was more than a disappointment to him. It became the occasion for greater bitterness and hatred within the recesses of his wicked soul.

Correspondence and Reply

Dear Editor,

In Prof. H. Hanko's article "Synod's Authority and the Believer's Conscience" he writes, "I agree with the basic thrust of the letter which De Jonge criticizes." I would summarize his position as follows. If a child of God sees leaders in his Church take the denomination down roads of apostacy, he must do all he can to turn the Church back to the truth. However, he is limited to appeal, and any other action leads to dissension, anarchy, rebellion, and schism. Further, if he would

attempt reformation of his Church, he must first leave his Church. As an example Luther is mentioned.

I would first note that we are here dealing with a Church whose leaders are attempting to corrupt the Church. This is the position Luther was in. However, this is the only similarity, for Luther used many other means to attempt reformation in the Church. He never left the Church, but was cast out. To show his contempt for his censure by apostatizing leaders, he publicly burned his excommunication papers. He said he would

never be bound by the decisions of councils, unless they were proved by the Word of God.

Thus it has been with many reformers. They testified against apostatizing leaders until they were cast out. This was the case with Huss, De Cock, and also Rev. H. Hoeksema. The apostatizing leaders are rebellious, not those who testify against them. If God's servants are faithful to him, may we call them rebellious?

When the apostles Peter and John were confronted with apostatizing leaders, they said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." (Acts 4:19)

In conclusion shouldn't we say to Rev. De Jonge, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; . . . For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." (II Timothy 4: 2, 3)

REPLY

Louis Elzinga

I take it that Mr. Elzinga's objections to the position I took in the article to which he refers are objections based exclusively on historical precedents. In a way this is too bad because the issue is really one which centers in the meaning of Article 31 of the Church Order. Article 31 describes the bethod of expressing disagreement with ecclesiastical decisions with which one disagrees and which one maintains are contrary to the Word of God and the Church Order. In the whole of the Church Order this is the only method of expressing such disagreement. If the ecclesiastical assemblies decide against one who so protests, these decisions must be considered settled and binding.

Mr. Elzinga speaks, as I did, of circumstances in the Church which lead ecclesiastical assemblies to decide things contrary to the Word of God. What must one then do who is faithful? It is my position that his only option, if all appeal has failed and he cannot submit, is to leave the Church in which he has his membership to seek the fellowship of the saints elsewhere. This is not only the clear implication of Article 31 and the whole Church Order; this lies in the very nature of the Church Federation. One's membership in the Church Federation is of his own choosing. By joining himself to such a federation of Churches, he willingly places himself under the Church Order, the Confessions and the decisions of the ecclesiastical assemblies. If he becomes, in the course of time, convinced that this Church Federation no longer manifests the unity of the body of Christ, he has the choice of leaving. But he may not, in good conscience, agitate against ecclesiastical assemblies when he has, by joining the federation, submitted himself to their decisions.

Nor can I imagine why he would want to do this. It seems to me that should an issue which separates an individual and the assemblies be of such magnitude that the individual becomes convinced that that Church departs radically from the Word of God, he will want to say to these assemblies: "Brethren, we can no longer

agree. We must part ways. You and I disagree on fundamental questions of the Word of God. I am convinced of the justice of my way. You are, apparently, convinced of the right of your's. The time has come for us to part." This is, by the way, precisely the position which Van Dellen and Monsma take in their *Commentary on the Church Order*. Cf. e.g., p. 146.

But let us turn to the historical figures which Mr. Elzinga refers to in support of his contention.

He refers first of all to Martin Luther. This is hardly an adequate example. Nor did I refer to Luther in this connection. I referred to Luther, not as an example of the proper way to protests evils in the Church, but by way of illustrating the *difficulty* of coming to a decision whether to submit to the Church or to leave. The fact is that Luther lived within the heirarchical Roman Catholic Church. No door was open to him to appeal any decisions whatsoever. The principle enunciated by Article 31 is a Reformation principle. It was born in the fire of the Reformation. It was not a principle of the Romish Church. Luther had no alternative but to protest evils in the Church with which he disagreed in the manner he did. He was seeking the reform of the Church — a reform of abuses which had crept in through the general spiritual and moral decay of the Romish institute since the days of Augustine. He worked in a context of reform as well. For many years, individuals, councils and organized groups fought long and hard for reform. For the most part their efforts were successfully resisted by the entrenched papacy. Rome recognized Augustine and had canonized him. Luther appealed directly back to Augustine and voiced his agreement with that great Church father.

The same was true of Huss. Huss was born in 1396, 150 years before the Lutheran Reformation began. There was no avenue of appeal open to him. He went to Constance under a safe-conduct granted him of the king and with the promise that he would be given opportunity to state his case. This was denied him. He was tried, condemned without being given opportunity to say one word and burned at the stake.

But with De Cock it was different. His Secession dates from 1834. But Mr. Elzinga is mistaken in his analysis of De Cock's actions. The chief issues facing De Cock were confessional unfaithfulness and liberalism in the State Church. This unfaithfulness and liberalism had not come about through ecclesiastical decision. It was the direct fruit of dead orthodoxy and rationalism which swept Europe and the Reformed Churches. Against these De Cock protested in his preaching and writing. But he did not agitate against ecclesiastical decisions. In fact, at one time disciplinary proceedings were started against him, but were not sustained because De Cock was in no violation of ecclesiastical decisions. At another time he was suspended from office for two years to which suspension he submitted. But when finally the breach came, it was brought about not by De

Cock being expelled by the Church, but by an Act of Secession drawn up by De Cock and his Consistory on October 13, 1834. By this Act he separated himself from a Church which had begun to walk the road of apostasy. For details, cf. "The Christian Reformed Tradition", by D. H. Kromminga, pp. 79-93.

The same was true of Rev. H. Hoeksema. There are several points which illustrate this. For one thing, the Synod of 1924 which drew up the Three Points of 1924 specifically rejected a motion to begin disciplinary action against Rev. Hoeksema even though it had such a motion before it. In the light of Rev. Hoeksema's opposition to the Three Points and in the context of Synod's own call for continuing discussion of the whole subject, this could only be interpreted as meaning that there was room in the Church for the position which Rev. Hoeksema took.

When Classis Grand Rapids East nevertheless went ahead and deposed him and his Consistory, Rev. Hoeksema was well aware of the fact that to continue to preach would mean a separation between him and his Church. Why he chose to continue to preach is discussed in "The History of the Protestant Reformed Churches."

That he was aware of the fact that this meant separation, even though the decisions of Classis were as wrong as they could be, is evident from the new name given the congregation: "Protesting Christian Reformed Church". It is true that a protest was still sent to Synod which men every two years. But little hope was held that it would be heard. And, indeed, it was rejected on the grounds that the protestants had left the denomination.

Finally, there is given the example of Peter and John. But this too is hardly analogous. The Sanhedrin formed the political and ecclesiastical tribunal in Israel because it belonged to the dispensation of shadows. In matters political its authority was sharply curtailed by Rome. But obviously, Peter and John could not recognize the authority of the Sanhedrin in matters of preaching the gospel. Nor was their statement of obedience to God rather than man an act of defiance against ecclesiastical decisions within a federation of Churches. Such a situation simply did not exist.

In conclusion then, the proper way of protest is the way outlined by Article 31 of the Church Order. There is no other.

From Holy Writ

The Book of Hebrews

Rev. G. Lubbers

ANNULMENT OF THE FOREGOING COMMANDMENT (*continued*) (*Hebrews 7: 18, 19*)

It should be clearly understood that this commandment which was annulled by the Lord was not simply a commandment which was to be obeyed by man, obedience to which is righteousness, but an institution designed to effect the atonement for men's sins. This law, which was according to a carnal commandment, was unable to accomplish such an atonement and expiation of sin and guilt by its own inherent weakness. It had reference only to the flesh and could not apply to the cleansing of the conscience from guilt and pollution of sin. (*Hebrews 9: 9, 10, 13, 14; 10: 2*)

This law made nothing perfect! We should notice the word "nothing." Perfection was indeed not by the Levitical priesthood. As law this Levitical priesthood only pointed to the better hope. However, if nothing more had happened, and Christ had not come to suffer and die as the great Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, we would still be in our sins. God saw that this Levitical priesthood had accomplished nothing toward our perfection to bring us near to God. We still stood afar. There still was a middle wall of the partition.

The way into the holiest was still not opened, according to the testimony of the Holy Ghost. (*Hebrews 9: 8; Ephesians 2: 14, 15*)

But now God has abolished this commandment of the Levitical law by his official annulment. It could be annulled because of two reasons. The first reason was that it was weak; it was characterized by "weakness." It was powerless to help; it could not bring about any aid to the wounded conscience. It did not really deal with and touch the souls and hearts of men, and actually save. It was weak! and for this reason it was also without any profit. It had in it the principle of unprofitableness. It fell by reason of its own incapacity to save. When it was discarded nothing was discarded but what was weak and unprofitable. The Hebrew Christians should take this to heart, and should not look back to the shadows and types as to the lost paradise. With Paul they should glory in nothing but the Cross of Jesus Christ, through which they are crucified to the world and the world is crucified to them.

For this annulling of the commandment had another light side to it. It was that when the veil is rent in twain, from top to bottom, at that very moment Christ has

brought about (*ginetai*) the realization of a better hope. This "hope" is the hope set before us. It is the hope which we have as an anchor for our soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil, whither the forerunner for us is entered, even Jesus! (Hebrews 6: 19, 20)

The term for "bringing in" is very significant in the Greek. It was something which God brought in afterwards, that is, after he had given a commandment which went before. The two are connected in the divine thought and plan as type and fulfillment, the shadow and the body, the earthly tabernacle and the heavenly sanctuary. Writes Calvin "by the word *bringing in*, on introduction, he means a certain preparation made by the law, as children are taught in those elements which smooth the way to that which is higher." Thus God has brought us to a better hope.

This hope is "better", incomparable better!

For this is an entirely new dispensation of grace, a new legal basis in Christ's blood by which we draw near to God. We are now justified in him who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised for our justification. Thus we have peace with God in Him. In Him we have constantly, up to the present moment, access by faith. In this grace we stand as an abiding possession in Christ. And herein we rejoice in the hope of the glory which God has revealed in His saints. What a blessed hope, sure and steadfast in the holy place! (Romans 5: 12; Ephesians 2: 18; 3: 12).

Yes, now we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. No, we do not merely have an earthly High Priest who enters into the holiest for us once every year; we ourselves draw nigh into the holiest. We do this not once every year, but we now constantly draw nigh to God. The verb in the Greek is in the present tense. (*eggizomen*) It can be translated in the sense of the progressive action in the present: *we are drawing nigh!* We are drawing nigh into the very presence of God, before whom the angels cover their faces as they sing their trisagion: holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty!

A poor sinner, guilty in himself, now walks where angels cover their faces!

Yes, annulment of the foregoing commandment!

But, it is now standing in a better hope, by which we are drawing nigh to God!

JESUS THE SURETY OF A BETTER COVENANT (Hebrews 7: 22)

Jesus did not become a high priest without a confirmation by the oath of God. It was not without oath. It was therefore quite different than the priesthood of Aaron. Here is a glory and a solemnity than which there is none greater. The oath is the end of all contradiction. It is God swearing by His own holiness and exaltedness, by the incomparable greatness of His rich mercy and eternal love, the panoply of His own immense Being and endless goodness.

By such an oath did God swear.

And God will not repent. That which God swears eternally in His counsel of peace, he swears in time and presently in all eternity. The purpose of God is unchangeable. His promise cannot fail, and all the hosts of hell cannot thwart His purpose of election in Christ. The Son of God, who is called Jesus, is the designated Person in the Divine trinity, to come to save His people from their sins. His counsel shall stand.

And this is the Word which God spoke through the prophet David, when David speaks of what the LORD said unto his Lord, the Christ. All the promises of God and His oaths are yea and Amen in Jesus, to the glory of God, the Father!

This Jesus is the "surety of a better covenant!"

Here we must pause a bit and reflect on what the Scriptures in general mean with the term "covenant" and in the letter to the Hebrews in particular. A comparison of the translation of the KJV and that of the Holland translation will show that in the minds of both of these translators there is a difference indicated between the terms "covenant" and "testament." What is striking concerning the usage of the term "testament" in the New Testament scriptures is that it is the term which is the translation of the Greek term "*diatheke*" in both the KJV and the Holland, where the Gospels speak of the institution of the Lord's Supper. In the phrase "this cup is the new *testament* in my blood" we see that the term "testament" is employed in both the aforementioned translations. (Matthew 26: 28; Mark 14: 24; Luke 22: 20) Here we do not read "the new *covenant* in my blood".

Even a hasty perusal of the usage of the term in the letter to the Hebrews will show that both the KJV and the Holland translation translate *diatheke* with the term "testament" in Hebrews 9: 15-17. The reason for this translation here seems rather obvious. It is to show that the salvation is as a *testament* requiring a testator, who must die in order to make the testament of force. No testament can be of force to be executed and the heirs to receive the inheritance except the testator have died. Thus also here. The term refers particularly to the death of Christ, as he has brought the perfect sacrifice for our sins, making atonement and the expiation of our guilt, so that God can be propitious to the heirs of the promise.

The term *testament* refers to the work of Christ in connection with the judicial basis in the blood of Christ.

There are passages in the book of Hebrews where the Holland translates "testament" and where the KJV translates "covenant." Thus in Hebrews 10: 29 the Holland reads (translated) "blood of the *testament*" and the KJV reads "blood of the *covenant*." The same holds true of the usage in both translation in Hebrews 13: 20. On the other hand in Hebrews 10: 16 both translations read "covenant" in the phrase "This is the covenant which I will make in those days . . ."

From the viewpoint of language and meaning of the terms themselves this distinction is already somewhat obvious. Both terms come from the Latin. Covenant is derived from the Latin *convenire* to come together, to meet together. Tropically it refers to an agreement with wishes and decisions, to have a consensus, accord, covenant. The term linguistically is akin to the term “verbond” in the Holland. On the other hand the term “testament” is a transliteration of the latin “*testamentum*.” And in Latin a *testamentum* is a legal will, document of the testator. This accounts for the several usages and translations in the Bible.

However, the meaning of the terms “covenant” and “testament” must not be derived from the classical Latin usage and made to determine the Biblical meaning of the term. The Holy Ghost put His own meaning in the term in the Bible. This is abundantly clear from the Greek verb which is used for to make a covenant. Literally this means “to covenant a covenant.” The term in the Bible for *to covenant* in the New Testament

Greek is a verb which means: to appoint, to consign *what belongs to one's self*. In the New Testament this verb is only in the middle voice: to arrange or dispose *for one's self!* (E. Robinson) This ought to point up that whether the term “covenant” is used or the term testament it is even a disposition of God which is brought about by God alone for Himself. The term in the Greek is not “*suntitheemi*” but it is “*diatitheemi*”! It is not the term used in Luke 22: 5 where we read “and they were glad, and *covenanted* to give him money.” Here the term is “*suntitheemi*” (our english; synthetic), which means to come to a mutual agreement. The wills and the minds met! Such is never the term for God's covenanting as the great Testator! God ever raises up His own covenant. He does this whether the term is “covenant” or whether it is “testament!”

This has some very important implications for the term here in Hebrews 7: 22 which speaks of Jesus having become the surety of a better covenant (testament)!

In His Fear

A Song in the Heart (2)

Rev. John A. Heys

Prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. But singing is a chief part of praise, if not indeed the chief part of praise.

For to praise is to extol for virtue. When we extol God for His goodness, it is an act of thanksgiving. When we extol Him for this goodness and for any one of or for all of the other virtues which He possesses infinitely, we are praising Him. And singing is the chief method of praising Him. We praise Him in prayer. We praise Him in preaching. We praise Him before men and we praise Him before His face. We extol Him publicly, and we praise Him privately. And we do this so richly in song. In fact the longest book in the Bible, the Book of Psalms, is a bundle of songs of praise to God.

But singing must be from the heart to be praise unto God.

Last time we pointed out that none, absolutely none, of the singing of the unregenerated is pleasing in God's sight and none is considered by Him to be praise. And now we would come to that which we set out to write when we began last time. The question is, “How much of *our* singing is pleasing in God's ears? How much of *our* singing is praise to God? By what standards does He judge it? Do we fail sometimes because we try too hard for the wrong element?”

Is it not true that also with our choirs we strive for

musical perfection, perfect diction, a proper balance of voices and parts, a musical masterpiece rather than a masterpiece of praise? Here again it may be stated that a childlike faith is pleasing to God. Here again it may be pointed out that many who are first shall be last, and the last shall be first. The voice may be cracked and have the very unmusical quality that will disqualify for the choir, but the song is in the heart and the praise is pleasing in God's ears. There may not be a profound thought of praise to God in the song. It may not be a versification of the profound Word of God itself. It may express a very simple truth. It may be the simple confession of the Jamaican chorus we heard so repeatedly, “They call Him the Rose of Sharon. They call Him the Lily of the Valley. But I call Him, Jesus My Lord.” There is praise. And when sincerely sung from the heart it sounds so sweet to the ears of God, while the “artistic” rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus — which literally is the Word of God — may be an abomination unto Him.

And then I mean exactly that Hallelujah Chorus and those literal words of Holy Writ as sung by members of the church, and believing members at that! There is so much show-off singing, also with us. Instead of singing God's praises unto God, we are trying to display our virtues of singing to men. Instead of extolling God for

His virtues, we are striving to extol ourselves for our "virtues." And our singing becomes an abomination in God's ears. Truly our best works are polluted with sin. Surely with Paul we must say, "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." And again, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."

We are not condemning choir rehearsal, although we would point out that this is a very dangerous thing. It is not dangerous because singing as such is a matter in which we can sin so easily and quickly. It is not dangerous because rehearsing as such is a violation or leads to a violation of God's law. It is not dangerous because God frowns on a truly artistic rendition of a song of His praises. It *is* dangerous because it is so often and so easily accompanied with taking God's name in vain! We take God's name and His praises on our lips without any thought of Him in our hearts and minds. And our singing becomes no different from the profanity of the world! For surely when we take that name of God over and over again to get the phrase polished for an "artistic" rendition that will extol *our* names and make us pleasing to men, we have taken that name of God in vain. We have used it for our flesh. We have used His holy name to advance our cause. We have not, as Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 5: 19, been "singing and making melody in your (our) hearts to the Lord." O, we are making melody. But it is not "in the heart to the Lord." A song of praise to be a song of praise, a song of praise to be pleasing in God's ears must come from out of the heart. We must not only sing believing that which we sing of God's virtues and glory but also rejoicing in those virtues and in that glory. And this means that we must have a song in our hearts as well as one upon our lips.

It follows then that the unregenerated, the unbeliever, the enemy of God cannot sing a song that is praise and cannot sing a song that pleases God. He may believe what he sings. James tells us that the devils believe that there is one God and even tremble, so certain are they that there is one God. But they surely do not rejoice in this truth. Otherwise they would not tremble. They would sing. Do you know of any passage in Holy Writ that presents the devils as singing? Do you ever read of them having a song in their hearts? The very mention of God's virtues makes them groan in anger. They rejoice in none of His virtues and they covet His glory for themselves. His sovereignty fills them with fury. His righteousness and holiness will never be the theme of their song. They cannot sing of His love, His mercy and His grace. For they are not recipients and objects of these virtues. And when they see these virtues bestowed upon God's people they seek to counteract them and to destroy them and to rob God's people of their comfort and joy. And so it is with all their children, their spiritual offspring. All the unbelievers, all

the unregenerated, all the unconverted are called by Jesus the serpents' brood, a generation of vipers, or if you will, children of the devil. Thus John 8: 44: Matthew 13: 38; I John 3: 8 and Matthew 12: 34.

The songs of the world therefore instead of extolling God for His virtues ridicule these virtues, ignore them and deny them; and the world has a song in its heart that extols the vices of men. The world's songs sing the praises of man. And so often these are what throb in our souls. Instead of singing, "How Great Thou Art" and, "O God how good Thou art", it is the "goodness" of man, the might and wisdom of man that vibrates in our fleshly hearts. And were that all, it would be bad enough. But listen once to what is offered today, and every day, and twenty four hours a day on radio and juke box! It is man's filth. It is his caricature for love. It is his sensuous, filthy passions of the depraved flesh! And your children fill your house with it, and you tap your toe to it?

Let us not be narrow in our observations and put the choir on the spot. What about us who are the listeners? By what standards do we judge their singing? Do they strive for such an "artistic" rendition in our churches because we do not know what is pleasing to God? Are we the listeners so interested in man and what he does that we ignore the element of what God is, and those who sing for us must cater to our fallen tastes rather than God's glory?

Do we reject sincerity for sonority? Is it with us a question of loudness rather than love to God? Do we look for that which the world also can do or that which only the child of God can and does do? Do we concentrate on the delivery rather than on the doctrine? Do we rejoice in rhythm rather than in revelation? Is the melody more important than the message? Do we try so hard to please our ears that we have no thought any more for what pleases God's ears?

Let us also examine our congregational singing. Do we drag it or swing it? Do we sing with no heart in it, or do we sing it in the spirit of better-get-this-thing-over-as-fast-as-we-can? We have heard much lifeless singing, and we have tried to stay with this race-track execution of what ought to be praise and instead is getting away from God's presence in song as fast as we can, so we can go on to other matters. We are in agreement with neither. But we do say that both reveal what is in the heart.

A heart with the song of Moses and the Lamb in it just cannot drag the words out as though this is a necessary evil, something that is our calling to do but in which our heart is not. You see them sometimes from the pulpit. The mouth remains closed, the eyes are lifeless. There is no interest in what is going on. There is no song in the heart and consequently there is none on the lips. O, indeed, there may be times when the heart is overwhelmed with grief. There may be times when one just cannot sing. This indicates that the song must come

from the heart. And there are dirges, songs of sadness, cries for deliverance and complaints. These songs others can sing during our moments of deepest grief. For you cannot cry and sing at the same time. But if one is *never* able to sing, if after the shock of the severe blow has passed we still cannot sing, it must mean that we have no song in the heart. We simply do not know the joy of the salvation which is ours in Christ and therefore we cannot sing about God.

Is that not an awful thing, not to be able to sing about as well as unto God? We can sing about men, about material things. From the moment we wake up in the morning until we close our eyes in sleep we will listen — and sing along in our hearts, for otherwise we would not turn the radio or record player on — but in church???? Is it not the testimony of the book of Psalms throughout that the child of God *SINGS*? It is equally true that he sings because of the song of salvation in his heart. A quick glance at my concordance shows some ninety references in the Psalms to the heart, and the word “sing” appears about forty times. Even then there is not a single one of these one hundred fifty psalms that is not in itself in the form of a song. The whole book is a compilation of poems of praise.

And if we really have that praise in our hearts, do we need a powerful organ to pull us along? Is it the organ that makes our singing so spontaneous, or is it the song in our hearts? We do not condemn the organ, nor even the cymbals and drums. Why not a trumpet with its

clear and triumphant sound? Why not clapping of the hands in the joy and ecstasy of justification by faith? If we get on fire in the heart by the joy of salvation full and free, the musical or unmusical quality of our voice will not keep us silent.

But the song of salvation will move to the deeds of salvation. There will be the decorum of a sanctified life and not the wild, savage tempo and antics of heathendom. There will be a restrained joy which is not a joy held back but a joy before God’s face. After all a song of praise is a song *UNTO* God. Away with this singing unto men. That you find in the world, for the children of the world know no one above the children of the world. Away, then, in our churches and church circles with singing unto men. Singing before men is in order, provided it is unto God and in His fear. With reverence and awe — and how else can you sing, if you give heed to the words of the spiritual song — in the very consciousness that we are before God’s face — let us sing praise to God from Whom all blessings flow. Let our song be this:

Ye who His temple throng,
Jehovah’s praise prolong,
New anthems sing;
Ye saints, with joy declare
Your Maker’s loving care,
And let the children there
Joy in their king.

Studies in Depth

The Modern Movement of Crusade Evangelism

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

Invitational and anecdotal preaching today largely displaces textual and expository preaching. The “invitation” used in connection with a sermon is a mere additive foreign to true preaching. What can the “invitation” furnish that true preaching does not? Where the latter is a reality, why would anyone want to append an opportunity to “take it or leave it”? — which is what an “invitation” is. Today, the “invitation” tacked on at the end of a “message” is usually one to come forward and accept Christ. Hence the “invitation” is also referred to as an “altar call.” What is the implication of an “altar call”? Are there altars in Protestant and Christian churches which seeking sinners are to approach on their way to God? Are there still in such churches remnants of “the anxious seat,” the “mourner’s bench” or the “enquiry room?” The great C. H. Spurgeon regarded the use of the “enquiry room”

as a pandering “to popular superstition. We fear that in those rooms men are warmed to a fictitious confidence. Very few of the supposed converts of enquiry-rooms turn out well . . . God has not appointed salvation by enquiry-rooms . . .” Latent in such sensationalist practices is legalism, a subtle form of Romanism.

The “enquiry room” may not be so widely used in this day. The so-called “invitation” to “let Christ come into your heart” is more widely practiced by modern mass evangelism. Who is not familiar with the gospel-hucksters who put Christ up for grabs like a peanut scramble? The “evangelist” may announce, “This is what we are going to do — Ask you to come right now, right up to the front. Wherever you are, there in the back, up in the gallery, come quickly. That’s a long aisle, but Christ went all the way to the cross for you.” Or, “You can come these few steps. Christ went all the

way for you. Give your life to Him. You do it now." Sometimes the "invitation" (the human device) is made to sound as though not complying with it is tantamount to repudiating the command of Christ. "Come now; if you do not receive Him, you will die in your sins; come forward."

It always makes a hit with the people to ride on the coat-tails of a name-great of former years, especially when it gives the impression of following in the line of the Puritans or Reformers. When, for example, the modern evangelist covers himself and his ministry with quotations from Spurgeon, the impression is given that he stands where Spurgeon stood. But the great prince of preachers held very openly and very uncompromisingly to the truth of the total depravity of man's nature. Anyone believing that great truth could not beg his hearers to "come to Christ" as though they had the ability to do so. He would not say, "You have the ability to choose. You stand at the crossroads. You may never be as close to the kingdom again. I believe your heart is specially prepared . . . You get up and come forward."

Supposed converts can be multiplied by the carloads out of this mill of cheapjack evangelism. But in every age few are saved. The disciples asked the Lord, "Are there few that be saved?" From Him came the words, "Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The antediluvian world, we have good reason to believe, was very highly populated, yet there was only one righteous family, in that of Noah's. Of that generation which entered into the wilderness, not even Moses but only Caleb and Joshua entered the land. When schism split the twelve tribes of Israel, only two followed the Lord, Judah and Benjamin. In the times of Elijah and Isaiah, there was but a very small remnant according to the election of grace. With the advent of Christ, He was in the world, the world was made by Him, but the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. The seed of the Word is sown on four kinds of ground, but only one is good ground.

The masses are ignorant of a true and saving grace, believing that all kinds of "common grace" (a human fiction) enable them to "accept or reject Christ." Everyone ought to be suspicious of a "grace" which puts one in a position to reject Christ! Such a "grace" must only be another form of *sin*! Many take that to be a work of grace when an "unclean spirit is (merely) gone out (not driven out) of a man," leaving him "empty," i.e., with no Christ (and so no grace); or, they assume to have grace because they tasted the good Word of God, or because they temporarily went along with the Holy Spirit — things which do not necessarily accompany salvation. Yet these things are rested in as evidences of grace. But true grace, being much higher, is beyond the reach of all natural and common attainments.

At the bottom of modern evangelism is a "common

grace" philosophy which flatters the natural man, baits him with a counterfeit, non-saving "good" and deludes him with a false picture of sin. He often assumes he is converted because he "went forward" and "accepted Christ" in response to an "altar call," and that he must be truly converted since now he does not drink, nor swear, nor lie, nor gamble, nor have a troubled mind. Personal "testimonies" reveal satisfaction with this negative sanctification, and indicate a looking to self and to some act of man for salvation, rather than to "look unto Me and be ye saved." He may have and look to his good desires which do not spring from motives that arise from love to Christ, the true Christ (and not an Arminian Christ) and from the aim to glorify God. It may be that his conversion has come very easily because of a very superficial view of sin. It may then be discovered to be only a mirage. In reality, sin is not just a wrong which creates problems and upsets in life, bringing grief and tragedy, even damnation. Being "saved" from such sins seems to many to be evidence of grace. For they deem the remaining sin in them to be but "infirmity," and since there is always indwelling sin in the best Christian as long as he lives no matter how much he may strive against it, this does not trouble the modern convert because, he reasons, no child of God can completely overcome sin in this life. But this is not to see sin as man's worst enemy, neither to see it in its exceeding sinfulness as an offence against God's holiness and justice, nor to see that the best Christian does not mourn the less, but the more for indwelling sin.

The "repentance" and "faith" demanded and professed by modern evangelism and its converts are different only in degree from that of Balaam, Herod, Pilate, Judas and Simon Magus. The prophet Balaam had high aspirations. He desired to die the death of the righteous. The trouble was, he did not, could not, live the life of the righteous. Herod heard the Word of God from John, heard him gladly, and did many things, which undoubtedly had to be recognized as good, as the good Jehu performed. Yet he was dominated by sin, and broke not one or two, the sixth and seventh, but all the commandments daily. Judas dreamed of a kingdom, was willing to forsake the world for it, to outwardly conform to the law of God for it. But so far from entering the kingdom of God, he went to his own place.

Today's evangelism, unlike that of Paul's first three chapters of *Romans*, flatters its hearers, buttering them up as generous, honest, religious people, who still retain much good in them, especially the ability to do God a favor and come over to His side. The matter of their sin must be handled with a certain amount of dispatch. Nothing about confession of sin, repentance and coming to Christ must be burdensome or "too strict," if converts are to be made. The sin question does not take long to settle. To ask in pressing for a "decision" for Christ, "You have sinned, but Christ died for your sins, bore your sins — then where are they?" has the

tendency to give men repose in a state of false peace. So one may conclude he is truly converted because he has heard the Word of God, now reads the Bible, has "accepted Christ," has a "wonderful Savior," prays, reforms his life and so doubts not his salvation. He has been led to believe he is in a state of grace because he "came forward" to the rostrum at an evangelistic meeting and "took Christ," tasted of Christ and of the good Word of God and has a peace never known before. But he had better be sure he is in a state of grace for none of these things, but because he has found the pearl of great price, has sold all and bought it to forsake all for God and Christ.

What bridges men make for themselves to get across to Christ! What inventions modern evangelism call on men to use to get to Christ! Faith conceived of as coming from and originating in man according to his "free will" is one of those human devices. "Faith" is preached as a power of man's own production and exertion. Confidence in such a "faith" is like holding on to one's shadow. True faith is not a native human quality, nor one which human nature can just as well produce. It is a gift of God, as much as repentance, or eternal life; a power which the Lord must sovereignly work in His chosen. But a self-elicited faith will take hold of Christ before made aware of need for him, and before realizing any lack of faith and ability to believe in Him. A "salvation" acquired by such "faith" is a deception and a trust to self. A man must know himself to be spiritually dead, and so unable to believe until the Lord makes him alive and endows him with saving faith. Without that work of grace he has no faith at all. When a man realizes he is a sinner, he knows he is vile. The more he understands God's Word and the closer he gets to Christ the more vileness he discovers in himself. The Christian man does not merely feel sometimes troubled for sin. He is always troubled for it. His praying over it, sorrowing for it and confessing it do not assuage the grief of his trouble. It only reveals to him that he is the more vile. But the hasty, shallow person, affected by hasty, shallow evangelism, after praying, confessing and being troubled for sin will assume these actions are

evidences of grace and so feel safe, so much so that he will not find himself anymore to be vile, or at least no more troubled about his vileness. This is to trust to self, to rest satisfied with fig-leaf righteousness. Any evangelism that does not agree with the infallible rule of Holy Scripture we are bound to reject with all our hearts. Let message and method conform to that rule and leave results to God. He is not slower than we are, and will not fail to honor His own Word preached.

Salvation is, from its beginning to its end, a mighty wonderwork of God, no less marvelous, and therefore, no less divine, than the work of creation. It is that wonderwork of the Almighty by which He calls light out of darkness, righteousness out of unrighteousness, everlasting glory out of deepest shame, immortality out of death, heaven out of hell! It is the wonder of grace, whereby God lifts an accursed world out of the depth of its misery into the glory of His heavenly kingdom and covenant. That work is absolutely divine. Man has no part in it, and cannot possibly cooperate with God in his own salvation. In no sense of the word, and at no stage of the work, does salvation depend upon the will or work of man, or wait for the determination of his will. In fact, the sinner is of himself neither capable nor willing to receive that salvation. On the contrary, all he can do and will is to oppose, to resist his own salvation with all the determination of his sinful heart. But God ordained and prepared this salvation with absolutely sovereign freedom for His own, His chosen ones alone; and upon them He bestows it, not because they seek and desire it, but in spite of the fact that they never will it, and because He is stronger than man, and overcomes the hardest heart and the most stubborn will of the sinner. He reconciles the sinner unto Himself; He justifies him and gives him the faith in Christ; He delivers him from the power and dominion of sin, and sanctifies him; He preserves him. All this belongs to the wonder of salvation, which is accomplished through sovereign grace alone.

—H. Hoeksema, "Whosoever Will" pp. 14, 15

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid of the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to a faithful member, Mrs. Jeanette Soodsma, in the passing of her husband

MR. GERRIT SOODSMA

whom the Lord took unto Himself on Dec. 15, 1968 at the age of 62.

May the knowledge that after God guides us by His counsel all our days, He receives us into glory (Psalm 73: 24) supply her and her children with abundant peace.

Rev. D. H. Kuiper, Pres.
Mrs. M. De Vries, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

Jan. 1, 1969

The winter's grip on the nation was felt in Iowa Dec. 22 when all church services were cancelled and the evening Christmas program was postponed. This winter's *grippe* was also in evidence in all our churches, leaving many seats vacant, and in one instance, Southeast Church, the pulpit had to be occupied by an elder on Sunday evening and Christmas morning when Rev. Schipper was laid low by its bug.

Our Protestant Reformed Christian School Teachers Convention was held in South Holland Nov. 7 and 8. The Thursday morning lecture on, "Distinctive Christian Education" was given by Dr. Calvin Seerveld, while the afternoon program featured Prof. H. Hanko who spoke on, "General Revelation and Christian Instruction". Friday morning they attended the Midwest Chr. Teachers Ass'n Sectionals in Chicago, and toured the Museum of Science and Industry in the afternoon. Their reporter, Mr. John Kalsbeek, said, "The exchange of ideas, the christian fellowship and the unity of thought and purpose shall never be forgotten. New ideas to try, new thoughts to think and new energy to face the responsibility of instructing Covenant children; these ingredients contributed much to the success of the convention".

Hope's Choral Society rendered a Christmas concert consisting of some ten numbers, with an accordin solo and a piano-organ duet to give variance to the program.

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema and family vacationed in Florida during the Christmas-between-semesters-vacation, and Prof. H. Hanko and family were quartered in Hull's parsonage with the Professor ministering to the congregation's needs in the interim.

On Dec. 20 Hope School rendered their Christmas program and had invited their parents and the staff and pupils of Covenant High School to share it with them. The first grades sang and recited Luke 2; the junior and senior choirs, under the direction of H. Langerak, sang some numbers; Prof. Hanko gave a short talk on, "He was made poor that we might be rich"; the High School choir, under the direction of R. Petersen, sang three numbers which, according to our reporter, "made chills run up and down my spine". It was announced that Hope's children had contributed \$200.00 as their Christmas gift to the children of Jamaica.

Loveland's School Christmas program included audience participation in two ways: the giving of an offering

and the singing of two songs, one of which was sung in German, the language of their forefathers.

A ninety-year-old lady from Mineral, Va. wrote Rev. Woudenberg to thank him for his study sheets which she regularly enjoys, adding, "I agree with all your doctrinal statements."

The young people of Redlands sponsored a pre-Christmas hymnsing which was reported to be, "enthusiastic and inspiring".

Among the many benefits to be had as a member of a Prot. Ref. Church one cannot find one that affords a low budget payment. Isabel adopted a 1969 budget that calls for a weekly gift of \$9.10 (is this the highest?), and that does not include the many other needs that must be met in the name of Christian Charity. But the very fact that we can adopt such a budget is a proof that we can say, "Our cup runneth over".

Looking over the printed programs of our schools and churches we noted that Kalamazoo's was a bit different from the usual run. The congregation was asked to sing a number of Christmas carols interspersing the reading of choice scripture portions by the Sunday School children. A violin solo by Mary Klop and a reading taken from Spurgeon, which was read by Phil Harbach, completed the interesting program.

Our most recent Theological Journal, Vol. II, No. 1, contains a paper on "The Organic Development of Dogma", by Prof. H. Hanko; and the second half of the journal is taken up by a reprint of a paper authored by the late Rev. H. Hoeksema which was found in his effects. The title of the paper is, "On the Theory of Common Grace". The Editor wrote, "While it has in it much Greek and Hebrew, our readers who have no acquaintance with the original languages of Scripture need not be deterred from reading it. The article will be of considerable value. And, though written some years ago, will be very relevant to the present." It is thought to have been written about 1920 and was read at a minister's conference of some kind. And even when we ignore the Greek and the Hebrew we found it very interesting to note that the author's thinking had developed, but was not changed in regard to the entire issue at that time.

Kalamazoo's Dec. 29 bulletin carried a thank you from the Pastor and his family for the generous purse given them by the congregation Christmas Day.

... see you in church

J.M.F.