

# The STANDARD BEARER



A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

I believe that we Protestant Reformed have something very pertinent to say to the Christian Reformed brethren with respect to the very matters which are troubling them in their present church connection. It is no secret that I believe that all of their troubles are related — historically, doctrinally, church politically, and ethically — to 1924. They may not believe it, and they may not agree. But I would like the opportunity to demonstrate this and to discuss it, as well as the opportunity to be enlightened by them and proved wrong if I am wrong. Can we not discuss? Need we be afraid of discussion, even if we may seem at first to be poles apart? (cf. Editorial)

## MEDITATION

## At God's Right Hand

Rev. M. Schipper

*"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."*

I Peter 3:22.

It is Jesus Christ of whom the apostle speaks!

Not Enoch, who, after he had a vision of thousands of angels coming with the Lord to judgment, was translated that he should not see death. Nor was it Elijah, who was whisked away into heaven in a whirlwind that appeared as a chariot and horses afire. Though these also went to heaven, to remain in the realms of glory, of them you do not learn that they were exalted at God's right hand, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto them.

But Jesus Christ, Who was raised from the dead!

The One of Whom the apostle speaks earlier in the chapter, that He once suffered for sins, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

He is gone into heaven, and is now on the right hand of God exalted!

Marvelous fact!

Fact, concerning which the apostle Peter had first-hand information, and concerning which he now writes!

It was written evidently for the comfort of and an incentive to Christians who are required to suffer for well-doing, having a good conscience; of Christians who, because of and from their sanctified hearts are ready always to give answer to every man that asketh concerning the reason of their hope. The very ground for their antithetical life in the world rests on the solid facts that as Christ was victorious, so shall they be. And the fact is that Christ, being exalted, has received power not only to deliver them, but also to preserve them unto everlasting glory.

As eye-witness of the glory Christ would receive, when He should ascend into heaven, which he saw when he was with Him on the mount of transfiguration, and eye-witness of the actual ascent into heaven, Peter and John could also say: "What we have seen and heard, and our hands have handled concerning the Word of life, that declare we unto you."

Historic fact!

For forty days after His resurrection the Lord Jesus had tarried with His disciples, making ten different appearances unto them. During this period He gave them instructions concerning His kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. He spoke to them of the necessity of His suffering and death. He tendered them the promise of the restitution of all things. He gave them the promise also of His return in the Spirit, the Comforter, for Whom they were to wait in Jerusalem, and of Whom they would receive power to be witnesses unto the ends of the earth.

On the last day of the forty, He led them out to the Mount of Olives, from which He was to ascend into heaven. Yea, while He was speaking to them and blessing them, He was taken up. And as they beheld, lo, a cloud specially prepared by God, came and received Him out of their sight. And, behold, as they looked stedfastly toward heaven, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

There can be no doubt about it. The historic fact of the ascension of Jesus Christ is well attested to by those who were eye-witnesses!

Who is gone into heaven!

And that means, first of all, that He changed places. The human nature which He assumed at His conception and birth, the nature in which He suffered and died, and the same human nature in which He was raised from the dead, now glorified, — must have a place. The ascension therefore, was not merely a change of state and condition, but also of place, — from the earth to heaven. And heaven is the place where the omnipresent God dwells most particularly in His glory. It is also the home of the glorified saints.

Secondly, that He is gone into heaven means also to convey to us the truth, not only that He changed



places from earth to heaven, but also that He penetrated the heavens and came into the very center of it. He passed through the periphery and the abode of the saints, so that they, too, witnessed His ascension. But He ascends above them to appear before the very face of God. In God's glorious presence He stood, and by God was urged to sit down.

On the right hand of God!

The original text seems to make this emphatic. Translated literally, the text may be read: "Who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven . . ."

Symbolic expression!

God has no throne in the literal sense of the word. Nor does He have a right hand in that literal sense. "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Rather, are we to understand the expression in the figurative and symbolic sense. Then the throne of God is to be understood as representing His supreme and absolute sovereignty. Then the right hand of God means to convey to us the truth that God has highly exalted Christ and given to Him to partake of His glorious power and authority.

Wondrous glory!

Necessary element in His exaltation!

We must understand clearly that Christ's ascension is not merely a change of place, from earth to heaven; but it is also a progressive degree in His state of exaltation. Just as in His state of humiliation there were several degrees according to which He progressively descends, beginning with His lowly birth, and ending as it were in the abyss of hell; so also in the state of exaltation there are various degrees, beginning with His resurrection, and ending with His return in glory to judgment. The ascension is only one of these ascending degrees that brings Him to the pinnacle of glory. It was to this He evidently referred when He said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

Necessary also because of His heavenly nature!

He arose from the dead with heavenly life. Though human, it was no longer earthly. It was new. It was different. And with heavenly life He belongs to the heavenly state and place. No longer could the disciples fellowship with Him, as they had done before His death. This lesson was forcibly impressed upon Mary Magdalene, who imagined that the living Lord had returned to her. Jesus said unto her when she was about to throw her arms about Him: "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and

your God."

Nor should we fail to point out that He was the Person of the Son in human nature, Who was so clothed with glory! Not the divine, but the human nature is glorified. The same Jesus Who had so deeply humbled Himself is now highly exalted.

And this means that our human nature, as it was assumed by the Son of God, is exalted at God's right hand. O, indeed, not so that the human becomes divine; but so, that the human is crowned with divine honors, and dwells in divine glory.

Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him!

Not so highly was man honored when he was created in the beginning. Then, verily, he was made a little lower than the angels. So the psalmist describes him in Psalm 8. And the writer to the Hebrews reflecting on this Psalm, informs us: "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels: thou crownest him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2).

The apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians, informs us that God hath set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church . . ."

Such is also the testimony in our text: "Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him."

His dominion extends over all!

All that is in heaven! All that is on earth! All that is in hell! All things, all men, all angels, and all devils! Over all His church! Over all His enemies and ours!

Jesus Christ is the exalted Lord, before Whom every knee must bow!

Lord of the angels! Since the fall in the angelic world, when Lucifer, son of the morning, exalted himself, taking with him in his rebellion a host of



angels, the order in the angelic realm was disturbed. Now, however, the order of heaven is restored in Jesus, made higher than the angels.

Lord over authorities! Over those who are given the right to rule under God, none excluded. They all are subject to the rule of Jesus.

Lord over powers! All the powers that be are subject to his power.

His is a dominion that is derivative, always given unto Him. He does not possess it of Himself. At God's right hand He receives it, and from that exalted position He exercises it until all is brought into complete subjection; when He also shall be subjected to God, after He has brought all into subjection unto God.

Our wonderful Lord!

With His authority and power He is enabled to finish the work of our salvation. What He has accomplished in His death and resurrection is not the

end. He must apply unto us His salvation, causing all things to work unto our salvation, and bringing us at last to everlasting glory. He must perfect His everlasting, heavenly kingdom, by destroying all His and our enemies, putting them under His feet. By His Word and Spirit He must gather His saints, sanctifying them, and presenting them at last without spot or wrinkle in the assembly of the elect in life eternal. He must prepare for us a place in God's Father-house. He must intercede for us with the Father. He must defend and preserve us until the work of the church in the world is also finished.

So the church of Christ has nothing to fear! Our hearts may be filled with hope. In the midst of all our distresses the Captain of our salvation cannot fail us. His is all the power even to make all the powers of darkness to be our servants.

When He shall have exalted us with His own glory, then shall we with Him be subjected unto God, in order that God may be all and in all.

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## EDITORIAL

# A Realistic Response To "A Dream"

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

In the May, 1974 issue of *The Outlook*, Editor Vander Ploeg writes of his "dream" of a "Congress of Conservatives called together from across denominational lines." Near the end of his editorial, he writes: "Smile if you will, ridicule this if you must, criticize and tear it all to pieces — *but please don't give up on the idea and bury it unless you can honestly say that you know a better way to do it.*" And again: "Won't you let me hear from you? And please let me know whether your letter may be used for publication or not."

Well, this is a response — not in the form of a letter, but in that of an editorial. It may indeed be used for publication by *The Outlook*. In fact, I shall send Editor Vander Ploeg a typewritten copy in advance of publication in the *Standard Bearer*. Furthermore, I will not smile. I will not ridicule. Nor will I "tear it all to pieces." I will indeed offer criticism, but not merely negative criticism. And I will welcome further discussion, whether in print or

in face-to-face meeting. Purposely I am prefacing these remarks in this way, so that *The Outlook* may know our attitude from the outset. And I take it that since Editor Vander Ploeg mentions the "Protestant Reformed brethren" in his "dream," he also includes us in his request, "Won't you let me hear from you?"

First of all, what is this "dream" of the Rev. Vander Ploeg?

Briefly, it is as follows:

1) The Rev. Vander Ploeg proposes a "Congress of Conservatives" which shall "meet together for a full day or even two."

2) Included in this meeting are to be "many concerned and interested persons from the CRC. And, if it could be under joint leadership, I would hope also from the RCA and the OPC." Further, Mr. Vander Ploeg asks: "Would our Protestant Reformed brethren and those of other Reformed bodies be willing to come so that with them also we may be



able to talk together?" But the list is left open for additions.

3) Apparently the basis and motivation of the proposed "Congress" is as follows: "We really do have so much in common, and we need each other more than we may realize. Let's not allow the liberals to have a corner on ecumenical ventures." In this connection, appeal is made to Christ's high-priestly prayer in John 17, "... that they may all be one..." And the suggestion is made that obstacles could be removed to make that prayer of our Savior realized, even to the extent of a visible, external organization.

4) As to execution of the above suggestion, a "planning session" is proposed, to be "attended by representatives of the various elements, groups, or churches interested in exploring the possibility of and the working out of such a "Congress of Conservatives." Moreover, it is suggested that at such a Congress, one spokesman for each group or body might address the gathering on what he would envision as "The Path to Unity." And "An evening mass meeting could be held at which the thinking expressed at such an all-day or a two-day session might be summarized."

5) Finally, the suggestion is made that such a "Congress of Conservatives" could give rise to: a) "possibly a working organization (being) brought into being that might be called *Conservatives United*," b) "and eventually, by the sovereign grace of Him whose guidance we will implore, also a *United Reformed Church* in the United States and Canada!"

That, briefly, is the "dream."

\* \* \* \*

Let me try to respond realistically.

First of all, I wish to stress that we of the Protestant Reformed Churches are, and always have been, willing to discuss. We have said this again and again over the years, especially to the Christian Reformed brethren; but no one ever seems to take us seriously. On only one occasion, in 1939, was there an attempt (in the so-called Pantlind Conference) to engage in any discussion. That attempt ended in abortion, but *not* because of our unwillingness. But let me say it again: whether in official, ecclesiastical conference or in an unofficial gathering of Protestant Reformed and Christian Reformed men, *we are willing to confer*. This does not mean, however, that we are willing to confer with *everyone at the same time*. This could only lead, I believe, to chaos and, ultimately, to failure. The discussion would be so varied and wide-ranging, especially in a one-day or two-day conference, that nothing definite and constructive could be accomplished. If "obstacles" are to be gotten out of the way, as the Rev. Vander

Ploeg suggests, then let us get those obstacles removed systematically and one at a time. Besides, is it not true that there are different obstacles between the Christian Reformed brethren and us, than, say, between the Christian Reformed brethren and RCA or OPC brethren? But I will have more to say about this a bit later.

In the second place, if the avowed and preconceived purpose of such a Congress is an eventual "United Reformed Church," then I, for one, would consider it an act of schism on my part to participate. It would imply some kind of dissatisfaction on my part with the Protestant Reformed Churches while I nevertheless continue as a minister and professor who has not even made known any such dissatisfaction to consistory, classis, or synod. It would be different, for example, if I would be appointed as a representative of our Synod to confer on possible merger with another denomination. But this is not the nature of this "Congress." And let me make it crystal clear: I have no such dissatisfaction with our Protestant Reformed Churches as would move me to work toward a new church formation. And I am a bit surprised that in the admitted conservative-liberal cleavage in his own denomination the Rev. Vander Ploeg makes this public suggestion of what, from an official Christian Reformed point of view, would have to be considered schism. But let that be. As an individual Protestant Reformed member and officebearer I could conceivably work toward some kind of non-ecclesiastical organization of "conservatives," just as, for example, I can quite properly be a member of the non-ecclesiastical Reformed Free Publishing Association. But I could not work toward a new church formation, that is, reformation through separation. I happen to believe that Rev. Vander Ploeg can and should do that vis a vis his denomination, and that he should do so *now*, not eventually. But I cannot and may not do that with respect to my denomination.

But, in the third place, if you would remove this element as the avowed intent of your "dream," for my part I would be willing (with a colleague or two) to attend a meeting *to explore the possibility* of a conference such as you suggest. I see endless problems. Who are to be invited? Who determines who are "conservatives" for the purpose of this meeting? In fact, what *is* a conservative? What will be the basis of the conference, and how will that basis function and be enforced? What will be discussed specifically? Who will "umpire" the discussion? How can two groups who have very real and serious differences between themselves, differences which do not directly concern others, gather in a general meeting of conservatives and join in a general



discussion of conservative union while their specific one-to-one differences are not ironed out? But I will at least attend an exploratory session, if invited, and raise my problems and make suggestions, without committing myself *beyond* that exploratory session. If thereafter we should conclude that such a "Congress" is not for us, we will also try to explain our reasons.

\* \* \* \*

But I believe I have a better plan. To put it in your words, Editor Vander Ploeg, I can honestly say that I know a better way to do it.

I propose a conference (as long as necessary) of concerned (or conservative) Christian Reformed brethren and Protestant Reformed brethren (We are, of course, all "conservative.").

Here, briefly, is the plan:

1) Let us have a planning session by a committee of six. I suggest the Rev. Vander Ploeg, the Rev. Leonard Schalkwyk, and the Rev. Jerome Julien from the Christian Reformed side; I am sure my two faculty colleagues would join me from the Protestant Reformed side. Or the Rev. Vander Ploeg may name his own colleagues and any two of my Protestant Reformed colleagues. We can hold this planning session at our Seminary Building.

2) The subject proposed by the Rev. Vander Ploeg could very well serve: "The Path to Unity." I volunteer to prepare a thorough paper on this subject; and I suggest that a Christian Reformed "conservative" also present a position paper on this subject.

3) After these papers are presented (and they should preferably be distributed in mimeographed form to all who attend), there is to be full and open-hearted discussion as long as necessary. If this should require repeated meetings, so much the better.

4) The fundamental basic of the gathering is to be Scripture and the Reformed confessions. All other ground rules will be agreed upon by the planning committee of six.

And here are my reasons for this proposal:

1) We should begin to realize Rev. Vander Ploeg's

"dream" closest to home. And the Christian Reformed brethren and we Protestant Reformed are from a historical and a doctrinal point of view closest to one another.

2) Almost nine years ago, when he was still editor of *The Banner*, the Rev. Vander Ploeg wrote of his desire for "reconciliation" with respect to us. You see, in some respects this "dream" has been a long time in the making. Since that time the conservative-liberal cleavage in the Christian Reformed Church has grown sharper; and I take it that the Rev. Vander Ploeg himself realizes this. We of the Protestant Reformed Churches remain the same "conservatives" today as we were then; and as a denomination we have no conservative-liberal cleavage, nor any of the problems which are causing the concern of the concerned Christian Reformed brethren. But already nine years ago I wrote of our willingness to discuss things and to try to get "obstacles" removed — whether in official or unofficial conference. The Rev. Vander Ploeg never responded then. We are still willing to have discussion, if only it is thorough and pertinent and frank discussion.

3) I believe that we Protestant Reformed have something very pertinent to say to the Christian Reformed brethren with respect to the very matters which are troubling them in their present church connection. It is no secret that I believe that all of their troubles are related — historically, doctrinally, church politically, and ethically — to 1924. They may not believe it, and they may not agree. But I would like the opportunity to demonstrate this and to discuss it, as well as the opportunity to be enlightened by them and proved wrong if I am wrong. Can we not discuss? Need we be afraid of discussion, even if we may seem at first to be poles apart?

Rev. Vander Ploeg, are you serious about the fundamental idea of your dream?

I also am serious.

When do you wish to meet with us for a planning session?

R.S.V.P.

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## QUESTION BOX

## Post-Lecture Question Box

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

*[Note: This is a special edition of Question Box. My recent lecture in First Church, Grand Rapids, was followed by a question period. The question period, however, was not long enough for the answering of all the questions. The promise was made, therefore that any questions which were not answered at the meeting would be answered in writing in a later issue of the Standard Bearer. This promise I now try to fulfill. Most of the questions are rather directly related to my lecture of that evening on the subject, "Why Are We Protestant Reformed?" Some, as you will see, are more distantly and indirectly related. I will not explain the relation of the question to my lecture: for this would require too much space. I think, however, that even those who did not hear my lecture will be able to understand and to benefit from the questions and answers. Incidentally, I will also briefly summarize my answer to the questions which were dealt with at the meeting.]*

## Question 1

If the doctrine of common grace is wrong, or false, and man is totally depraved, how do you account for the good that man does? Or (how do you explain) Matthew 5:44-45, which indicates that God blesses all? Why did Jehu, a person who was not elect, do that which was right in the eyes of the Lord (II Kings 10:30)? Was not this only by the grace of the Lord?

## Reply

First of all, whether man is totally depraved is not a question in Reformed Churches. According to Scripture and the Confessions, the natural man is by nature incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil. That is total depravity. And if man is totally depraved, it follows, of course, that he cannot do good.

In the second place we have the question about the familiar passage in Matthew 5:44-48, which the reader may look up for himself. In regard to this, the following:

1) You must not simply appeal to isolated passages in Scripture. You must read the Scriptures in the light of the current teaching of Scripture. And that current teaching of Scripture in many, many places is that God does not love and bless all men, but that He hates and curses some. (I will not go into detail here. As our readers know, I have just discussed this subject in my series of editorials on the "Free Offer.")

2) Notice carefully that the text does not say that God blesses all. This is a conclusion — and an incorrect one — from the statement of the text that God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good,

and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Incidentally, the presupposition in this conclusion is that blessing (and cursing) is in things as such. This is a grave mistake. For if you conclude that good things are as such blessing and bad things are as such curses, then you must also conclude not only that God blesses the wicked reprobate, but that He curses His people when He sends them evil things.

3) The point of the text is this: we must love our enemies, which does not mean simply that we do them some good, bestow some good things on them, but that we show them the love of Christ. We bless when they curse; we do good to them when they hate; we pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us. The text means, therefore, that we must seek their genuine good. And that means that we must seek their repentance, seek their salvation. In that sense we must show them love. And in the case of those enemies, that love toward a wicked man is, so to speak, a one-way street; it is not a mutual love. It extends from you toward your enemy, but not from him toward you.

4) The point is, further, that we must do this for God's sake. We must manifest to our enemies the love of God that is in us and that we have tasted. And the *character* of the love of God is exactly such that it is a love that is capable of being merciful and kind to His enemies. Notice that I do not say that it is a love that is merciful and kind to *all* His enemies. But the character of the love of God is such that He loved us while we were yet enemies.

5) As a most general example of this fact that we must love our enemies, the Lord Jesus here points to



God's work in nature, where He causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Next there is the question concerning Jehu. In connection with this question, let me refer the reader to a thorough treatment of this subject in a pamphlet available from our Business Office, and entitled, "The Curse Reward Of The Wicked Well-Doer." In answer to the question, the following:

1) Notice that the text does not simply say that Jehu did good, but "thou hast done well in executing that which is right in my eyes." That refers, therefore, to the outward deed, the executing. And what was that which was right in God's eyes? It was the execution of judgment upon the whole house of Ahab. That was what Jehu did.

2) The question is whether that was a good deed on Jehu's part. That it was right in God's eyes, that Jehu did well in executing it, that he did a good job — there is no question about that. He did a very thorough job: there was nothing left of the house of Ahab when he was finished. But that he did *good* in the sight of God is an altogether different matter. The truth of the matter is that Jehu did not do this work for God's sake, but that he did it for his own sake, because of his own opportunistic and carnal striving and desire to be king. And the proof of this lies in the fact, stated twice in the context in II Kings 10, that although Jehu was very zealous to execute the house of Ahab and to stamp out the worship of Baal, he nevertheless did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin.

3) And thus Jehu also had a reward. His reward was that his sons to the fourth generation would sit on his throne. He was the only king of Israel who had that happen to him. But if you study the history of those four generations which sat on his throne after him, you will discover that the reward of Jehu was indeed a *curse*-reward. Would you dare to think that it was a *blessing* for Jehu to have descendants such as he had sitting on the throne? No, it would have been better for Jehu and for them, had they never been born. For not only did they follow in the wicked footsteps of their father, but they went from wickedness to wickedness, to ever deeper wickedness, until finally the northern kingdom became ripe for judgment under their influence. And if you would like a further Scriptural commentary on Jehu and his house, and definite and clear Scriptural proof of God's attitude toward the house of Jehu, I refer you to Hosea 1:4, where God instructs Hosea concerning the name of his son: "And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel."

There you have plain proof: a) that God's attitude toward the house of Jehu was an attitude of wrath and vengeance, not favor b) that in shedding the blood of Jezreel (that is, slaying all the house of Ahab) though Jehu was very zealous to do this, he nevertheless sinned in the sight of the Lord. This is implied in the very fact that God "avenged" the blood of Jezreel. Vengeance is, of course, a recompense for evil.

#### Question 2

Are you suggesting in your speech that the Protestant Reformed Churches are better or stronger church politically than a Secession movement like the De Cock movement of 1834 in the Netherlands or Secession movements in the 20th century in the U.S.A.? Also the Doleantie Movement in 1886? Would we be weaker doctrinally had we seceded? Is there something intrinsically wrong with secession? We are here because of secession, are we not, in the background of our history?

#### Reply

In the first place, I am not suggesting that the Protestant Reformed Churches are better or stronger church politically than the movement of 1834 or the movement of 1886. My point, in connection with my discussion of secession, was that we did not ruthlessly and recklessly trample the unity of the church, that we did not arbitrarily leave. I did not mean to say that separation is under every circumstance wrong. I would emphasize, however, that an act of secession is permissible and is right only when it has become fundamentally impossible for anyone to stay in his mother church.

In the second place, I meant to emphasize in connection with my remarks on this subject in my lecture, that we are a continuation, *the* continuation of the Reformed line that traces itself exactly over 1886 and 1834. That is necessary. The church that is divorced from the church of the past, the church of all ages, has no rightful claim to the name church. In the third place, we would not be *weaker* doctrinally if we had seceded. That as such has nothing to do with secession. I would emphasize, however, that the fundamental question in secession is the question of *doctrine*, the question of the truth of the Word of God. I would also emphasize in this connection that some of the secession movements in the 20th century have been extremely weak because they are doctrinally mixed and broad, and not confessionally strong. Reformation through separation, let me stress, is always a return to the truth of the Word of God; and it must be a complete and wholehearted return, involving the disavowal of all error, or it will never be successful.

Further, I would caution that today I can very well



conceive of circumstances again where secession, as an act on the part of those who separate, is necessary. Why? Because today you have the phenomenon in American churches, and also in churches abroad, that they have become so big and so loose, and the liberal element has become so strong, that they don't care a snap of the fingers about a conservative element. Their attitude is: humor them, for they are harmless. They vow that they will not have heresy trials in their churches; and they vow that they will be a tolerant, modalities church. That is the thing that is coming to pass today, both here and abroad. And as a result they will not cast anybody out — not very easily. They will let you stay and die; and they will let your generations die, and let your conservative element die out. And therefore, for your very ecclesiastical and spiritual life's sake, you have to separate.

I would also point out that as far as principles of church government are concerned, we exactly agree with the Secession of 1834 and with the Doleantie of 1886, with their emphasis on the autonomy of the local church and with their emphasis against hierarchy, their emphasis against the idea that classis and synod have the power to depose office bearers. It is Reformed to teach that it is only the power of the local consistory to preach, to administer sacraments, and to exercise discipline.

Finally, I would point out that there is a significant difference between the secession of 1834 and the origin of our Protestant Reformed Churches. We were expelled as consistories and congregations. In 1834 those who seceded did not act in their capacity as office bearers, but they acted by virtue of the office of all believers. You will discover this if you read their "Act of Secession." But fundamentally 1834, 1886, and 1924 are alike in this: the deepest concern was the marks of the true church, namely, the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline. And that must always be the underlying concern of any reformation movement.

### Question 3

In what ways have the Protestant Reformed Churches developed the doctrine of the covenant? What is the organic idea of the covenant?

### Reply

Pastor Van Baren was correct in his remark that this question is a subject in itself. It would make a fine subject for a lecture.

Let me briefly point to some ways in which we have developed the doctrine of the covenant.

1. Our strong emphasis is upon the idea that the covenant is not a means to an end, but an end in itself — in fact, *the* end of all God's work. Historically

there have been two main types of views concerning the covenant. The one group of views was characterized by the fact that it considered the covenant a means to an end. Some have held that the covenant is a way of salvation. Others have said that the covenant is an agreement or contract between God and man, with mutual stipulations, conditions, and promises. Others have held that the covenant is an alliance between two parties against a third. Others have found the essence of the covenant to be the promise. All of these views run into difficulty with the fact that the covenant, according to Scripture, is everlasting. But if the covenant is some kind of means to an end, it stands to reason that when the end has been attained, the means falls away, no longer has any importance. That kind of covenant can hardly be called everlasting. We have emphasized that the covenant is not the means, but the end. It is *the* end of all the work of the God of our salvation. And when the perfection of that covenant is reached in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the new heavens and the new earth, when the tabernacle of God shall be with men in perfection, then that covenant, as it was conceived eternally in God's counsel, shall continue forever and ever.

2. We have developed the doctrine of the covenant in our emphasis that the idea of the covenant is the bond of friendship between God and His people in Christ, established in the line of the generations of believers. Once one has become imbued with the beautiful, Scriptural idea of the covenant as the relation of friendship between God and His people in Christ, no other presentation of the covenant holds any attraction.

3. We have developed the idea of the covenant in our strong and Scriptural and Confessional emphasis upon the truth that God alone and sovereignly establishes and realizes His covenant, and that, too, along the lines of election and reprobation.

4. We have developed the idea of the covenant richly with our teaching concerning the organic idea of God's covenant. The covenant is all-embracing. It is a key and pervading theme in Scripture. And let me add: the idea of the covenant is characteristically a *Reformed* doctrine, equally, if not more so, than the doctrine of sovereign grace and sovereign predestination.

The second part of this question concerns the organic idea of the covenant. What does that imply? Very briefly, the following:

1. The organic idea implies that God's covenant includes not merely man, not only God's people, but the whole creation. God saves not merely a church, but the *world*. The brute creation, as well as the children of God, shall participate in the covenant in



its everlasting perfection (Romans 8:10, ff.). Moreover, the whole creation is also involved in God's work of establishing and realizing His covenant historically. All things are for the sake of the people of God in Christ. This, by the way, is very clearly the case with the covenant as it was established with Noah after the flood. That was not simply a covenant of nature, and certainly not a covenant of common grace. But it was God's covenant with the church as it came out of the ark. And that covenant involved the whole creation for the sake of the church.

2. The organic idea implies, too, that God does not save merely some parts of the world and some parts of the human race, while the world as a whole goes lost and is destroyed. On the contrary, God saves His world, and glorifies it to everlasting perfection in Christ, while some individuals are destroyed and perish.

3. The organic idea of God's covenant implies that God realizes His covenant in the line of generations, the generations of believers. God does not work individualistically. And this also implies that sovereign election and reprobation cut right across the generations of God's covenant in history. This means that here in the midst of the world, God's covenant people always exist historically as a mixed people. There is among them the true, spiritual seed, the true children of God, the elect heirs of the covenant. There is also among God's people in the midst of the world the carnal element, which is born in the line of the covenant, circumcised in the old dispensation, baptized in the new, and in every respect outwardly treated as the true covenant children are. They have all things in common with the spiritual seed, except grace. They are born, and grow up, and live in the sphere of that covenant. They are baptized, the Word is preached to them, they receive catechetical instruction, etc. But they have no grace. For the true, spiritual seed all of this tends to their salvation; for the carnal element these very same things serve to harden them and are to their condemnation. This organic idea is illustrated in such Scriptural ideas as the wheat field, which also may have many tares; in the figure of the wheat and the chaff; in the figure of the vine with fruitful and unfruitful branches; and in the figure of the olive tree in Romans 11.

Finally, for some helpful reading on this subject, I refer you to a very instructive book, *Believers And Their Seed*, available through our Business Office.

#### Question 4

If the group which left in '53 wishes to return, must they confess to having lived in sin these many years? And if so, why? Are not they being asked to confess to satisfy man, rather than God? Why not,

"Welcome home, Prodigal, join us in the true worship of our God."

#### Reply

My answer to these questions is as follows:

1. My questioner really suggests the answer to this question in his final question, concerning the Prodigal. It seems to me that both in the parable itself and in the reality to which the parable points, the Prodigal was welcomed home exactly in the way of confession of sin.

2. Were the doctrinal errors of 1953, along with related matters, sin? Is false doctrine sin? Was it wrong in the sight of God and of His church to return to the Christian Reformed Church? Then, it seems to me, the sad fact is that as long as that sin is not repented of and forsaken, those concerned are living in that sin. And I would add that the very fact that many of them are vexing their souls and are extremely unhappy is also evidence of this fact.

3. I do not believe that confession of sin is ever a matter of "satisfying" man or God. We cannot make satisfaction for our sins; nor is this necessary, seeing that Christ has satisfied for all the sins of His people. But sin must be gotten out of the way, with the brethren, with the church, and before God. Forgiveness and reconciliation are in the way of confession. This, by the way, does not mean that everyone concerned in that departure made himself guilty of sin in the same way and in the same degree. There were those who were misled. There were those who were deceived. There were those who also very deliberately opposed the truth and sought the destruction of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

4. I would point out that confession of sin, where sin has been committed, is not a shame, but a reason for gladness and joy on the part of all concerned. I ask: why should this be such an obstacle to some? Confession is, of course, hard for the flesh and for our sinful pride. But for the child of God confession is to be viewed as a gift of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Finally, I would assure those who sincerely desire to come back to our churches and to the precious truth and the pure preaching of the Word which we have, that when they come back wholeheartedly and in the right way, our people and our consistories will gladly receive them, so that they will find themselves at home among us. Do they desire the truth of God's sovereign and particular promise and unconditional salvation which our Protestant Reformed Churches hold and preach? Then they will also repudiate the errors of a general promise and conditional salvation, errors which strike at the very heart of the Reformed truth.



Hence, by all means, "Welcome home, Prodigal — in the way of whatever confession is necessary for reconciliation."

[The rest of these questions will have to wait until the next issue of our magazine. Space does not permit my answering of the several questions which remain.]

## The Standard Bearer In Retrospect



Rev. G. Van Baren

*"Time," it is said, "marches on." Rather, one ought to insist that God's counsel is in process of realization. That is impressed upon us especially at an anniversary. Then we remark about how quickly time passes. It also becomes the occasion of consideration of the past events. Such consideration is particularly significant when done by one who had himself gone through the events described. In Vol. 32 of our Standard Bearer the late Rev. G.M. Ophoff does that in an address commemorating the 40th anniversary of the late Rev. H. Hoeksema in the ministry.*

### "Anniversary Address"

Rev. G.M. Ophoff

Beloved in the Lord; we are assembled here in joyful mood to commemorate the fact that our brother, Rev. Herman Hoeksema, has completed forty years of service in the ministry of the Gospel. In the name of all our people, I heartily congratulate our brother, and our ardent desire is, that, the Lord willing, several more years may go by before the Lord takes him home. This is our prayer. And I feel certain that it is a permissible prayer, seeing that I subordinate it to the Lord's will. A permissible prayer, I say. This would not be the case if the physical condition of our brother were such as to compel us to conclude that he has only a few more days to live. My impression is, that, though he is sixty-nine years old, he is still a rather young person in the point of view of his physical and mental vitality. He can still do a lot of walking and swimming. And in the pulpit he is still surprisingly vigorous. His mental powers have not diminished noticeably. His sermons are still characterized by that excellency that has always made it a joy to listen to them. He still writes as clearly and logically and forcibly and as edifyingly as always. This is the more remarkable in view of his severe illness of recent years. For a while he was completely paralyzed. He could not read, he could not talk, he could not think. He could hardly utter a sound. He could not move a

muscle. But the Lord had mercy upon him and upon us all. He gave him a most remarkable recovery. And therefore I repeat, the prayer that the Lord may prolong his life for several years is a permissible one. For it seems that this is the Lord's will. At least it does not appear that it is not the Lord's will. And these final years of our brother's life may turn out to be as productive as any of his previous years in the ministry of the Gospels.

The committee did not limit me by indicating what I should speak on in connection with this occasion. So I am free to choose. Let me delve a little in the past and make some appropriate remarks as I proceed.

I first came to know about Rev. Hoeksema when I became a student in Calvin. He, too, at that time was a student in Calvin. But he was five years ahead of me, so that we were in school together for about this length of time. During these years we had no contact with each other, except for one year during which he was my teacher in English literature. I also recall that, when I was in the seminary, he was asked by the students to lecture before them on the subject of common grace, which he did. At the time he was residing in Grand Rapids as pastor of his present charge — then the Christian Reformed Church of Eastern Ave.



It was while I was in the seminary that the Janssen controversy ran its course. Prof. Janssen gave instruction in the Old Testament branches. The trouble with his instruction was that it was characterized by rationalistic tendencies. Our brother, Rev. H. Hoeksema, was the only one who was capable of making this plain to the churches. Others had tried it but had failed. And by other, I mean the four professors in the seminary, the late professors Volbeda, Heyns, and TenHoor, and Prof. Berkhof, and some ministers including Rev. H. J. Kuiper, the editor of the Christian Reformed *Banner*. As a result of our brother's exposures, Prof. Janssen was deposed from his office of professor of theology.

During all the time of this controversy, I made no personal contacts with Rev. Hoeksema. I was esteeming him at a distance. His good fight for the truth in the Janssen controversy had endeared him to my heart. His singular abilities as a theologian and controversialist — abilities that had been called into action especially by the Janssen controversy — won for him my admiration, respect, gratitude, and trust. It caused him to stand out in my mind as the only able champion of the truth in the churches, as the only one of all the ministers including the professors, who really had right understanding of things. From that day on he was my man, although as yet he knew nothing about it, as I not once had set my foot on his doorstep.

By his exposures of the wrongness of Prof. Janssen's instruction — exposures that, as was said, had resulted in his deposition — our brother, Rev. Hoeksema, had rendered the churches an incalculable service. Yet, what happened? Let us see what happened. The friends and supporters of Janssen, of which there were several in the churches, were furious with Hoeksema, as could be expected. And it became revealed that they actually vowed to rid the churches of him. And they also succeeded with their three points — the famous "Three Points" of the synod of 1924. And what was so startling is, that, in achieving their aim, in realizing their purpose, they sought and secured the cooperation of those very persons — ministers and professors — who had stood shoulder to shoulder with Rev. Hoeksema during the Janssen controversy, and who all along had run his doorstep flat, so to say, urging him to keep up the good fight by all means.

This, I say is startling, amazing. For the "Three Points" are Arminian. The doctrine contained in them runs contrary to the truth of the Scriptures as formulated in our Reformed Confessions. The first "point" teaches a favorable attitude of God also toward the reprobated. As taken in connection with the ground upon which it was made to repose, it teaches, does this "point", that the preaching of the

Gospel is grace also for the reprobated. The idea of the second and the third "Points" is, that through the operation of God's grace in him, the reprobated can and does perform works that have true ethical, spiritual value in the sight of God. This is a plain denial of the Scriptural doctrine of man's total depravity. Fact is, that in adopting the "Three Points" the Christian Reformed churches through their representatives as assembled in Synod officially subscribed and introduced into their churches the entire conditional theology of the Arminians. This is what their doing amounts to. And what is also so astounding is, that the articles of the "Confession" that were quoted in support of these "Points" teach the very opposite from what is taught in these "Points". They teach our doctrine, do these articles. What it comes down to is, that we were deposed from office for the very reason that in our teaching and preaching we were adhering strictly to the Scriptures and the Confession.

Rev. Hoeksema was expelled from the communion of the Christian Reformed churches, because he refused to do what before God he might not do, namely subscribe, preach and defend the doctrine of the "Three Points." His consistory was similarly dealt with for its refusal to place their pastor before these points. The late Rev. Danhof and his consistory and the undersigned with his consistory were deposed by Classis (Grand Rapids) West for the same reason. For conscience sake it was also impossible for Danhof and for me to subscribe, preach, and defend the doctrine of "The Three Points". And it was impossible for our consistories to place us before these points.

But I must not get into this any deeper. Allow me but one remark. The Christian Reformed churches seem to be going places. They have a school with a large enrollment, staffed with a faculty that numbers as many as fifty members, I believe. And they are always at it, adding schoolbuilding to schoolbuilding because of the continual influx of new students coming from everywhere. They have missionaries in the foreign field, and a goodly number of so-called gospel chapels. The voice of their radio minister is carried over the air to almost every nook and corner of our land. For it is heard on I don't know how many radio stations. They have extended themselves as a denomination deep into Canada, where among the immigrants many churches have been organized bearing the name Christian Reformed. But in the sight of God their whole huge program must be devoid of real use and meaning. For in 1924 they corrupted and forsook the truth and replaced it by the carnal and false imaginings of Arminius, and thereby they became just another denomination of Arminian churches. Certainly, they still have the truth but only on the books: it is no longer being



heard in their pulpits — the truth of God's sovereign grace and of His sovereign election and reprobation. And unless they repent of their abomination and return to the truth, they have no future. The day will dawn but not for them as a denomination. The Christian Reformed churches are not to be envied but to be pitied only.

The sole calling of the church is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ as constrained by love, in order that Christ through that proclamation may gather out of the world His people. When the church, a church, corrupts the Gospel of Christ, it tramples its calling and then like salt that has lost its savor it is good for nothing but to be cast on the dunghill to be trodden under foot by men. And then it may still be doing big things, but it walks in a vain show. And the motive of all its doings can be none other than the desire to become big in the eyes of the world, to gain recognition, to acquire for itself name and fame with men.

But to return to our brother, the Rev. Hoeksema. How true it is that most of the years of his ministerial career have been years of storm and strife for him, a fight for the truth. But the Lord was with him and sustained him through all these years. Take our most recent fight for the truth in the bosom of our own churches. How wonderfully the Lord raised him up from a bed of illness that he might lead us also in this fight. God is God and none else. This was again the issue, as it was in 1924. It is always the issue essentially. How wonderfully the Lord has wrought through our brother through all the years of his ministry. I think now of his labors as a pastor of a large congregation, of his labors as professor in our school, of his labors as writer and lecturer. We have a copious Protestant Reformed literature, the bulk of which came from his pen. Indeed, we are grateful to God for what He gave us in the person of our brother.

Fifteen years ago we were commemorating the fact of his having completed 25 years in the ministry of the Gospel. He then joined in our prayer that it might please the Lord to allow him to labor still another twenty-five years in our midst. If the Lord answers that prayer, he will still be with us, laboring in our midst, for another ten years. May it indeed please the Lord to prolong his life for that many years and even for more than that many years.

A final word about ourselves as a denomination of

Protestant Reformed Churches. It is twenty-nine years ago, I believe, that as a denomination of Protestant Reformed Churches we were brought into being. Our beginning was small. We numbered but three churches. Through the years other Protestant Reformed Churches were organized, but not so many. Certainly our growth was not phenomenal. As a result of our most recent fight for the truth, we are again nearly as small as we were in the beginning. But if only we are spiritual and love the truth, our smallness will not disturb and trouble us at all, seeing that the cause of our smallness is that we abode in the truth by God's mercy. More must be said. If we are spiritual, we will even rejoice because of our smallness, seeing that it betokens that we have kept the faith and that therefore the favor of God is upon us.

And let us not imagine that we have no significance just because we are small. It is we, Protestant Reformed, that hold and confess the truth in its purest form, that is, as uncorrupted by Arminian leaven. And therefore our influence is bound to be felt particularly by all that calls itself Reformed.

As to our smallness, let us consider that the matter of our numerical growth is God's business only and not ours, that our calling is to abide in the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Let our prayer constantly be for grace to walk worthy of this calling — the calling wherewith the saints are called. For unless we abide in the truth, we, too, shall have no future as churches.

And let us not boast in ourselves but walk humbly before His sight as always considering that apart from His redeeming grace, God's believing people are but vile, ill-deserving and condemnable men, that even as saints of God they still are continually polluting their way before Him by their sins, seeing that in this life they have but a small principle of the true obedience in them, and that therefore the reason that "the sons of Jacob," whoever these sons may be, however faithful in this life by His mercy, are not consumed, lies not in them certainly but in God only: He is Jehovah, He changes not, Mal. 3:6. This is but one of the sides of the truth that we hold. Let us hold it and hold it dear, believe it with all our heart and confess it before God continually without ceasing, also with respect to ourselves by all means, lest in judging others, we ourselves be judged and condemned of God.

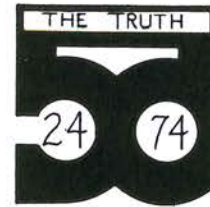
**Know the standard and follow it. Read THE STANDARD BEARER.**



## CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

# 50 Years - Our Doctrine

Rev. H. Veldman



The undersigned was requested to write an anniversary article in connection with his rubric: The History of Doctrine. We comply gladly.

I repeat: we comply *gladly*. Why? There is a reason why we comply gladly to contribute an article to this anniversary of fifty years of our existence as Protestant Reformed Churches. There is something about this celebration that should thrill our people, thrill all those who love the truths of God's infallible Word and Scripture. What is this cause for our joy and happiness?

Anniversaries are very serious events. We celebrate the twenty-fifth, fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries of our married lives. The world, too, recognizes these milestones in their married lives, and celebrates them. After all, we repeat, anniversaries are serious. They leave an impression which no man can escape. They remind us of the truth that time marches on, irresistibly and inexorably. What shall we say about this inexorable marching of time? How shall we react? We must say something. And we do! However, the reaction to this inescapable marching of time is quite different in the midst of the world than as occurring among the people of God. Worldly anniversaries are marked by hilarity on the one hand, but also by a feeling of depression and gloom on the other hand. The child of the world views this event superficially, hilariously, seeks to cover up, refuses to look at the reality of life squarely in the face, and he cannot escape a feeling of gloom and despair, realizing that the life he loves is transitory, fleeting, and that he is being carried irresistibly and inexorably to his eternal destiny. How different are these anniversary celebrations among the people of God! They review the past. They know that they must give an account of all things done in the body, whether good or bad. They do not attempt to cover up. They review the past in the light of God's Word. And they come to a two-fold conclusion: on the one hand, they have forfeited all the mercies of the Lord, have corrupted their way before the face of God Who is unchangeably good and righteous and just, and, on the other hand, the Lord remained faithful and His mercies never failed them. And they also look toward the future, confidently, realizing

that, although their sinning will continue, the mercies of the Lord and His goodness will lead them through the remaining years of their pilgrimage.

Church anniversaries are serious, too. Upon these occasions we look back and reflect. We should do this. As churches we will soon celebrate our fiftieth anniversary. What shall we say?

Doctrine has a history. Of course! We speak of the history of doctrine. And the history of doctrine teaches us particularly two things. In the first place, this history teaches us that the Lord has always preserved His truth throughout the ages. This applies also to the church of the Lord. The Lord has always preserved a remnant. There has always been our Father's "little flock" throughout the history of the world. The gates of hell may rage and rave but they can never overwhelm the church of God. They will never prevail. And what is true of this remnant also applies to the truth. This lies in the nature of the case. The two are inseparable: God's remnant according to election and the truth of the infallible Word of God. This truth of the Divine Scriptures has always been preserved. Fundamentally, this truth can be expressed in three words: GOD IS GOD. These three words surely establish the sovereignty of the living God. Because God is God He is wholly sovereign. Because God is God He alone determines all things, including the eternal destiny of every moral-rational creature, expressed in the terms election and reprobation. However, the truth that God is God also establishes and confirms the truth of man's responsibility. Because God is God therefore He must be served. No man has any license to sin. Because God is God He demands of every man to love Him with his entire being. The Lord does not ask the sinner to repent and turn from his evil way; He commands him to do so. That is His Divine prerogative. Because He is God! If we proceed from the Scriptural truth that God is God we will surely be kept from error. And the Lord has preserved His truth throughout the ages. During the early centuries of the New Dispensation the devil aimed his attack upon the truth of the eternal Godhead of the Son. This truth was attacked by Arius. The risen Lord,



however, had given His church the assurance that He would return to it and lead it by His Spirit into all the truth. And the Lord led His church to declare it to be the truth of the Word of God that Jesus, besides being true and very man, is also the eternal and natural Son of God. It was Pelagius who denied the Scriptural truth of man's utter depravity. But the Lord raised up Augustine to champion this truth of the Word of God, and the church of God was again led to set forth and establish this truth of the Word of God. In the early years of the seventeenth century it was Arminius who denied the sovereignty of God and all related truths, such as the atonement of Christ, the depravity of the sinner, the irresistible character of God's grace and the perseverance of the saints. But again the church was led into all the truth, and that church defended and set forth these cardinal truths and principles of the infallible Scriptures.

However, the history of doctrine also teaches us something else. And this, too, is important. I refer to the phenomenon, so prevalent throughout the ages, that the truth of the Word of God has been under constant attack, that departures from the truth have always occurred and that the church has never enjoyed purity of doctrine for too long a time. These "ups and downs" characterized the church of God already in the Old Dispensation. The book of Judges speaks vividly of this phenomenon. And how true this is during the New Dispensation! During the age of the apostles, the church of God was preserved by God through these apostles as they were led infallibly by the Spirit of God into the mysteries of the truths of God's Word. Soon after their death the enemies of the truth became bolder in their attacks upon the Divine Scriptures. In the so-called "Heroic Age," during the second and third centuries, when the faithful people of God were subjected to fierce persecutions, the church of God was called upon to preserve what they had. When these persecutions ceased and the church was given legal recognition, the forces of darkness arose in their assaults upon the Word of God. And although it is true that the risen Lord always led His church into all the truth, the purity of doctrine was never enjoyed for too long a period of time. Pelagianism, condemned at the Synod of Ephesus in 431, was succeeded by Semi-Pelagianism. It is claimed that this Semi-Pelagianism was condemned at the Synod of Orange in 529. Concerning this synod we may remark that it is known especially because of its consistent condemnation of Semi-Pelagianism. Many historians leave the impression that this synod represents a last victory for the Augustinian conception of predestination and sovereign grace. This, however, as the late Rev. H. Hoeksema observes, is not the case. The synod left much rather the impression that it was afraid of the strict Augustinian principles. On the one

hand, the synod maintained the total incapability of man to do any good, and this over against the Semi-Pelagians. On the other hand, however, it denied the infallible and irresistible operation of sovereign grace. And one finds nothing in the decisions of this synod concerning sovereign election and reprobation. And, as far as the Arminian controversy of 1618-1619 is concerned, we know, to be sure, that the heresy of Arminianism was condemned at the Synod of Dordt. But we also know that Arminianism remained very much alive. In 1924 the Christian Reformed Church formulated the Three Points of 1924. In these points the Arminian and Pelagian heresies of God's universal love as expressed in the general free offer of the gospel and the denial of man's total and utter depravity were officially set forth. And we know that these sentiments had already been proclaimed in those churches before 1924. Our existence as Protestant Reformed Churches is due to the fact that the Christian Reformed Church would not tolerate us because of our rejection of those points of 1924.

And now, what shall we say? Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of our churches, reflecting upon the past, we may certainly declare, in all humility, that the Lord has preserved us steadfast in the truth. This can hardly be said of our mother church who cast us out of her fellowship in 1924-1925. The Three Points of 1924 have certainly left their mark. The warnings which were issued by our leaders at that time and in connection with these points of heresy, which warnings went unheeded, have surely been fulfilled. That church's misery of the present day can never be divorced from what happened in 1924. Today, in these churches, people are talking openly of secession. Who does not know of the evils that have come upon these churches? Need we call attention to them at this time, as including universal atonement, the denial of the historicity of Gen. 1-3, etc.?

Our churches have remained faithful to the truths of the Word of God. Indeed, we do not say this boastingly. This is simply a fact. We have not deviated an iota from the position we took in 1924. Our worship services, too, continue as then. This, to remain faithful to the Word of God, is hardly characteristic of a sect. A heretical group, once departing from the truth of the Word of God, continues to drift away from the Divine Scriptures. Such a group never returns. Individual sinners repent, but churches never repent. Our mother church has departed from the truth and her departure from the Word of God has continued unabated through these last fifty years. Shall we, because of our faithfulness to the Word of God, boast of what we have done? Shall we glory in ourselves? Shall we look in pride upon our accomplishments? Indeed, not! Why not?



Because our preservation in the truth was never of ourselves. That we persevered in the Scriptures was because we were preserved. And we were preserved by God and His grace.

So, as we celebrate our anniversary let us say: Ebenezer — “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” It was all of Him. And may we resolve to continue in

this safekeeping of the Lord, clinging to His Word, through prayer. May we, with the children whom God has given us, continue in the Scriptures, walk in them which alone are a light upon our path and a lamp before our feet. And may we ever hold fast to the promises of God which in Christ Jesus are Yea and Amen.

## TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

# “Hyper-Calvinism” and the Call of the Gospel (2)

Rev. David Engelsma

*(This is actually the second article of Rev. Engelsma’s series. Due to a printer’s error, the THIRD article appeared in the May 15 issue and was called the second installment. Our apologies for the mistake. To get the proper connection, please read this article first, and follow up with the May 15 article. H.C.H.)*

In a previous article, we saw that the charge, “hyper-Calvinism,” is often an attack, not on an exaggeration of Calvinism, but on Calvinism itself. This raises the question: has there ever been, and is there now, a theological position that may fairly be called hyper-Calvinism? Or is the charge nothing but a theological bugbear?

We will not concern ourselves here with the terms themselves, whether Calvinism is a good name for the Reformed faith and whether hyper-Calvinism is an accurate description of a theology that has fundamentally perverted genuine Calvinism. We are concerned only with the question whether some who professed Calvinism have drawn un-Biblical and unwarranted inferences from the doctrines of Calvinism, so that their doctrine and practice went “beyond Calvinism,” and deserved to be called hyper-Calvinism.

The answer to this question is that there has been a teaching and corresponding practice that can rightly be called hyper-Calvinism, and that could give occasion to some today (mistakenly) to regard the denial of the well-meant offer of the gospel by the Protestant Reformed Churches as hyper-Calvinism. It is important, however, to be clear as to what it is that takes a theology beyond the pale of true Calvinism into the realm of hyper-Calvinism. Contrary to the thinking of some, the doctrine of supralapsarianism

does not make one a hyper-Calvinist. There has always been room in the Reformed faith for supralapsarianism.<sup>1</sup> Although the Reformed confessions are infralapsarian, the Canons of Dordt deliberately so, over against the strong plea of Gomarus for supralapsarianism, they do not condemn supralapsarianism as un-Reformed or hyper-Calvinistic. Nor is one a hyper-Calvinist because he holds the doctrines of eternal justification and immediate regeneration. Sound Reformed theologians have both denied and affirmed these teachings. Neither is it the case that hyper-Calvinism is a matter of a strong emphasis on God’s eternal counsel and God’s sovereignty in salvation. No true Calvinist ever lacked this strong emphasis. But hyper-Calvinism is the denial that God in the preaching of the gospel calls everyone who hears the preaching to repent and believe. It is the denial that the Church should call everyone in the preaching. It is the denial that the unregenerated have a duty to repent and believe. It manifests itself in the practice of the preacher’s addressing the call of the gospel, “repent and believe on Christ crucified,” only to those in his audience who show signs of regeneration, and thereby of election, namely, some conviction of sin and some interest in salvation.

This error actually appeared in the history of Calvinism in England.<sup>2</sup> It was the position of several

<sup>1</sup>Such Calvinists as Theodore Beza, Abraham Kuyper, and Herman Hoeksema were supralapsarians.

<sup>2</sup>For this history, but not for the analysis of it, I am largely dependent on Peter Toon’s *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity 1689-1765* (London: The Olive Tree, 1967).



Congregational and Baptist ministers, including Joseph Hussey (1660-1726), Lewis Wayman (d. 1764), John Brine (1703-1765), and the well-known John Gill (b. 1697).<sup>3</sup> Wayman, Brine, and Gill were involved in a theological controversy known as "the Modern Question." "The Modern Question" was: "Whether saving faith in Christ is a duty required by the moral law of all those who live under the Gospel revelation?" Basically, the question was whether the reprobate unbeliever is required by God in the preaching to believe in Christ. Wayman, Brine, and Gill denied this. Since many New Testament passages plainly teach that Christ and the apostles did, in fact, command everyone in their audience to repent and believe, the reprobate as well as the elect, these men resorted to a distinction between legal and evangelical repentance, and between common and saving faith. "Legal repentance" and "common faith" according to this distinction, are virtually synonymous with the demand of the law, which God makes of everyone; "evangelical repentance" and "saving faith," then, make up the real gospel-call, which God gives only to the regenerated elect. This artificial and impossible distinction only serves to make plain that these men denied that God calls everyone who hears the preaching to repent of his sins and to believe on the Christ presented in the gospel, and that it is the duty of every man who comes under the preaching to repent and believe. But these men called their position "the denial of the offers of grace," and this is what many think of when they hear that a church denies the offer of the gospel.

The Gospel Standard (Baptist) Churches in England continue to maintain this hyper-Calvinism, as certain articles of their confession show:

"Article 26 — We reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in, or turn to God.

"Article 33 — Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power and on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption."<sup>4</sup>

There are also Baptist Churches in the United States which vehemently oppose "the offer of the gospel" in the name of Calvinism, but which are actually opposed to calling anyone to believe on Christ, except the regenerated elect.

It seems that men fell into this error in reaction to the abounding Arminianism of their time. Gill, e.g., was a contemporary of the notorious, admitted Arminian, John Wesley. It may even be the case that the practice of referring to the call of the gospel as "the offer" contributed to the error of the English hyper-Calvinists. At issue, in reality, was that which Reformed theology speaks of as "the external call of the gospel." But both parties in the controversy referred to "the offer of the gospel."<sup>5</sup> Since the term, "offer," has the Arminian flavor, it is not surprising that the would-be defenders of Calvinism rejected the offer, especially since the Arminian conception of the offer was rampant at that time. The trouble was that in throwing out the bath-water, they threw out the baby, i.e., the external call to all who hear the gospel, reprobate and elect alike.

Those who repudiated the external call of the gospel to all who hear certainly supposed that they were defending Calvinism. This is why their error may be called hyper-Calvinism. This is plain especially in Article 33 of the confessional articles of the Gospel Standard Churches. It argues that a call to an unconverted person to repent and believe would imply "creature power," i.e., the ability of that unconverted person to do what he was called to do. In other words, the call to the unconverted would imply free-will, and would be a denial of total depravity. Also, such a call would be a denial of "the doctrine of special redemption," i.e., the doctrine of limited atonement. The argument is that if all are called to believe in Christ, Christ must have died for all, and must desire to be the Savior of all. But since Christ died only for the elect, only the elect are to be called in the preaching.

Although put forth as true Calvinism, the teaching that denies the call of the gospel to all who hear the preaching is not Reformed, Biblical doctrine. It is indeed true that God calls only the predestinated, or elect, with the effectual, saving call. Them and them only He calls by drawing them efficaciously to Himself by a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, even as He says, "Come!" in the preaching of the gospel. This is the teaching of Romans 8:30: "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called . . ." But there is also a sense, according to Scripture, in which He calls those who are not elect, and calls them in the preaching of the gospel. Matthew 22:14 teaches this: "For many are called, but few are chosen." More people than the elect are called by God. As is plain from the parable

<sup>3</sup>It is worth noting that, so far as I am aware, no *Reformed* theologian has ever embraced this error.

<sup>4</sup>These articles are quoted by B. Honeysett in the religious periodical, *Reformation Today* (Summer 1970), in an article entitled, "The Ill-Fated Articles."

<sup>5</sup>Hussey's book was entitled: *God's Operations of Grace but No Offers of His Grace*. Andrew Fuller, criticizing the hyper-Calvinism of Hussey and the others, asserted "the free offer of salvation to sinners."



that precedes, the parable of the king's wedding-feast, the reference is to the call that God makes through His Church and her preachers when He commands all who hear the gospel to repent of their sins and believe on Jesus Christ. God commands men to come to the feast of salvation prepared through Jesus' death and resurrection. The response of many to this call is that they reject it. By doing so, they bring down upon themselves the wrathful judgment of God, terrible exactly because it is the punishment for rejecting the call of the gospel. Theirs is the sin of sins: despising Christ presented to them in the gospel, and rejecting God's call to believe on Him. That the call to repent is not restricted to the regenerated, or "the sensible sinner," but goes out to everyone who hears the preaching is taught in Acts 17:30: "(God) now

commandeth all men everywhere to repent." This was the practice of the apostles. Having proclaimed Christ to their audiences, they called everyone to repent of his sins and to believe on Christ (cf. Acts 3:19; Acts 8:22; Acts 13:38-41; Acts 20:21). This was the ministry of John the Baptist. He "came . . . preaching . . . and saying, Repent ye." He called also the Pharisees and Sadducees, a "generation of vipers," to "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (cf. Matt. 3:1-12). Such was the nature of the preaching of Jesus Himself: "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14, 15).

## ALL AROUND US

# The New Christology

Prof. H. Hanko

Three issues ago we quoted from the *RES Newsletter* a report which demonstrated how a Dr. H. Berkhof from the Netherlands denied the divinity of Christ. The quotation showed how Dr. Berkhof criticized the old Chalcedonian Creed for its "Greek/Hellenistic thought"; how we must think of Christ in terms of "function"; i.e., we must ask not what something *is*, but what something *does*. What does Jesus as liberator do in our world? The article quoted Berkhof's personal confession on the matter in these words:

You are the true man, as God intended man to be from the beginning: the true obedient Son, the man of love, the one who was willing, taking the full consequences, not to maintain his life, but to lose it for others, and who by that exceptional life of love and obedience started in our world the counter movement of resurrection.

In an article which appeared in *Christianity Today* Dr. Klaas Runia discussed this article as representative of "a new Christology" which was becoming more generally accepted. In this article Runia defends Chalcedon somewhat and argues forcibly against this new Christology. He particularly

points out that "the crux of the matter is that those who advocate this new Christology hold a different view of Scripture." This different view of Scripture is the approach of modern, liberal, higher criticism which "starts with the *historical Jesus*, as portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels."

We have no disagreement with Runia on his criticism of this new Christology, of course. But there were two or three thoughts which passed through our minds as we were reading Runia's article. And they seem important enough to comment on them.

There is a tendency in the article to find as much good in Berkhof as is possible. This is not something unique to Runia; this is rather characteristic of many writers who offer critiques of liberal and modern theological innovations. An example of this follows:

Berkhof puts it thus. The early Church in Palestine wrestled with the question of who Jesus is. In the New Testament we see that they attributed many titles to Jesus: Son of man, Messiah, Son of God, Word, Lord, and others. But no one of the titles can say everything. Jesus does not offer a Christology; he offers himself. And He invites us to find the name by means of which we can confess what he means to us.



Runia comments on this as follows:

With much of this we can agree. It is indeed the duty of today's Church to say *in words of this day* what Jesus means to us. . . .

There is, of course, no question about the fact that the Church always has the duty to express the truth of the Word of God in the current *usus loquendi*. But that is not the point here. Berkhof denies the very fundamental doctrine of Christ's divinity and speaks only of what Christ means to us. The question of Who He is, is of no significance. Yet Runia tries to find points of agreement and seeks to put the best possible interpretation on some of Berkhof's remarks. I do not know if this common tendency is in the name of politeness, or what; but the fact remains that if a heretic denies such a fundamental doctrine, there is nothing good to say about his writings.

In the second place, Runia discusses Berkhof's criticism of Chalcedon. He writes:

The Church has never claimed that Chalcedon was the final word. The formula of Chalcedon was no more than a feeble attempt to indicate the mystery of Jesus' being in words and concepts that were familiar in those days. It would therefore be incorrect to assert that we may not say it *differently*. But we are not allowed to say *less* than Chalcedon. If we want to do full justice to *all* biblical data we cannot go back behind Chalcedon (and Nicea).

This strikes me as an incorrect appraisal of Chalcedon. There are, it seems to me, several elements which Runia has ignored. The first is that Chalcedon was not simply interested in attempting "to indicate the mystery of Jesus' being in words and concepts that were familiar in those days." They were very much interested in setting forth in creedal form the doctrine of the natures and person of Christ overagainst the heresies of their time. This they did in a beautiful and remarkably Scriptural way. The fact that the creed may have been written in language used in that day is altogether irrelevant. It was, obviously, a necessary fact. But it was not something consciously done to make some sort of testimony, in current language, of what Jesus meant to them. All their efforts were concentrated on setting forth what Scripture said.

Secondly, it is highly questionable whether it is possible for the Church today to go beyond what Chalcedon said on this doctrine. It is true we are not allowed to say anything less. But it is also true, it seems to me, that it is highly unlikely we shall be able to say anything more. There are, as I see it, two reasons for this. The first is that the very importance of the subject necessitated a decision which was all but exhaustive of the Scriptural teachings on the subject. The doctrine of Christ stands as the rock

upon which the whole Church is built. Peter's confession in Ceasarea Philippi that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God was the rock upon which Christ would build His Church. That rock had to be put into place. Chalcedon, by means of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, did that.

In the second place, history has proved that the Church has never moved beyond the creed of Chalcedon. Runia himself admits this. Many doctrines are developed throughout the whole history of the Church of Christ. The creeds of Nicea and Chalcedon have not been so developed. Not even the Reformers nor the great theologians of the immediate Post-Reformation Period could add anything to what Chalcedon has said. Any attempt over the years to add to Chalcedon has proved to be a denial of Chalcedon and of the truth of Christ. It stands yet today as the confession of the Church of Christ. It strikes one as a bit presumptuous that today's weak theologians can even suggest the possibility of improving on Chalcedon when the greatest theologians in the history of the Church have not done so.

Finally, we are somewhat disturbed by the relative weakness of Runia's criticism. We do not mean to suggest that he is not critical. He is. He objects strenuously to the new Christology. But the apostle John has some strong things to say about those who deny the truth of Christ. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." I John 2:22, 23. "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." I John 4:3. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." II John, 9-11.

Runia speaks of the fact that we shall perhaps have to fight the battle in the defense of Christ over again. I doubt this. Perhaps it will be fought here and there. But the Church of Christ which remains faithful to her confession will not have to fight this battle — at least, not in the sense that it will be a battle for her survival, as it was in the third through the fifth centuries. Indeed, if the Church today reaches such a point where she is required to fight the battle over this doctrine within her borders, the Church is much too far gone even to engage in any kind of effective battle.



# David and Goliath

(and bad eyesight)

A reader sent in the following clipping from a newspaper and suggested publishing it in this column. It reads in part:

When David slew Goliath, he had more going for him than his trusty slingshot, a physician suggests.

Young David perhaps observed that Goliath had bad eyesight, something that doctors today call "tunnel vision" . . .

. . . the agile David could have skipped around the 10-foot-tall Philistine, heavily armored, wearing a heavy brass helmet, with Goliath never sure where the young Israelite was.

"Did David's boldness border on youthful irresponsibility and impulsiveness" in issuing the challenge to Goliath? It is far more likely that his keen powers of observation disclosed Goliath's peculiar movements. . . .

David therefore, would step agilely aside when he had drawn close enough to Goliath. . . .

Then as his adversary hesitated, clumsily turning his head to bring back the youth within his limited field of vision . . . David took deadly aim with the slingshot and struck the lone (forehead) spot unprotected; by heavy armor.

David won his victory by superior knowledge, skill, and agility, rather than by brute force.

How evil it is when men attempt to explain the miracles of the Bible "scientifically" and ignore the clear Scriptural data. The Scriptures make it very clear that David was not interested in a mere conflict with a Philistine, but that he was deeply concerned about the fact that this Philistine defied the armies of the living God. And it troubled him that faithless Saul was paralyzed with fear. He went out to battle confident that "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." He informed Goliath: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

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## STUDIES IN ISAIAH

# If Ye Be Willing

(continued)

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"If ye be willing, and hear, the goodness of the land ye shall eat. But if ye refuse and rebel, by the sword ye shall be devoured; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isaiah 1:19, 20). The context shows that the Lord had very severely denounced His people Israel. Through the prophet Isaiah He had called them rebellious children, a seed of evil-doers, from head to foot totally corrupt. The heads of the people God called men of Sodom. If this

characterized the rulers, what must the masses be like? They had rejected the Holy One of Israel. Now He would reject them. He would have none of their worship or sacrifices. He abominated all their religious observances. He fully and flatly condemned their whole moral and religious life. Their case looked hopeless. It *was* hopeless! There was nothing they could do, nothing, save die in their sins. Such was their condition in itself. But God did not leave His



people in their state of sin and misery. No, but according to His plan from all eternity He did covenant to bring them into His grace and deliver them from their sin by the Redeemer of God's elect. This note of divine deliverance is sounded in the words, "Come now, if your sins were as crimson, they will be made white as snow; if they were red as crimson, they will be (as white) as wool."

This is the ground on which the willingness and obedience shall be performed. It is on the ground of the efficacious command, "Come now!", and on the plea of the shed blood, on the ground of pardon through the atoning blood. In the symbolization of the colors here there is gospel mystery. There is the mystery of the beauty of perfection. Here is perfect salvation in the blood. The promise of God to His elect is that their sins shall be "as white as snow." When we reason truly about our sins we perceive that they have made a deep, a double-dye on our souls. They are as scarlet, red like crimson. We are stained both with original and actual sins. We are sinners by birth and by practice. Twice-dyed in iniquity, yet, mystery of mysteries, we shall be cleansed as white as wool! We have lain long in the dye-vat of sin and death, yet the blood of God cleanseth us from all sin.

The emphasis is on the gospel mystery of it, not in any literalness. Sin is still in our nature (*sin* is not dead). The sin is still sin; you can't change *sin*. Sin does not cease to be sin. So the *sins* are not in reality made white. There are no white sins. But the persons of sinners are made white. In the book of the Revelation the saints are shown to be clothed in white, in contrast to Babylon, clothed in purple and scarlet. Red in contrast to white is the color of sin, the color of murder (their hands were full of blood!), the color of the Evil One, the Red Dragon, a murderer from the beginning. The saints in contrast to all this are robed in white. Their sins are regarded as non-existent, and they in their own persons are regarded as the exact opposite of their sins, considered in Christ as washed in His blood, clothed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before His throne!

What God does here is to save us from the love of sin; He cleanses us from the pollution of sin; He discharges us from the guilt of sin; He frees from the reign of sin; He redeems from the penalty of sin; He will guard against a fatal fall into sin; He will yet deliver from the very presence of sin. Such is the mystery of sins being white as snow! Guilt-laden they are, as "red" and "crimson" portray. But made white as snow expresses the glorious idea that they are forever and entirely blotted out. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions; and as a cloud thy sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee" (Isa. 44:22). To say our sins are made as white as

wool is to say, in figure, "I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins" (43:25). Then it may be said of all the redeemed people of God, "They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14).

The Lamb in the decree of God is slain from the foundation of the world. The elect then have forgiveness of all their sins from eternity. They *have* forgiveness before they *receive* it. The gospel is sent "that they may receive the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 26:18). This implies that forgiveness was already prepared before they experienced it. If it were not already prepared before they experienced, it could not be received. The receiving of it implies that the thing received was prepared in Christ, and had an existence in free grace long before our receiving it. It is eternal forgiveness!

So the only ground for reasoning, willingness and obedience is gospel ground. On this ground obedience is ensured. The doing good works is not to be "justified by His blood," but on the ground that we have been "justified by His blood." The promise of salvation was made on the ground of the price paid by the Lord in His own blood. He purchased with that precious price all gifts and benefits of salvation. He purchased peace, pardon, forgiveness, the place to draw near to God, the gifts and grace of willingness, obedience and all good works. Willingness and obedience are, therefore, the fruit of His merit on the cross. "Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth . . ." Yet the believer *does* run: "So run, that ye may obtain" (I Cor. 9:24); and "let us run with patience . . ." *That* running is of God that sheweth mercy. It is a running which mercy activates.

**III. The Reward of It.** "If ye be willing" was looked at first from the point of view of the activity explained, then the ground of its performance, now its reward. That is seen to be "the land," in "ye shall eat the good of the land." This, from Isaiah's point of view (as also from Peter's and John's) is the New Heavens and the New Earth. Canaan is a type not of an earthly, sort of gold-plated kingdom, but of the New Creation, the real golden age itself, where all *is* gold that glitters. This is that better country, the heavenly country, that which is meant in the expression the "meek shall inherit the *earth*." That is not *this* earth, but the New Earth, the new earth under the new heavens in the new creation.

According to dispensationalism, the land given to Abraham, which extends from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates (Gen. 15:18), is to be restored to the Jews. The promise is interpreted to mean that Abraham and his seed are to be raised from the dead and are to return to and possess this land. Yet the book of Hebrews tells us that Abraham was not



seeking an earthly, but a heavenly country. If we take the promise in the natural, rather than the spiritual, sense, then Abraham is to return to earth and possess the land of Canaan for ever! But how can Abraham possess the natural land of his earthly sojournings, if this earth is to be destroyed by fire, and there be formed then the new heavens and the new earth? Matthew Henry is correct when he says the good of the land is "all the blessings of the new covenant, of the heavenly Canaan; all the good of *that* land."

This eating in the land is the enjoyment of the actual possession of the New Heaven and New Earth. The elect obtain it. The believers eat of it. The rest are blinded. The reprobate refuse it. If they can't have *this* earth, they will have nothing. But the elect do not refuse and rebel. There is proof of this. It is true at the crucifixion, the elect "all forsook Him and fled," they denied Him, they even despaired of Him; but they never wished His death, never cried, "Away with!" never screamed, "Crucify!" never made a covenant with death, nor said, "His blood be upon us!" They shall eat the good, the best of the land. Christ with them shall eat and drink in His Father's kingdom (Mt. 26:29). Then we shall have the best heaven has to offer.

"If (or even as) ye be willing. . ."\* Or, since ye be willing . . . ! Does my presence in the enjoyment of heaven depend on a little "if"? Not on any shaky, uncertain Arminian "if," no, but upon nothing but Jesus' blood and righteousness. Every blessing flows from that blood, the fountain of all good: forgiveness, willingness, heaven and the best of the New Earth.

\*Calvin says "the papists openly maintain that men, by the exercise of their own will are free to choose either good or evil." Willingness to obey God "is placed in our own power." But the question is not, Can a man make his bad will good? That is by all other Scripture denied. The question is, or the answer is, that man by his bad will, which is natural to him, moves not from good to evil, but from one evil to another, and from bad to worse. Man by nature does not have the choice of *good and* evil, but of only evil, and that continually. "There is not a glimmer of anything good in the description of the persons to whom this text is addressed." — Charles H. Spurgeon.



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### NOTICE TO OUR READERS!!!

Tape recordings of the three recent lectures presented by The Lecture Committee of our Protestant Reformed Churches are now available. These include the lecture by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema, entitled "WHY PROTESTANT REFORMED?", the lecture by Prof. H. C. Hanko, "THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP AND THE KINGDOM", and the final of this series, — a lecture delivered by Prof. Robert Decker entitled "THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS".

Recordings can be obtained by writing to our business office. Cassette recordings at \$2.50 each and 7 inch reels at \$3.00 each. Please enclose payments for tapes with your order.

Address your orders to: THE STANDARD BEARER, P.O. BOX 6064, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49506.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE!!!

According to the decision of the Synod of 1973, the Consistory of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan was appointed the calling church for the 1974 Synod. The Consistory of Hope Church hereby notifies the churches that the 1974 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Wednesday, June 5, 1974, at 9 AM, in the Hope Church. The pre-Synodical service will be held Tuesday evening, June 4, at 8 PM in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. John A. Heys, President of the 1973 Synod will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

A. Dykstra, Vice Sec'y.



## News From Our Churches

The congregation of Edgerton has called Rev. Van Baren, from a trio which included also Rev. Heys and Rev. Moore. Rev. Harbach was installed as Home Missionary on May 8, in Hope Church. Rev. Van Overloop preached the sermon and Rev. C. Hanko read the "Form of Ordination of Missionaries." Rev. and Mrs. Veldman, as you probably recall, spent the four Sundays of April in Maine. The May 5 bulletin carried the following note from Southwest's pastor, on his return to Grand Rapids: "Needless to say, the pastor and his wife are happy to be back with you today. Although only a few thus far attended most of the services (in Maine), the last Sunday morning there were three new faces from the Skowhegan area and nine came from afar. Maybe it would be a good experience for each of us to sit on a folding chair in an old building with a few, craving for the Truth."

\* \* \* \*

From various bulletins comes news concerning building projects which are afoot in a number of our churches. Faith's congregation, for example, has approved plans for "the development of our property in three phases (the first a parsonage and the second and third a sanctuary)." The church services of this young congregation, incidentally, are currently being held in the Jenison Christian Junior High building; the Adult Bible Class, as well as the consistory and deacons meetings, are held in the Union Bank Building, Jenison; and the catechism classes are held

in the home of deacon Frank Block.

From a Randolph bulletin we learn that Forbes' congregation has "purchased a mobile home and intend to build an addition for more space" in order to provide adequate housing for the new pastor. They plan, according to the bulletin announcement, to do the work themselves in order to keep the cost down.

There's some do-it-yourself work connected with the construction of Randolph's new church building, too. An April 14 bulletin of that congregation suggested that "anyone who is willing to help with the painting and cleaning of the new church please be there tomorrow evening." Dedication of the new building was set for Friday, May 24.

A project of a little different sort will, if things go according to plan, be undertaken in Doon. An item in Doon's April 14 bulletin noted the following: "Our School Board notifies our congregation, and in particular our School Society, that the Society has passed a proposal in their recent meeting to add a third full-time teacher. This means that a third room will have to be prepared for teaching, and a drive will be conducted soon to offset this expense."

\* \* \* \*

In reading the bulletins which have come from the western churches during the past weeks, one cannot

*(continued on back page)*

### NOTICE

Classis East will meet, the Lord willing, in regular session on Wednesday, July 3, 1974 in the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least ten days prior to the convening of this session.

Jon Huiskens, Stated Clerk

### ANNUAL STAFF MEETING

Members of the Staff will have received notice of this meeting from our secretary. But this is an urgent reminder. Please plan to attend our meeting on Monday evening, June 10, 7:30 P.M., at the Seminary. In order to take care of Staff business we need a good attendance.

—H.C.H.

### SUMMER PULPIT SUPPLY

All those interested in summer pulpit supply from the professors and the students (candidates) should get their requests in to the undersigned as early as possible. We will try to fill all requests; but if there is a conflict in dates, vacation-requests will be treated on a first-come-first-served basis.

—Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Following our custom, there will be but one issue of the *Standard Bearer* per month during June, July, and August.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 10, 1974, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. and MRS. THEODORE LOOYENGA hope to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. In gratitude to our God, we are thankful for the years He has given them to instruct us in the fear of His Name. Our prayer is that they may continue to experience the Lord's blessings on their earthly pilgrimage.

Their grateful children,  
Mr. and Mrs. Joe E. Brummel  
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Looyenga  
Patricia, Robert, Randall,  
Nancy, Douglas, Mark and  
Karen Looyenga.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 21, 1974, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. FRED ONDERSMA hope to commemorate their 35th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our Covenant God for sparing them these many years for each other and for us. We pray that God may continue to bless them as they go down life's path together in the fear of their God.

Their grateful children,  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Moelker (Kay)  
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Moelker (Roselyn)  
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Meulenberg (Judy)  
and 5 grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Michigan



help but be impressed by what might be called a kind of interchurch cooperation in connection with some of those building projects. South Holland and Hull, for example, both announced a collection for Forbes, to "help pay for a house trailer which was purchased for Rev. Mark Hoeksema." Hull pointed out that "they are small in number" and are therefore "much in need of assistance from our sister congregations." Similar assistance to Forbes came from the Randolph congregation which (and here's the interesting part) had, several weeks earlier, received a gift collection for their own Building Fund from (you guessed it) Forbes, North Dakota. Assistance of a different kind came to Forbes from Isabel. Rev. Miersma, Mr. Ephraim Reichert, and Mr. Emil Streyle traveled to Forbes . . . with their hammers. If we can judge at all by reports concerning the quality of that assistance, it appears that Rev. Miersma's talents are not limited to the pulpit.

\* \* \* \*

Another kind of interchurch relationship was reported in a recent South Holland bulletin. On Friday, April 26, there was to be a combined meeting of the Young People's Societies of South Holland and Randolph. That's quite a trip for the young people of Randolph! And on the following Thursday evening, South Holland played host to the Covenant Christian High School Choir from Grand Rapids.

\* \* \* \*

A couple of interesting little items, yet, from Isabel's bulletins:

Members of the congregation were invited to the home of one of its members after the evening service on March 10, in order to listen to the tape of the Seminary Dedication.

And, from the April 7 bulletin, we lift the following special notice, concerning this congregation's church extension efforts: "The opportunity that we have been waiting for has finally come. A radio station has been found that will broadcast the thirteen 15-minute programs made by Rev. Engelsma. Starting next week Sunday afternoon at 4:10 P.M. they can be heard over KBHB Radio, Sturgis, 810 on your dial. To defray the expenses of this broadcast a special collection will be taken once a month."

D.D.

## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## CONTENTS:

At God's Right Hand . . . . .	338
A Realistic Response To "A Dream" . . . . .	340
Post-Lecture Question Box . . . . .	343
The Standard Bearer in Retrospect . . . . .	347
Fifty Years - Our Doctrine . . . . .	350
"Hyper-Calvinism" and the Call of the Gospel . . . . .	352
The New Christology . . . . .	354
David and Goliath . . . . .	356
News From Our Churches . . . . .	359