

# The Standard Bearer

**A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## Meditation

## Christ Capturing His Captors

Rev. M. Schipper

*"As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground."*

John 18:6.

Amazing scene!

In Gethsemane it took place, the garden where Jesus and His disciples had retired after the paschal lamb had been eaten, and the last Passover kept. After Judas had been dismissed, and the Supper of the New Testament instituted, the Lord came here; not so much to be alone with His disciples before the deciding hour, as to

be alone with His God. There He crawled in the dust, and became as a worm and no man. There He had poured out His soul which had become exceeding sorrowful even unto death. There He had prayed earnestly that the cup of suffering might pass from Him — that if the Father could devise another way to save His people than the bitter way of the cross, this was His desire;



but also that desire He was willing to subject unto the will of His God. And when it became plain to Him that the Father had no other way whereby He could redeem His people, that the only way was the way of the cross, that He must pass under the outpouring of the vials of holy, eternal, divine wrath, — then it was that He was ready to walk that way.

Arousing His sleeping disciples, who could not watch with Him one hour and pray, because of the weariness of the rapidly turning events, and, more importantly, because the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief might suffer alone in the midst of the garden, where He sweat as it were drops of blood and experienced no moral or spiritual support that men might give and He might crave, — then said He unto them, “Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.”

Then it was that the captors came for to take Him!

Evil men they were, inspired by the prince of darkness, and led by an erstwhile disciple whose heart Satan filled!

Judas, after he had been dismissed by the Lord from the table of Passover, with the words, “What thou doest, do quickly,” went swiftly in the darkness of the night to the leaders of the Jews, with whom he had already agreed for thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus into their hands, bringing them the message that their diabolical plan was known to the Lord, and urging them with haste to carry it out. Rushing into their presence, he urges them to act quickly and with force to capture and dispose of Him.

Indeed, it had not been the plan or desire of the enemy to dispose of Jesus publicly on the feast days, lest they stir up the people. What they planned to do, they had thought to do secretly. But now it appeared that their plans had to be changed. Regardless of the consequences, they sense that they must act now. And because they knew Jesus’ power, for they had witnessed it in the wonders He had performed, and most likely they had been forewarned by Judas that it might be necessary to come with force, they appealed to the captain of the temple guard for a band of soldiers, on the pretext that they were about to capture a dangerous malefactor. Therefore with a great multitude, armed with swords and clubs, with lanterns and torches, and led by Judas, they approach unto the gate of the garden.

Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth to meet them.

He addresses them with the question: “Whom seek ye?”

Significantly then we read in the text: “As soon then as He had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.”

Indeed, an amazing scene!

The would-be captors lie fallen upon the ground! They appear as dead men, utterly helpless!

The intended Captive captures His captors!

Awful power!

But how shall we understand their conduct?

That the enemy would be astounded at the fearlessness Jesus displayed before a numerically and physically greater host, we can easily comprehend. That they would momentarily pause in their contemplated endeavor to capture Him, and stand in amazement at the boldness wherewith He came forth to meet them, is not difficult to perceive. For they had come, so we may believe, to capture a “dangerous malefactor” who would either flee at the first sound of the footsteps of the approaching posse, or who would use every available weapon to avoid capture. This is what they expected; and therefore, they had come fully armed and with a great multitude. But instead of fleeing, or instead of using physical power to avoid capture, He confronted them with the simple question: “Whom seek ye?” This would, indeed, naturally cause consternation, and psychologically might cause them to halt and even to step backward. But it would not cause them, and especially the soldiers, to fall away backward and to lie prostrate on the ground. You cannot explain their conduct from a merely natural and psychological point of view. For consider that they were a great multitude, with hardened soldiers who were thoroughly armed at the head, led there by Judas whose heart Satan filled, and who was now determined to betray the Lord. Is it conceivable, do you think, that such a host would fall to the ground helpless, and that out of mere natural fear or psychological wonderment? We think not. There must be another and a much better explanation.

Is it not significant that John is the only one of the gospel narrators who speaks of this scene? And remembering that it is he, in distinction from the rest, who would emphasize in his gospel the divinity of Christ, would it not appear therefore also here that he would have us see Jesus as the Son of God? From this we conclude that on this occasion the Lord allowed His divine power to proceed from Him, riding as it were on the words He spoke, “Whom seek ye?” that caused the multitude, all of them, including Judas, to fall backward to the ground. In one word, He allowed for a moment His divinity to shine through the veil of His flesh, the holiness and righteousness of which causes wickedness to recoil in the dust.

Here it must become perfectly evident that no one could take Him, unless He gave Himself willingly into their hands.

Something of this divine power He displayed on other occasions when the enemy sought to destroy Him. In Nazareth they brought Him out of the city intent on pushing Him off a cliff; but He passed through their midst and escaped, for His hour was not yet come. Later when He was in Jerusalem and they were determined to stone Him, He departed from them



into Peraea, for His hour was not yet come.

But now it was the hour!

And in this hour we see that, though He had the power to slay all His enemies and lay them prostrate at His feet, though He could have called down legions of angels to deliver Him out of the enemies' hands, though even the disciples would fight in His defense, if necessary unto death, — He would not strike terror into the hearts of His captors while He had the power to capture them; but He gave Himself voluntarily into their hands. Before that hour which the Father had set in His counsel had come, no man could take Him. But when that hour arrives, He will, according to the Father's will, give Himself voluntarily unto death.

But there is more!

Not only must the captors learn that they cannot take Him until He gives Himself into their hands; but this evidence of His power, and His resignation to the will of the enemies must also speak to His disciples, and to us. They, and especially Peter, had made up their minds to defend Him. They had come into the garden with their swords. And Peter had been the first to show that he meant to use it. He had cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest, and was thoroughly rebuked of the Lord for his conduct. They that use the sword shall perish with the sword, the Lord had said. But more significantly he and the disciples had to learn that the Lord needed not their defense. He could on His Word call down a multitude of angels if He felt that was necessary. And what greater proof did they need of His infinite power when they, too, saw the ungodly host lying prostrate at Jesus' feet? Indeed, He did not need their protection. The two Greek words which Jesus spoke, and constituting only seven letters, was all He needed to cast the enemy to the ground and hold them there until as on other occasions He would pass through their midst and thus escape. But so it

must not be. The hour had truly come. The mob is here in the service of God to capture Him and bring Him to the frightful but at the same time glorious cross, where He would be raised up in order to draw all men unto Himself.

It was this instruction which they learned that caused the disciples to forsake Him and flee. Not because of any personal fear they might have had at the sight of the rabble, but because they now understood that the Lord would give Himself willingly into their hands that moved them to flee and forsake Him. This was indeed the offense concerning which the Lord had previously forewarned earlier that night, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad."

Yes, with the power to capture His captors, He must nevertheless be ready in this hour to lay down His life for His sheep.

While what He did when He cast the multitude to ground was prophetic of what must also come to pass when He would be exalted at God's right hand, when every knee must bow, acknowledging that He is the Lord, He must nevertheless in this hour forego the use of that power to deliver Himself from their hands, lest He should become disobedient to His heavenly calling.

"Wherefore God has also highly exalted Him" can only be realized after He had first "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

The mighty Lord will attain to the highest pinnacle of His lordship, only after He has through the way of perfect obedience experienced what it means to become the servant of all.

Most blessed Saviour!

Glorious King and Deliverer of His people!

## Editorial

# Why Not Confess With The Mouth?

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

We had always intended to comment at an opportune time on an item which appeared in *News of our Churches*, now several months ago. But sometimes opportune times do not come: one has to make them.

The announcement referred to concerned a change in the Order of Worship by the Loveland Consistory and Congregation — a change which we deem to be highly commendable and worthy of imitation by our other congregations. In the worship service of Loveland the entire congregation recites the Apostles' Creed

instead of silently "speaking in their hearts" while the minister recites it.

As we see it, there is no reason why other congregations should not initiate this change; and there are, in fact, reasons why they could and should initiate it.

Let me explain my viewpoint.

First of all, we are not interested in change for the sake of change, especially not when it concerns liturgical practice. This is in the air nowadays; and there is a large measure of superficial, if not downright bad, in-



novation in some churches — it would seem, merely for the sake of innovation, and perhaps partly to satisfy an unholy clamor for removing the old landmarks. For this we do not care, and we warn against it. That sort of change is as addictive as dope; and the more you get of it the more you want. Besides, it is not governed by sound principles of public worship. Yet, I sometimes think that in our fear of *bad* change we tend to be afraid of *all* change, the good included. And if there are good and sound reasons for change, both principal and practical reasons, there surely is no reason to be afraid of change.

In the second place, it ought to be noted that as to its *idea* the reciting of the Apostles' Creed is one of those elements in our worship in which the minister *leads*, but in which the congregation also participates. It is not intended to be an element of the worship in which the minister *speaks* and the congregation *listens*. Rather, when the minister gives expression to this Confession, the congregation is supposed to do so *with him*. This is the reason why some of our ministers will introduce the Creed with an expression like, "Let us make confession of our faith, speaking in our hearts," or, "Let each one say in his heart. . . ."

In the third place, however, the proper idea of confession is exactly that of speaking with the *mouth*, not merely speaking in our hearts. To confess is "to say the same thing with someone else." Moreover, this is a Biblical idea. We confess with our mouths that which we believe with our hearts. Thus you find it literally, for example, in Romans 10:9, 10: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." This is the current idea of confessing in Scripture.

Moreover, this is even the idea of the Apostles' Creed as it is found in our *Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper*. There we read in the Prayer: "Strengthen us also by this Holy Supper in the catholic undoubted christian faith, whereof we make confession with our mouths and hearts, saying. . . ." It always has struck me as a bit incongruous when as minister I have had to administer the sacrament according to this Form, that at this point in the prayer this fine statement is followed by silence on the part of the congregation. In fact, I have sometimes wondered what a stranger would think — or even do — if he came from a congregation which was accustomed to reciting the Creed. He might be embarrassed to discover that only he and the minister were reciting the confession.

In the fourth place, it is certainly possible, practically speaking, for the congregation to take part orally in this element of worship. I have witnessed this frequently in other churches. True, it is not equally successful everywhere. Sometimes the congregation

merely mumbles rather indistinctly. But it *can* be done successfully. I would suggest that with a little good leadership on the part of the minister and a little co-operative effort on the part of the congregation success can be achieved. The minister must lead with a clear voice. He must speak loudly enough to be heard and to lead, but not so loudly as to drown out the members of the congregation. And he must recite at an even, unhurried pace. As far as the congregation is concerned, my first suggestion is that they should recite the Creed *standing*. Not only is this respectful, but it is also good from a practical point of view. Just as one can sing better when he stands up and is psychologically inclined to be more alert and "perky" in his singing, so he can also speak better. It has been my observation in churches where the Creed is recited by the congregation that when they were seated, they were more inclined to mumble through it; and when they were standing, they were more inclined to recite it clearly and attentively. And it would certainly not be difficult to follow this practice: following the order of worship in use in most of our churches, the congregation would merely have to remain standing after the first song. My second suggestion is that the congregation must cooperatively follow the lead of the minister, and not act as a group of individuals trying to outdo either the minister or one another. And my third suggestion is a very simple one, but basic: when you make confession with your mouth, do so as one who believes with the heart!

I suppose some objections could be raised. There are always some who are against change, probably for the sake of being "against." This does not mean anything. Others might object that reciting of the Creed would become an empty habit. But that is a danger now also — perhaps more so when the congregation takes no active part. Public worship must, of course, never be empty habit, but always a matter of the heart. Others might object that this is a difficult thing to accomplish in our larger congregations. But this, of course, is a matter of judgment. Personally, I do not think any of our congregations is prohibitively large. At least, I would not be afraid to try it in any of our churches — given, of course, consistorial approval and also the opportunity to instruct the congregation.

Think about it.

Personally, I think Loveland furnished a good example. And my answer to the question above this editorial is: "Yes, indeed; why not?"

\* \* \*

While I am on the subject of public worship, let me broach another aspect of it.

I wish that some consistories would take the initiative in restoring the Votum ("Our help is in the name of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth.") to its proper place in the service.

That proper place is the *beginning* of the service.



And I mean the *very* beginning.

Especially in congregations which have introduced a doxology at the beginning of the service, the Votum has been deprived of its place. I suppose this happened rather naturally. If there is an opening doxology, it is but natural that the organist moves from the prelude to the cue for the doxology, at which cue the congregation stands. The result is, however, that the organist (who is not an officebearer) in effect begins the service. This in itself is not correct. But my main point is that the Votum, both as to its idea and its content, is supposed to mark the beginning of the service. To change this would, of course, take "a little getting used to." But it would be proper; and it would add to the dignity and solemnity of the service. The procedure would then be as follows:

- 1) After the minister and consistory have taken their places, the organist would stop playing.
- 2) Then the minister would stand and declare the Votum (incidentally, without the address, "Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ." The latter belongs properly with the Salutation, not with the Votum).
- 3) Then the organist would give the cue, and the congregation would stand and sing the doxology.
- 4) Then the minister would pronounce the Salutation, or opening blessing: "Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, Grace, mercy, and peace," etc.
- 5) Thereupon the first selection from the Psalter would be announced.

Think about this too.

## Question Box

# As To The Meaning Of Colossians 1:24

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

### Question

Dear Prof. Hoeksema:

Colossians 1:24 (Douay Version) is one of the proof-texts used by the Roman Catholic Church for its teaching that indulgences may be transferred to the members of the church in Purgatory. I have no trouble rejecting this false teaching; but I do have a bit of trouble understanding Col. 1:24, even in the King James Version. My perplexity increases when I read in Rev. H. Hoeksema's *Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 16, chapter 2, page 253: "And for this cause they are called to suffer with Christ, and so fulfill the measure of His suffering." Will you please explain the text, and the concept of fulfilling the measure of the suffering of Christ?

Thank you,  
N.

### Reply

First of all, let us get the text before us. The Roman Catholic Confraternity Version of 1941 (a revision of the Challoner-Rheims, or Douay, Version) renders it as follows: "I rejoice now in the sufferings I bear for your sake; and what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for his body, which is the Church." It is readily understandable that the text as here presented is used as proof for the idea of the transfer of indulgences to the members of the church in Purgatory. The sufferings, then, are understood as meritorious sufferings; the presupposition is that there must be something added to the meritorious sufferings of Christ; and the apostle, then, supplies those additional

meritorious sufferings by his own suffering in the flesh, but does so for others, i.e., Christ's body, the church, some of whom are in Purgatory.

But my questioner has problems with the King James rendering and its meaning. The KJV renders the text as follows: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." And my questioner's "perplexity" is increased by the comment of the Rev. H. Hoeksema in connection with Lord's Day 16.

Now I think that the basic problem here concerns our understanding of what is meant in a context like this by the sufferings of Christ. And then I call attention to the fact that Scripture looks at the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ from a two-fold point of view. The first is that of Christ's atoning suffering. That is His suffering of the wrath of God in our place and on account of our sins. From this point of view, Christ's suffering is unique and perfect. No one else can suffer or need suffer in that atoning sense. Nor is there anything lacking in it; but it is perfect and complete in every respect. Nothing need be added to it: He has fully atoned for all our sins. The second aspect of that suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ is that of His suffering at the hands of wicked and ungodly men on account of His being of the light, of God, on account of His representing the name and honor and righteousness of God in the midst of darkness. Of that aspect of Christ's suffering He Himself speaks more than once during His earthly sojourn; and of that aspect of His



suffering the apostles speak also. It is from this latter point of view that it is also possible to speak of *sharing* in that suffering and of *filling up the measure of* that suffering. It is this aspect of that suffering that is on the foreground in Philippians 1:29, for example: "It is given you in the behalf of Christ . . . to suffer for his sake." And the expressed wish of the apostle, "That I may know him . . . and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Phil. 3:10) refers to the same thing.

But let me give you the complete explanation which the Rev. H. Hoeksema gives in his mimeographed commentary on Colossians. I will quote his comments and at the same time edit out the Greek references, which would only perplex you more. (Some day, incidentally, I hope that this entire commentary can be edited, popularized, and published. It is too valuable to have only the limited use which it has in its present form.) Here are the pertinent comments:

"The apostle in this verse speaks about himself as the apostle that is called to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He assures us here that he rejoices in the suffering which he endures in behalf of the church and for the sake of the gospel. The reason for this rejoicing is no doubt to be found in what the apostle had written in vss. 15-22 about the Christ as the glorious head of the church and about all the blessings of salvation which the church has in Him and receives from Him. Considering this glory of Christ and His riches for the church, the apostle is able to rejoice in his suffering for Christ's sake and for the sake of the church.

"Let us note, first of all, how the apostle in this verse describes his sufferings. He puts the word for 'sufferings' in the plural. By this he denotes, of course, the different forms of suffering to which he was subjected as the apostle to the Gentiles because of his preaching of the gospel. But the plural denotes not only that his sufferings were various and manifold, but also that they were numerous. He endured many sufferings for Christ's sake.

"This suffering the apostle describes as 'in behalf of' and for the spiritual benefit of you, the Colossians. It was, of course, not only in behalf of the Colossians that the apostle suffered in the world, but in behalf of the whole church, in behalf of the whole cause of the Son of God. For he suffered as the apostle to the Gentiles, and for the cause of the gospel of Christ. Moreover, the apostle further defines this suffering in the words, 'and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.' Through his sufferings he fulfills, or fills up, the sufferings, or tribulations, of Christ in his flesh, and that, too, in behalf of His body, which is the church.

"The term used here and rendered 'afflictions' means 'oppressions' or 'tribulations.' It denotes that one's place in the world becomes very narrow, so that

ultimately he has no place to stand any more. He is pressed upon from every side, and pushed out of the world. In the literal and ultimate sense, this oppression means death. This oppression even unto death the Lord Himself suffered as the head of the body. And the same oppression the apostle endured. Again and again the evil world pressed upon him, so that there was no room for him to stand. And finally he too was literally pushed out of his place in the world. Further, the text speaks of "that which is left" in the sense of "what is still lacking" of these tribulations. The idea is, therefore, that the suffering of Christ is not yet full, or complete, that there is still something lacking, or wanting, of this suffering; and that the apostle by his own suffering and oppressions fills up that which is still lacking, and does so in the sufferings in his own flesh. This requires further explanation. It is evident that a very close relation is here expressed between the suffering of Christ and that of the apostle — in general, between the suffering of Christ and that of believers. We may note in this connection:

1) That the reference here is not and cannot be to the mediatorial or vicarious sufferings of Christ. In this the believers have not and cannot have any part in the sense that they must fulfill it. It is all by itself perfect and complete. But the reference is to the sufferings of Christ as He endured them on the part of the world. The world hated Him and caused Him to suffer because He revealed the Father; because in the midst of the world that was in darkness and hated the light He witnessed of the light, that world stood in enmity over against Him and filled Him with reproach and shame.

2) That this same suffering also comes upon the believers because by His Spirit Christ dwells in them. Through them Christ comes to manifestation in their testimony and in their entire walk. Hence, they too stand for the cause of the Son of God in the midst of the world. And that world dwells in darkness. Literally the world hates and oppresses always the Christ, even in the believers.

3) Although Christ is personally in heaven and far exalted above the very possibility of suffering, yet He is standing in a close, most intimate relation to the church, which is His body, and still suffers in and through them.

"Now the question is: what is the meaning of the expression 'what is still lacking' in connection with the verb 'to fill up' ('to fill up in turn')? In this connection it signifies 'to fill in that which is still lacking, or wanting, of a full measure.' The question therefore is: what is the full measure to be filled? Does the apostle here think of the full measure of his own suffering, which he will presently fill completely by his death? This is the interpretation of some, including Meyer. But it is certainly not the meaning of the text. The text refers, first of all, not to the suffering of the apostle, but to



the afflictions of Christ. If this had been the meaning of the apostle, he would have expressed himself much more directly by saying, for instance, 'I fulfill my suffering, or oppression, for the sake of Christ.' But the text speaks of 'tribulations of Christ,' evidently presupposing that there is a full measure of sufferings and oppressions of Christ which is determined by the counsel of God from all eternity. This measure is principally and centrally filled by the sufferings of Christ Himself during His sojourn in the world. But there are still remnants of this suffering left. And these are filled up

by the tribulations of the body of Christ from the time of Abel even to the time of the last martyr on earth. This measure also the apostle is filling up:

"This suffering the apostle endures in his flesh, that is, in his natural body. It is only through and in that flesh that the apostle is connected with the world. And that hostile world can touch him and inflict its tribulation upon him only in that flesh. In his inner man he can still rejoice in his suffering because he realizes it is for the sake of the church."

## Feature

# What For? (A Question Of Antithesis)

Rev. G. Van Baren

(Note: The following is an abbreviated and revised, form of an address delivered on February 18, 1971 in the First Christian Reformed Church at Kalamazoo, Michigan under the auspices of the *Association of Christian Reformed Laymen*.)

I am, perhaps, known to most of you only as the writer of the "Father Groppi reports" — reports printed originally in the *Standard Bearer*, and later reprinted in the *Torch and Trumpet* and the *Bulletin* of the ACRL. It was in response to those reports that I also received this invitation to speak.

I would like to state concerning my presence at the Groppi lecture that I attended merely out of curiosity — and not in order to give any sort of report. Later, when I did write the report, it was with a certain amount of hesitation — for it could only be an unfavorable one concerning an activity in a college belonging to a denomination other than my own. Yet I was convinced that what happened the evening that Father Groppi appeared on the stage at Calvin was of concern not only to me, but to many others of Reformed persuasion.

Very frankly, I was amazed and surprised at the response to the reports. I have had conversations with many members of the Christian Reformed Church who expressed complete agreement with my criticisms on Groppi's appearance. Some wrote letters to declare their approval of the articles. One of these letters came from a Christian Reformed consistory in Grand Rapids.

All of this has been for me a matter of gratitude and thankfulness. Such response indicates to me that there are yet many in the Christian Reformed Church who are deeply committed to the Word of God. These are, therefore, and rightly, greatly offended when that which is contrary to God's Word is introduced, wel-

comed, and applauded.

Only one very serious question has greatly troubled me in connection with the Groppi affair and other similarly disgraceful incidents: *what have you been doing about it?* You have rightly deplored what happened — but what have you done about it?

My present subject is closely related to that Groppi affair — in fact, I believe it touches upon the root of the problem: it is a question of the antithesis. My theme I have borrowed from an editorial of Dr. Lester De Koster in the *Banner* of January 15, 1971. In this editorial, Dr. De Koster insists that one must be positive — what is one to be *for*? And I would agree; the Christian must be positive. At the same time, the editorial (which also refers to Groppi's appearance at Calvin) slights, minimizes, and deprecates the negative. And very wrongly so.

Therefore it is well for us to remember that the question, "What for?" must necessarily involve the antithesis — both a "for" and an "against."

## The Antithesis

The word *antithesis* is composed of two parts: *anti* and *thesis*. The *thesis* is the positive part. It is the fact or reality. But opposed to the *thesis*, is the *anti*. *Anti* is either that which is *against* the thesis, or that which seeks to be *instead of* the thesis. These two ideas can be combined. That which is opposed to the thesis, is that which is against it in order to displace it.

The word *antithesis* is not found in Scripture. The idea, however, is plainly taught there. The Scriptural *thesis* is God and His holiness. Throughout, this is the emphasis in the Bible. The idea is summarized in I John 1:5, "... God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Against this Thesis, and seeking to displace it, is the darkness of the devil and all wicked ones. We read in John 3:19,20, "And this is the condemnation,



that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”

It is this antithesis which can be traced throughout Scripture. One finds at least some preview of it in paradise, where God placed before Adam two trees: the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. To the former Adam must respond positively; to the latter, negatively.

From the time of Adam's fall into sin, the antithesis has been seen here on our earth. God spake, addressing the serpent, in Genesis 3:15, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Always that enmity is revealed — and suggests the fact of antithesis. The enmity of Genesis 3:15 reached its climax on the cross of Christ. There the serpent and his seed sought to crush the seed of the woman. All of his venom was poured out upon the Son of God in our flesh. In opposing Him, Satan desired to displace Him. But precisely there, Christ had the victory over Satan and his seed; over sin and death. There the Thesis, the Light, triumphed.

Yet there remains the distinction between light and darkness. Children of God, who are still in this sinful world, face a world of darkness. They can not be one with that world; they may not join hands with it; they may not idolize it. For does not II Corinthians 6 teach, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” Surely, that antithesis clearly remains even unto our very own day.

### *The Antithesis Displayed*

The faithful child of God, who believes necessarily in the truth of antithesis, is first and centrally *for* something. He carefully avoids two terrible errors. On the one hand, he is cautious lest he should be only *against*. Some people are that way. No matter what arises, they are against it. The congregation may decide to install green carpeting in the sanctuary — but these are both against the color green and against carpeting. They strenuously oppose it — though they know not why. These are simply against whatever they confront. They have no basis, no positive basis, for their opposition; therefore they can not either be taken seriously. One surely can not be only *against*. On the other hand, there are some who consider it a virtue to be only and always *for*. These are often *for* the church (whether she be right or wrong); *for* the school (no matter what may be taught there; no matter who may speak there; no matter what may be done there); these may be *for*

their children (no matter what evil deeds they may do). Needless to say, this attitude is not only harmful to those possessing it, but it is also spiritually detrimental to the very organizations or persons that are so upheld!

The child of God, therefore, must be properly *for* God and His Word, Who is Jesus Christ — or, as Dr. De Koster stated in his editorial, *pro Rege* (for the King). He is *for* God and His truth as God has revealed Himself infallibly in His Word. The Christian will not compromise with that Word. Whatever that Word declares concerning God and His Son Jesus Christ is authoritative. The child of God will maintain that.

I might add, the Christian will be *for* the King as He has been historically confessed by the Church in its creeds. He does not join the multitudes who would do away with all those creeds of the past (multitudes who claim that the creeds are outdated, ancient, unsuitable for our times, etc.). He believes that the creeds express precisely what Scripture sets forth concerning the King. The child of God is *FOR*.

Therefore, he must also be *against*. Whatever is opposed to that King, whether in the evil world or in the church itself, he will oppose. He *must* oppose it. When one is properly for the King, he can not avoid being against all that which opposes his King. Does not Scripture itself serve as a guide in this? Are not eight of the ten commandments *negative* (Thou shalt not . . .)? Do not the prophets and the apostles often address the church in a negative way? Psalm 97:10 summarizes it: “Ye that love the Lord, *hate evil*.” As long as members of the body of Christ live on this earth, they must be negative — but always negative on the basis of what they believe positively.

### *An Absolute Antithesis*

There was a statement printed in the *Bulletin* of the ACRL of January 1971 which declared, “The antithesis is absolute, or it is not an anti-thesis.” With that statement I fully agree. However, the denial of the absolute antithesis is the root of many of the deviations evident in the church today. As soon as the absolute antithesis is denied, the way has been opened to have fellowship with unrighteousness and to be yoked with unbelievers (contrary to the instruction of II Cor. 6). The three professors (Greydanus, Marsden, Mouw) who sat with Father Groppi on the stage in the Fine Arts Center at Calvin College are a case in point. In their second letter in which they attempt to explain their part in the Groppi affair (*Standard Bearer*, Vol. 47, No. 4), they state:

As perhaps we should have recognized the first time we wrote to you, the real difference between us is the question of common grace. This became clear from your reply to our letter. You see the antithesis between the regenerate and the unregenerate as so absolute that you preclude giving any hearing to any of their views. Thus you state that “hearing both sides



of a question" is a "very basic error." Consistent with your view of absolute antithesis you readily equate Groppi, agnostics, and similar speakers with "the devil and his followers," and twice you condemn us even for praying for such men and for asking God's blessing on them. Clearly you are judging such men to be beyond the help of God's grace — that is that they are already irrevocably followers of the devil so that there is no good in them and that we can safely judge them to be beyond hope.

We, of course, do not share your view that the antithesis is so absolute. We believe that God by his grace allows the unregenerate to continue to live and to do and say some relatively good things, including works of "civic righteousness," even though these may be inconsistent with their ultimate God-denying presuppositions. Hence we feel that it is proper to converse seriously with those who may be unregenerate (as well as to read and study their works in the light of God's Word) and we do not expect that everything they say will be absolutely wrong.

Now I pointed out to them in my answer to their letter, that they do not fairly nor accurately present my position in these paragraphs. But they do make plain that they themselves do not want an "absolute antithesis," at least not so absolute that one can not "converse seriously" with the unregenerate. I am not certain what they mean by "conversing seriously," but I presume that the Groppi affair would be an instance of such conversation. I would suggest that their action was a denial of the antithesis and a violation of II Cor. 6:14-17.

Though Dr. De Koster in his editorial of January 15 does not mention "antithesis," and therefore does not either openly deny the existence of "antithesis," he nevertheless makes the antithesis to appear utterly absurd. He insists one must be "for," and concedes the possibility that occasionally one must be "against," but in a concrete instance he tries to show that those who were "against" Groppi were somehow imbeciles — illogically and irrationally condemning his presence at Calvin. He writes:

All right, then, some among us deplored the appearance of Groppi, and let that be known. Now let's go on from there: what, in such matters, are we *for*?

Can we be *for* an educational institution hermetically sealed against the views of Groppi and the like? Then we must be *for* shutting off radio, television, newspapers and magazines, and books from the college campuses. In no other way can the Groppi's, or rock music, or whatever is alive in the mind of the day, be shut out from the schools to which we commit our children. And this, in fact, we know to be impossible. But what, then, having been opposed to Groppi, is one to be *for*?

Now such a formulation, I contend, is really unworthy of a man of Dr. L. De Koster's stature and ability. It is not even logical — and certainly not Scriptural. If I were opposed to feeding my children poison,

does it logically follow that I am *for* "hermetically sealing" my children against every reference to poison: whether in books, magazines, or over television? Of course, not. If I am opposed to adultery, does it logically follow that I must "hermetically seal" members of the church from every reference to sex or to instruction concerning sex? Of course, not. Then why does opposition to Groppi's appearance imply a being *for* hermetically sealing the college against every reference to Groppi? De Koster obviously would make the antithesis to appear utterly absurd — in order to allow for the "Groppi's, or rock music, or whatever is alive in the mind of the day" (I presume he means the "Bonnie and Clyde" type movies) within the college. In fact, he even suggests what appears to be a good reason why all this sort of thing is essential. He states:

Ask yourself: how would I go about producing graduates who will not wilt under the harsh winds of modernity the moment they leave the campus? How would I give our fine young people the trust and freedom essential to responsible development? How would I deal *creatively* with the mistakes all human beings make?

So De Koster would bring the "Groppi's, or rock music, or whatever is alive in the mind of the day. . . ." into the college in order to produce "graduates who will not wilt under the harsh winds of modernity the moment they leave the campus?" It seems to me that such procedure would not prepare graduates to *face* such harsh winds, but would prepare them to *join with* these evil winds. One does not need a Christian school or college for this purpose. A secular school can accomplish this purpose as well — and far more cheaply for the student and his parents. Yet this is the ultimate result of denying an absolute antithesis.

When I speak of an absolute antithesis, I want you to understand clearly what I have in mind. I do not want any to create a misunderstanding on this score. An "absolute antithesis" is not identical or even similar to a "hermetical sealing" from the world. Practical experience shows that this is truly impossible. Even were one to retire to a Pacific island, he could still not be "hermetically sealed" from the world. The fact is, one would take the world right with him in his own flesh. Jesus Himself, while on earth, prayed not that we be taken from the world — but that we be kept from the evil (John 15:19; 17:14-16).

It is also to be understood that an absolute antithesis does not mean that there are not any things produced in the world and by wicked men which the Christian can use. Wicked men may be bakers of good bread which I can eat to the glory of God. Wicked men may manufacture good cars which I can use to God's glory. Wicked men may compose music, following God's laws of harmony, which I can use to God's glory. The wicked often (for they are not imbeciles or fools) recognize that when certain laws which God es-



established are followed, there is outward success. These wicked men sin even when they follow outwardly certain of God's laws for their own advantage — for whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). The child of God can surely make use of such things, which in themselves are not inherently corrupt, in the service of God's Name. (Obviously, the "new morality" presented by Groppi at Calvin *is* inherently corrupt and ought not to be applauded or termed "one of the best sermons" one has heard.)

I would suggest that Jesus presents the absolute antithesis in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." You will notice in this text that Jesus does not present a "both-and" situation. One can not serve God *and* mammon. Nor does Jesus present an "either-or" situation. One can not serve God *or* mammon; he can not serve God, but ignore mammon. Rather Jesus insists that when one loves the one, he *must* hate the other; when one holds to the one, he *must* despise the other. This is the idea of an absolute antithesis. One who truly loves God and His Word necessarily hates all evil doers and all of their corrupt deeds. He can not properly love God — and embrace a Groppi who espouses theories obviously contrary to God's law. We read in Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord *is* to hate evil."

It follows too that one who hates God's law may not be allowed even within the household of faith. It is not a question of keeping out television or magazines. It is rather a question of keeping out those who would desire to teach me or my children what I know is opposed to God's law. This is the idea of II John 10, 11, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed: *for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*"

Yes, we are *FOR* . . .

Some suggest that one cannot, in practice, live antithetically — so why even try? It would appear almost impossible, in this modern world, to have any distinctions anymore. There can be no real separation from the world's corruptions. Rather, one must of necessity join the world in every sphere: in their labor organizations; in their movies; in their lodge membership; in their Sunday desecration. But such a situation presents a sad commentary on the state of affairs within the church!

Others are not in a position to live antithetically — simply because they are spiritual ignoramuses. Concerning this situation, Paul writes in Ephesians 4:14, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive." People in this position will quickly follow any leader — no matter what he believes

or teaches. Such are ready to applaud even the immoral suggestions of wicked men.

But *you* must know what you are *for*. One knows this by hearing the *pure* preaching of the Word of God. He knows this by studying diligently the Word of God. One must know and be able to quote Scripture to show what are the positive truths concerning God and His work. And one must instruct his children in these same truths. Our children are going to face greater evils, greater apostasy, than we have had to face. They must be thoroughly equipped to stand fast. Together with a knowledge of God's Word must also go a knowledge of the creeds of the church. These creeds are not out-dated, though they are over 400 years old. The old errors which they condemn continue to arise in our own day — though the error comes under new guises. One must, then, not simply be *for* denominations, *for* buildings, *for* schools — but rather always *for* the truth of God's holy Word. One who is *for* the truth, can not be moved from it by the devil himself.

. . . *therefore we are also AGAINST*

Because you are for the truth, you must unhesitatingly condemn the wrong. Attempts have often been made to silence proper criticism or make such criticism almost impossible. Dr. L. De Koster evidently also tries to scare the critic into silence when he writes in his editorial:

I am not much impressed, I must say, by those who point out, as *examples for us*, that Amos and Jeremiah and Isaiah prophetically denounced the sins of Israel, as did Moses, and St. Paul, and indeed our Lord Himself. I say I am not much impressed by the excuse for pelting the Church with verbal brickbats. In the first place, none of us belongs to that select, and closed, company of divinely and infallibly inspired spokesmen. Our task, in the second place, is to strive mightily that the biblical denunciations do not rightfully fall upon us, rather than self-anointing ourselves prophets to denounce our brethren.

Now it is indeed true that no one is entitled to set himself up as an infallible prophet along side of Amos, Jeremiah, and the others, and present his own word as an infallible statement of condemnation upon others. But one not only *may*, but *must*, use the very words of Amos and the others to condemn the evils which exist in our day within world and church. It is not a question of throwing "verbal brickbats," but one must condemn what God's Word condemns — thus must base his condemnation on Holy Scripture itself. De Koster adds:

Only the *Church* appoints those *entitled* to criticize it; they usurp this right who willfully take it upon themselves, and in consequence only sow discord and division!

Where De Koster obtains *this* proposition, I do not know. Does the Church only appoint those entitled to criticize it? I would agree that the ministers of God's Word are called only through the Church. Their task is



to proclaim the pure Word of God without compromise. In proclaiming that Word, they are duty-bound to condemn the error too. But surely they are not the only ones *entitled* to criticize. Nor is such a privilege entrusted *only* to elders. God's people, the laity, are not only *entitled*, but *obligated*, to criticize properly when the need arises. Fact is, Scripture strongly condemns the laity when they fail in their duties in this regard. In Hosea 4:6 the prophet deplores, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." And, perhaps more strongly yet, Jeremiah says (5:31), "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; *and my people love to have it so . . .*" Would you want that condemning Word of God directed against *you*?

As those properly founded on the positive truths of God's Word, you must criticize everything opposed to that Word. We are approaching the end of time. The signs about us indicate this clearly. This means there will be more and more attempts also to present to you the "poison" of the lie. Perhaps this will be presented under the guise of preparing students to face the "harsh winds of modernity the moment they leave the campus." Perhaps these poisons will be presented under the guise of enjoying "film arts." (But Jesus

strongly condemned the church in Thyatira for allowing in their midst those who, under the color of Christianity, "enjoyed the depths of Satan, as they speak" — Rev. 2:24)

You must be opposed to all such corruption. This is not the time to "sit on your hands." This is not either the time to "wring your hands" in despair and discouragement — but do nothing. It is your duty and calling to point out sin wherever it might exist. You do that by showing from Scripture and our confessions *why* a thing is sin. You do that by following the orderly way of removing the sin — even though you might sometimes feel that such a process is hopeless. Do not be of those who, through their action (or lack of it) show that they "love to have it so." Corruption must be removed for *your* sakes, for the sakes of your *children*, for the sake of those who commit sin, and above all, for the sake of the glory of our God.

Let us together remember well the warning Christ gives to the church of Ephesus in Rev. 2:5, "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, *except thou repent.*"

## ***All Around Us***

### **Union of Presbyterians Rock Music Dr. Arntzen Resigns**

*Prof. H. Hanko*

#### **UNION OF PRESBYTERIANS**

Several years ago the Southern Presbyterian Church rejected merger proposals prepared by a joint committee for union with the Presbyterian Church USA. There were many in the more conservative Southern Presbyterian Church, however, which were never satisfied with this and which continued to press for full organic union with their northern counterpart. A new joint committee was formed, working on new merger proposals which are to be presented to both General Assemblies this year. In a way, this was forced upon the Church because, although the Assembly of the southern Church had rejected merger several years ago, several *presbyteries* (classes) of the southern Church went ahead with merger with presbyteries of the northern Church in spite of what the Assembly had decided. I do not know what the present status of these merged presbyteries is in relation to the

presently existing denominations; but there is, apparently, full participation in meetings, programs, staff services, and various "ministries" of both presbyteries. This situation was allowed to continue without reprimand from the General Assemblies. It is not, therefore, surprising that the question of merger is up once again.

This year the Assemblies will be asked to send the new draft for merger to their members for study and comment. After the joint committee has had an opportunity to study any comments which have been made and to consider any changes, the plan for union will be submitted by the 1972 Assembly to the presbyteries for formal vote. If sufficient presbyteries approve the plan, the union will be consummated at joint 1973 Assemblies.

What is interesting about the present plan is the fact that some changes were incorporated into the plan at



the request of conservative elements in the southern Church particularly who do not want to go along with such a merger.

One such element has been called "the election not to enter" section. After the required number of presbyteries have voted for merger sometime in January of 1973, congregations having objections to union will have an opportunity to "elect not to enter" if they do so before the next Assembly meeting in May of 1973. This vote will exclude them from the merger to be effected at the Assembly meeting.

Individual ministers will have the same opportunity if they have their decision recorded during the same period.

There is also a "conscience section" in the draft proposal which advises presbyteries that they can vote for merger even though they disagree with some sections of the union plan.

With such a proposal, it is quite necessary also to have some understanding concerning division of property. On the synodical and presbyterial level the plan proposes that assets be divided in such a way that "a proportional interest in such property not greater than the proportion the membership of such congregations bears to the total membership" be given to those who refrain from merger.

This will, however, only be true of those who record their refusal to merger in the allotted time.

Two new questions are also to be asked of those who are to be ordained. One question concerning the Bible reads: "Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to be, as the Word of God, the unique and authoritative guide to faith and life?" The other, which has to do with doctrine, reads: "Do you accept the confession of the Presbyterian Church (USA) as setting forth the teachings of the Christian faith as they are revealed in the Scriptures and will you be instructed by them in matters of doctrine and be led by them as you lead the people of God?" The reference is to the well-known Confession of 1967 which reflected so sharply the liberal thinking in the northern Church.

It is quite obvious, therefore, that the proposed merger is one which favors the liberals in both Churches and which commits the new Church to a doctrinal path which is far removed from Scripture. The conservatives hope that this will finally bring about a realignment of membership so that the liberals of both denominations form one new church while the conservatives of both denominations form another.

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We mentioned above that various presbyteries of both northern and southern Presbyterians have already merged, especially in border states. This is somewhat strange and we do not understand how this is possible and in what relation these newly formed presbyteries stand to the existing denominations. A recent issue of

*The Presbyterian Journal* (from which also we gleaned the material found in the above report) told of what happened when this merger of presbyteries was attempted in Missouri. Apparently a presbytery of the northern Church made overtures on two different occasions to the southern Presbytery of Southeast Missouri to enter into a merger with them. Both times the southern Presbytery rejected these overtures. The northern presbytery was unhappy with this refusal and so invited individual congregations within the southern presbytery to join with them in spite of what their presbytery decided to do. The resolution read, in part: "Therefore the Presbytery of Southeast Missouri of the United Presbyterian Church USA extends an invitation to any organization, particular church, or group of particular churches . . . to participate in meetings, programs, staff services or other undertakings of this presbytery where it is mutually desired and appropriate."

This is a strange situation, and we find it difficult to understand how legally this is possible. But the ways of merger are sometimes strange nowadays.

## ROCK MUSIC

Recently I have been reading articles and some books on the subject of rock music. This subject is of particular significance because it is the standard type of music which is found in the world today and because there are many of our young people who are rather devoted listeners to this stuff.

There has always been a dividing line between the music of the world and the music of the Church which the saints of God have recognized. Throughout the ages, beginning with the musical contributions of Jubal, the Church has drawn the sharp line of the antithesis between that music which is particularly suitable for the Church to use in praise to God and that music which has become, in the hands of a wicked world, a vehicle of sin. On the Church's side of the line have stood the Psalms and other songs of Scripture and the music which the Church herself has written for the use of the saints. On the other side of the line has stood such music of modern times as jazz, blues, country, western and folk music. On the side of the Church have stood the great classics in the field of music which have come down through the years. On the other side have stood those hymns even which have contained in them heresy and which the Church has specifically repudiated as being harmful for the saints in their confession in the world.

But there seems to be something exceptionally evil and devilish about rock music. For some reason it seems to stand in a class by itself. Although it belongs to that music which the world has invented, it nevertheless stands, even among types of worldly music, as something exceptionally wicked. There is a smell of wickedness about it which is far greater than anything the world has, up to this point, produced. It stands, I



suppose, even in relation to other types of worldly music in the same position as Satan worship stands to liberal and modern apostasy in the Church. It is part of all that is evil, and yet it is evil in an especially terrible way. It comes from the sinful heart of man, and yet it is a particularly horrible manifestation of that sinful heart.

I have long felt this. From time to time I have heard rock music played. It is plain, it seems to me, that there is the smell of hell about it. Anyone who has any sensitivity to music ought to be able to know this. It does something to a person which is not good. It comes at one with a force and with a power which is frightening because of its evil. Maybe a person, like myself, who knows very little about music cannot precisely define what is the trouble; but it is there, hovering in the air, trembling through the whole soul, an evil that destroys.

In reading material on rock music, some of which was written by men who themselves once composed it or played it or sang it, I became convinced that this was true. These men know. They have lived as close to rock music as it is possible to live: for they themselves have made it and performed it. And they write that it is evil in a way in which no other music is evil.

One author writes:

What is actually different about rock music? Wasn't the popular music our parents and grandparents listened to as teenagers about the same? First of all, rock music is a specific classification of music. It can be distinguished from other types of popular music . . . . Some of the earmarks of rock are its characteristic rhythmic patterns, chord progressions, melodic and harmonic movements, and form in general. Rock had its beginning in the 50's, combining the styles of other types of pop music before it. The primary original element that it offered was its rhythms. Rock remained relatively mild in its style until the early 60's when social unrest seemed to find in it an avenue of expression. Since that time, rock music has followed its early direction with greater momentum. Rhythms, harmonies and words considered extreme at one time have become outdated in a few short years. That pattern has repeated itself over and over. Today, very little is considered too wild or too questionable to release to the general public. An age of permissiveness has fostered a style of music quite unlike any before it. Performers of rock music need not be well-trained or even well-groomed. There are no conditions for making it big. A new group with little more than a few guitars and microphones and a repertoire of two songs can be an overnight success. The age of the antihero has caused the affections of the average teenager to be directed not toward the handsome, and the talented, but to the non-conformist. This is what is different about rock music. ("Music? Does It Make A Difference?", by Bob Parks.)

It seems that it is particularly this matter of rhythm

which is important for rock music. Without it, rock music would not amount to much more than most music which comes from the world — and which is certainly bad enough. You understand that this is speaking about the music itself. There are songs which, I suppose, may have good music but of which we say: The words are bad. The words are wicked. They do not tell the truth. We may not sing the song because the words of the song are evil. This, too, is true of rock music; and we shall have something more to say about this presently. But this is not the point now. Now the point is that the music itself is evil. If rock music is played without any words at all, it is still evil. There is, it is assumed here, music which is, in its own right sinful and wicked. Whatever words may be added to the music, no matter how correct even and Scripturally true such words may be, the song is still of hell because the music itself is evil.

And when those who know because they have been intimately associated with rock music at some time in their life are asked why rock music as music is evil, their answer usually comes down to this matter of rhythm.

In the book referred to above the following paragraph is found:

In his book, "Rock and Roll, the Devil's Diversion," converted rock band leader Bob Larson says, "Some argue that there is no such thing as an evil rhythm. I must differ with them . . ." He is saying that there are rhythmic patterns that be the very peculiarity of the arrangement of the accents and pulsations will naturally produce wrong responses in thought and action.

The point is then that music can be, as music, of such a kind that it does evil things to people. It destroys them. It makes instruments of Satan of them. It opens the doors of their souls to every manner of sin. Rock music is of this kind. It does it in a unique way.

We must quit this article at this point. If the Lord wills, we shall return to this subject in the next issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

#### DR. ARNTZEN RESIGNS

We learned recently, from an article written by Dr. Praamsma in *The Calvinist Contact*, that the rather well-known Dr. Arntzen from the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands has laid down his office of the ministry of the Gospel. He was for 19 years minister in the Church of 's-Gravendeel and for 26 years minister in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. He was recently in this country and in Canada, where he spoke of the troubles in the Netherlands Churches and told of the work of the "verontrusten" or "Concerned Ones."

His reasons for resigning from office were not trouble in his own congregation; rather he speaks of his congregation as being faithful. Rather his reasons for resigning from office have to do with the latitude in teaching which is now increasingly a reality in his



denomination. This has to do with the decisions which the last Synod of Sneek made in the well-known "Kuitert Case." While Kuitert denies fundamental truths of Scripture, the Synod passed the whole matter over with only a slight reprimand. And Dr. Kuitert was permitted to continue his instruction. In fact, Praamsma, in this article tells us that a minister of the Hervormde Kerk (the State Church) has said that there is more latitude in teaching in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* than in the *Hervormde Kerk*. It is this which has saddened Dr. Arntzen and was the determining factor in his decision to resign from the ministry.

We are unhappy with Dr. Arntzen's decision. He has, by laying down his office, stepped out of the battle and said, in effect, that he will fight no longer for the truth. This is especially difficult to understand when, by his own admission, his congregation was faithful. What will they now do?

And yet it is understandable in a way. A spirit of pessimism and discouragement has seized upon the

conservatives in the Church. They have despaired of doing anything constructive in saving the Church from the road of apostasy and have been so overcome by their pessimism that they have concluded that further struggle is useless.

But Dr. Praamsma, correctly, compares Dr. Arntzen with Elijah who sat under the juniper tree in southern Judah and prayed for the release of death. "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." But God told Elijah that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. It was this that showed Elijah that his work could not possibly be done. From this also Dr. Arntzen ought to take courage.

And there is always the way of church reformation, a way which others have followed even when their following was small and insignificant. It was the way the forefathers of Arntzen himself have walked. It is the only way to walk in faithfulness to the gospel.

## Contending for the Faith

# The Doctrine of Atonement

THE REFORMATION PERIOD

Rev. H. Veldman

In our preceding article, beginning our treatment of the history of the dogma of the atonement as set forth by the Reformation, we called attention to what the Lutheran Formula of Concord sets forth with respect to the doctrine of predestination. And we concluded with the remark that, the Lord willing, we would call attention in our following article to certain glaring inconsistencies in this Formula of Concord. We must remember that the formulation of the doctrine of predestination in this Formula of Concord was under the influence of the teachings of Melancthon, Luther's co-worker in the Reformation and a man who certainly was not as pure as Martin Luther.

In Art. II, concerning the free will of man, the Formula of Concord states the following, and we realize that these declarations are influenced by the position of Luther:

I. Concerning this matter, the following is our faith, doctrine, and confession, to wit: that the understanding and reason of man in spiritual things are wholly blind and can understand nothing by their proper powers. As it is written (1 Cor. 2:14): "The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because he is examined concerning spiritual things."

II. We believe, teach, and confess, moreover, that the yet unregenerate will of man is not only averse from God, but has become even hostile to God, so that it only wishes and desires those things, and is delighted with them, which are evil and opposite to the divine will. For it is written (Gen. 8:21): "For the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth." Also (Rom. 8:7): "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be."

Therefore we believe that by how much it is impossible that a dead body should vivify itself and restore corporal life to itself, even so impossible is it that man, who by reason of sin is spiritually dead, should have any faculty of recalling himself into spiritual life; as it is written (Eph. 2:5): "Even when we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ." (2 Cor. 3:5): "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing good as of ourselves; but that we are sufficient is itself of God."

III. Nevertheless the Holy Spirit effects the conversion of man not without means, but is wont to use for effecting it preaching and the hearing of the Word of God, as it is written (Rom. 1:16): "The gospel is a power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." And (Rom. 10:17): "Faith cometh by hearing of the Word of God." And without question it is the will of the Lord that His Word should be



heard, and that our ears should not be stopped when it is preached (Psa. 95:8). With this Word is present the Holy Spirit, Who opens the hearts of men, in order than, as Lydia did (Acts 16:14), they may diligently attend, and thus may be converted by the sole grace and power of the Holy Spirit, Whose work, and Whose work alone, the conversion of man is. For if the grace of the Holy Spirit is absent, our willing and running, our planting, sowing, and watering, are wholly in vain (Rom. 9:16; I Cor. 3:7); if, that is, He does not give the increase, as Christ says (John 15:5): "Without Me ye can do nothing." And, indeed, in these few words Christ denies to free-will all power whatever, and ascribes all to Divine grace, "that no one may have whereof he may glory before God" (1 Cor. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:5; Jer. 9:23).

These articles on the Formula of Concord on the free will of man are sound. They undoubtedly reflect the thinking and writings of Martin Luther as that reformer wrote on this subject in his "Bondage of the Will." This, however, is not in harmony with what we read in Art. XI of the Formula of Concord, which article sets forth what it considers to be the truth of the eternal predestination and election of God. These articles on Divine predestination we quoted in our preceding article. We can never maintain the offer of salvation to all men on the one hand and the truth of the utter corruption and death of the sinner on the other hand. An offer of salvation can be well-meaning and serious only when the sinner to whom the offer is presented is able to accept it. This lies in the nature of the case. Sovereign predestination and particular atonement can be maintained only as long as one maintains the utter and absolute depravity of the sinner. To say that the sinner is hopelessly and helplessly depraved means that he can do nothing unto his own salvation. This means that the Lord must always take the initiative. But to teach that the Lord must always take the initiative, take the first step, surely means that He takes that first step in whom He pleases, never waits upon any action of the sinner; should He do the latter, then no sinner could possibly be saved.

We now call attention to this doctrine of the atonement as set forth in the writings of John Calvin. There are no articles in the Lutheran Augsburg Confession or the Formula of Concord which deal specifically with the atonement of Christ. So, we now turn to John Calvin. In these quotations from Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, the emphasis is not laid upon the particular character of the sufferings and death of Christ. This was obviously not an issue of controversy. The particular character of the atonement of Christ is not treated until in connection with the Arminian controversy and the Synod of Dordt of 1618-1619. But it is worthy of note how Calvin stresses the character of the sufferings and death of Christ, laying all emphasis upon the element of vicarious atonement. Calvin discusses the death of Christ in Book II of his Institutes, Chap-

ters 16 and 17.

Notice how this element of satisfaction appears in the very first paragraph on Chapter I:

But here we ought diligently to examine how He has procured salvation for us; that we may not only know Him to be the author of it, but, embracing these things which are sufficient for the establishment of our faith, may reject every thing capable of drawing us aside to the right hand or to the left. For since no man can descend into himself and seriously consider his own character, without perceiving that God is angry with him and hostile to him, and consequently he must find himself under a necessity of anxiously seeking some way to appease Him, which can never be done without a satisfaction, — this is a case in which the strongest assurance is required. For sinners, till they be delivered from guilt, are always subject to the wrath and malediction of God, Who, being a righteous Judge, never suffers His law to be violated with impunity, but stands prepared to avenge it.

In this paragraph the Genevan reformer clearly emphasizes the element of satisfaction. He speaks here of God's anger and hostility to the sinner, that the sinner must find some way to appease the Lord, and that this can never be done without a satisfaction. He also writes that sinners, until they are delivered from guilt, are always subject to the wrath and malediction of God, and that the Lord, being a righteous Judge, never suffers His law to be violated with impunity, but always stands prepared to avenge that law. Calvin, therefore, clearly emphasizes that sin is guilt and that the Lord can never be appeased without satisfaction.

Before Calvin treats the subject of the atonement he first asks the question how it must be harmonized that God can love us while He is our enemy. He writes:

Before we proceed any further, let us examine, by the way, how it could be consistent, that God, Who prevents us (comes before us — H. V.) with His mercy, should be our enemy, till He was reconciled to us by Christ . . . The Spirit speaks in the Scriptures merely in this manner — That God was an enemy to men, till by the death of Christ they were restored to His favour; that they were under the curse till their iniquity was expiated by His sacrifice; that they were separated from God, till they were restored to union with Him by the body of Christ . . . For if it were not clearly expressed, that we are obnoxious to the wrath and vengeance of God, and to eternal death, we should not so fully discover how miserable we must be without the Divine mercy, nor should we so highly estimate the blessing of deliverance . . . But if, on the contrary, he be told, what the Scripture teaches, "that he was alienated from God by sin, an heir of wrath, obnoxious to the punishment of eternal death, excluded from all hope of salvation, a total stranger to the Divine blessing, a slave to Satan, a captive under the yoke of sin, in a word, condemned to, and already involved in, a horrible destruction; that in this situation, Christ interposed as an intercessor; that He has taken upon Himself and suffered the punishment



which by the righteous judgment of God impended over all sinners; that by His blood He has expiated those crimes which render them odious to God; that by this expiation God the Father has been satisfied and duly atoned; that by this intercessor His wrath has been appeased; that this is the foundation of peace between God and men; that this is the bond of His benevolence towards them; will he not be the more affected by these things in proportion to the more correct and lively representation of the depth of calamity from which he has been delivered? In short, since it is impossible for the life which is presented by the mercy of God, to be embraced by our hearts with sufficient ardour, or received with becoming gratitude, unless we have been previously terrified and distressed with the fear of the Divine wrath, and the horror of eternal death, we are instructed by the sacred doctrine, that irrespective of Christ we may contemplate God as in some measure incensed against us, and His hand armed for our destruction, and that we may embrace His benevolence and paternal love only in Christ.

We can understand how it can be true that God can

be our enemy while He loves us eternally. God loves us only in Christ. This explains why we can never experience this love of God outside of Christ, must experience His wrath while we walk in sin. But notice how Calvin emphasizes the idea of atonement, of expiation, that God must be fully atoned. This Calvin also emphasizes in the following (paragraph III, Chapter 16, Book II):

Therefore, to remove all occasion of enmity, and to reconcile us completely to Himself, He abolishes all our guilt, by the expiation exhibited in the death of Christ, that we, who before were polluted and impure, may appear righteous and holy in His sight. The love of God the Father therefore precedes our reconciliation in Christ; or rather it is because He first loves, that He afterwards reconciles us to Himself . . . And therefore, if we would assure ourselves that God is pacified and propitious to us, we must fix our eyes and hearts on Christ alone, since it is by Him only that we really obtain the non-imputation of sins, the imputation of which is connected with the Divine wrath.

## *In His Fear*

# Are You Listening?

*Rev. John A. Heys*

Saturday, a severe earthquake struck in Italy with the loss of at least eighteen lives, and with at least two hundred seventy injured. In a matter of six seconds the work of centuries was destroyed, when gems of antiquity and pieces of art were destroyed with the museums that contained them. Who was it that said, "Man proposes, but God disposes." And that in but six seconds!

Today, while these lines are being written — and it is the Tuesday after that Saturday — reports are coming in of the earthquake that struck across the wide ocean and on this side of the globe in our own country, more specifically in the Los Angeles area of California. At the last count thirty-three were killed, and millions of dollars of damage was done to the freeway systems, while untold millions of dollars of property damage also resulted. And even while the reports are being updated, the top story of the day is forced to share time with them and shorten the programs the news media have prepared for the day. Strikingly enough, three men are at the moment rushing at unbelievable speeds back towards this globe that suffered this devastation. They had circled the moon, and two of them had walked upon its surface. But this is their home. Here only can they live without all that equipment that artificially produces for them the food

and the oxygen they need for life. They must, therefore, return to such a globe.

And tomorrow morning in the early hours we will witness a total eclipse of the moon, for the earth will be in just exactly that position in relation to the sun and moon that it will cut off completely the light of the sun from the moon's surface. It will be directly in a line between both sun and moon.

The reports of the earthquake were hardly aired before the theory was presented that this unique position of the earth in relation to sun and moon caused our globe to be pulled by the gravitational forces of these two bodies into a shape somewhat like a football; and this caused the fault line, that runs through California from as far north as San Francisco past Los Angeles and into Mexico, to shift and cause the quake. Tomorrow we will hear men tell us that a quake here had been expected, and in fact had been predicted for many years.

Well, you heard these reports and these explanations. And you heard all this a month ago, since of necessity these lines must be prepared that far in advance of the date that they appear in your mail box.

We say that you *heard* these reports and explanations.

But were you listening?



And are you a month later still listening? Are you listening to what God says? You heard man's reports and explanations. You have by now heard his reassuring words that he expects some day not only to be able to predict where the next earthquake will come, but also the date. But are you listening to what God says in all this, that is, to what He says in that and other earthquakes, but also in the spoutings of unbelief of so-called scientists? You cannot help hearing what men have to say about these matters. Nor do we condemn hearing it as being out of rather than in His fear. But in His fear are you listening to God? There is a big difference, which we ought to see.

You see, there is something spectacular about a moon eclipse, especially when it is total. But it strikes no fear of fright in us, for we know it to be the result of a harmless movement of the sun, moon and earth in their God-ordained circuits. No terror grips our hearts, then, when we witness such an eclipse. Moments of deep anxiety bordering on strong fear do accompany a blast-off of a rocket for a journey to the moon, especially when such difficulty in docking is encountered as this last time; and also when the section separated to land on the moon approaches its surface; and again at the critical moment of blasting off again to rejoin and dock with the command module. With bated breath the splash-down is followed; and all along the line there is room for fear for the wellbeing of the men who undertook this dangerous voyage into space.

But what fear grips the hearts of men when the earth begins to heave and buckle! What fear at this very moment for thousands that the dam which holds millions of tons of water above them might crack open and wash down their valley to destroy their homes and themselves! Can you blame them if in fear they flee to a safer place? When the solid earth begins to move up and down and buildings begin to topple, cracks appear before one's feet, huge slabs of concrete are lifted up and bridges are thrown down, there is justifiable fear. Many who are afraid to fly and cannot be gotten on a plane, because they feel safe only on the ground, become greatly disillusioned when that ground gives way and throws them around, and hurls objects at and upon them. Some, the saying goes, "Like to fly with one foot on the ground." Yes, but when an earthquake strikes, even with two feet on the ground there is no assurance of safety. It comes without warning; and one never knows just where it will open up the earth, or cause the ground to rise. Like the lightning which strikes without warning and the place thereof cannot be predicted, so it is with the earthquake. It may strike right there where your two feet are resting upon that earth.

But the question is, whether the fear of the Lord causes us to listen to Him speak when He shakes the earth upon which He has placed us. Fear there is going to be. But is it merely the fear of terror, of sudden

death or bodily injury? Or is it the fear of the Lord, which in the midst of terrors gives us peace of heart and mind?

The fear of the Lord will cause us to listen to what God is saying. Let us bear in mind that God is speaking in these events because God is working in them. He has something to say *to* us because He is doing something *for* us, even in these works of devastation. And we are not at the moment particularly concerned with the matter — which is surely true and not to be denied — that God speaks judgment in such shakings of our earth. This one of today did occur very near our modern — and by our, we mean our American — Sodom and Gomorrah. For Hollywood escaped the fiercest blows of this act of judgment of the living God. We must listen to Him concerning judgment when we hear of these works of His hands. But at the moment we would stress another matter. And if we listen, we will hear that which will bring comfort and encouragement, peace and joy. We will hear good news, the gospel, in the midst of all this tragic news.

Did you ever notice that although you hear the clock tick, you do not listen until it suddenly stops? Have you never read your newspaper while hearing soft, soothing music from radio or stereo? You are hearing but not actually listening. And any school teacher knows very well that children hear the assignment but are not listening. Therefore hands are raised to ask for a repetition of that assignment. Yes, we have heard for years of earthquakes in diverse places. In connection with the one this morning reports have been given out that about nine thousand of them occur each year. And we have also heard, or even read ourselves, that Jesus said that earthquakes in diverse, that is, different, places would be a sign of the beginning of sorrows and of His return. But were we listening? Are we paying attention to what God is saying?

For one thing Scripture teaches us that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, waiting with earnest expectation for the manifestation of the Son of God, Romans 8:19-22. In the earthquake, if we live by faith, we can hear that creation groaning. If we listen to what God says therein, we will hear that groan and much more. For that creation groaneth in hope. And there *is* hope for that creation, for it shall be delivered from bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

That latter element we must hear and will hear if we listen to God in His Word and works. The day of the glorious liberty of the sons of God is coming. A new heaven and a new earth shall soon appear. And the old earth, but also the present heaven, must first pass away. In Revelation 21:1-3 John sees this new heaven and this new earth, and that the first heaven and the first earth are completely passed away by earthquakes and heavenquakes. Haggai 2:6

The process of the passing away of the old has be-



gun. Each earthquake is another word of God that He is keeping His word of promise to us. Yes, in all that pain and death, in all that devastation and destruction God is speaking to the heirs of salvation, and to the meek who shall inherit the earth, that the new heavens and the new earth are a step closer, and that He has not forsaken or forgotten us in the midst of all the rapid development of sin, and in the perilous times which are upon us and will increase in their intensity. He is calling loudly, more loudly even than the roar of the earthquake as such, and of the falling buildings and cries of the injured: "My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, is coming soon!"

There is the point of our question which forms the title for these lines! Are you listening for Christ to come? You are going to hear of more earthquakes, and of more wars and rumors of wars. You are going to hear of more exploits of man and more verification of Daniel's words that knowledge shall increase, (also of the heavenly bodies in outer space) and that men shall run to and fro (even to go to these heavenly bodies). But are you in all this listening for Christ's return? Do we simply hear, and then go on and forget? Do we simply hear what men have said about these works of God (which they do not at all attribute to Him), or do we hear what God says in them?

He certainly tells us that here we have no continuing city. He tells us that all of man's works will be destroyed, and that in a moment! He tells us that it is not man's achievements of reaching heavenly bodies to walk on them that is going to bring us the kingdom of

heaven and heavenly bliss, but that it is the coming of His Son from out of heaven down to this earth to conquer by His suffering and obedience, spoiling principalities and powers, triumphing over them (Col. 3:15), that brings us peace and joy and life everlasting. He tells us that it is His Son's ascent into heaven to the Father's right hand to have dominion over land and sea, and His return without heat shield and parachute, recovery vessels, helicopters, frog men, and all these earthly things of the earth that must pass away to make room for the new earth, but by His own almighty power as *our* King, that will bring us peace and salvation.

And He says, in the person of His Son, "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me."

While reading these lines, hopefully you have been listening to Him. You have fixed your attention on these things. But as you lay this magazine aside, do not forget that glorious truth. Continue to hear it in your soul. And when more tragedies such as these come — as they surely will — listen more carefully to hear the good news in this bad news. The news media can only bring you bad news, and they surely do. But listen to what God says in that bad news. For He speaks the good news of the gospel. He assures us that our adoption, which will be perfected in the redemption of our bodies, will soon be consummated.

Listen to what God says. For His people it will always be good news. For it will always be: "The day of your redemption draweth nigh."

## From Holy Writ

# Exposition of Hebrews

Rev. G. Lubbers

*THE BELIEVERS ASSURED OF THEIR FINAL SALVATION THROUGH SUFFERINGS* Hebrews 10:39

Yes, the believers had need of patience in their sufferings for Christ's sake. For here is the patience of the saints; here the believers are made a spectacle before God and angels. And in the midst of it all, theirs is the victory; they are more than conquerors. For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith, (I John 5:4b). The writer to the Hebrews had warned the readers of the dire consequences of falling back; it is a falling into perdition and destruction in hell. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, (Heb. 10:31). And the word of prophecy is very clear. The Hebrew Christians hold the Old Testament to be the Word of God, to be canonical.

Well, then let them heed the words both of Isaiah and Habakkuk!

Now the writer believes the best concerning the Hebrew Christians. Writes he, "Now we are not of those who shrink back unto perdition, but of those who believe to the obtaining of the salvation of the soul." In so writing there is not a vain boast in man. Here is a boast in the sure work of God. Said Jesus: "My Father is greater than all, and no one can pluck them (my sheep) out of the hand of my Father!" Such is the basic confidence. The good work which God has begun in the saints He will finish even unto the day of Jesus Christ! If we were left to ourselves, even for a moment, we would surely fall back. But we are kept in the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last day, (I Peter 1:5).



And, therefore, the writer can speak with certainty of these believers. It is not a mere wish which he here utters; it is a statement of fact.

The writer speaks here of "we." This is emphatic in the Greek text. (*Heemeis — Esmen*) And the writer includes himself. He is certain of the faithfulness which God has promised, both for himself and for his fellow-believers. What they *are* they became and shall continue to be by the grace of God. Hence, they shall not fall away unto perdition. On the contrary, they shall go forth from strength to strength until they appear before God in Zion. They shall possess their souls in patience, as those who were not appointed unto wrath but unto obtaining salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. For salvation is all of grace from beginning to end. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of this good work in us; and, therefore, He will finish it. Such is the secret of salvation, and more particularly the secret of faith. For by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, (Eph. 2:8-10).

#### THE MYSTERY OF FAITH ANALYZED (Hebrews 11:1)

We agree with Calvin and other exegetes of reputation that it is wrong to begin in Hebrews 11:1 as if it were a brand new subject. Fact is, that the division of the chapter here is rather misleading, because it suggests that we are here dealing with a matter, which heretofore had not been discussed by the writer. We know that the original manuscripts had no chapters and no verses; and, therefore, we will view this passage as a continuation of the fact that the Hebrew Christians are in need of patience in the battle, and that their victory is *faith*. And in view of this the writer here analyzes this mystery of faith!

What we have here is an analysis of *saving* faith, justifying faith, and not of a general faith, faith as this is purported to be found even in the endeavors of sinful and unbelieving men in the world. But this is the faith by which the just shall live! (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38) Of this there can be no doubt. And only sophistry of man can distill out of this text a "general faith" of mankind, even though it be true that unbelieving men have a certain confidence concerning the future. However, this confidence of the ungodly is qualitatively different from the "confidence" of the children of God, who are saved by grace. For this confidence of the saints is a leaning upon the everlasting arms of God, which they know are underneath. Their faith rests upon the rock-bottom truth expressed by Moses, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thy enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places," (Deut. 33:29). And, therefore, we conclude that here

is spoken of a *saving* faith by which we do not fall back but press forward till the victory is won!

Concerning this faith two things are stated in which the secret of faith, in opposition to all other forms of certainty, is clearly set forth. There are basically two ways of living: by faith and by sight! We can take our starting point either in God or in the creature. True faith is directed to God; true saving faith is directed to God's promises as revealed by His authoritative Word. Faith asks nothing more and nothing other or less. The writer in the Hebrews places emphatically the verb "is" (*estin*) on the foreground. Although we do not have a formal definition here of faith, a dogmatic definition, we do have here a disclosure of faith as it is operative in the hearts of all the believers. We are given a spiritual ex-ray picture of faith as it is in the hearts of the faithful. We see the Christian as he moves and lives in this battle-arena, as he goes forth conquering and to conquer. And when one asks after the secret of this victory, this super-human display of strength and patience, then the answer is: *faith*!

First of all, then, we notice that faith is called the "substance of things hoped for." Now the things hoped for are the same things which are not seen. That much is clear from the text. And this is clearly the teaching, too, of Paul in Romans 8:18-25. There we learn that all the sufferings for Christ's sake are not worthy to be compared unto the glory which will be revealed in us. But this glory we do not yet see. Yes, all of creation groans in hope to share in this glory of the adoption of sons. However, we only see this in hope. We are saved in hope. And the salvation which shall be ours in that day is things which are not seen. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for it. But now we await it with patience. Thus is the clearly enunciated teaching of Paul in Romans 8. Basically that is what we have here in the text. The things hoped for are the things not now seen by the believer. He lives in faith and not by sight.

However, there is some difficulty connected with determining the exact meaning of the term in the Greek, which here is translated in the KJV by "substance." In Hebrews 3:14 the term is translated "confidence," while in Hebrews 1:3 it is translated "person." This is the Greek term "*hypostasis*." In the great Greek Creeds the three Persons in the Trinity are called three "Hypostases," and the Person of the Son incarnated is also called his "Hypostasis." However, the Bible is no dogmatics! And the terms will need to be interpreted in the light of the immediate context, and in such a way that the shade of meaning in the term as used in a given text comes to its own. Beza renders "substance" by "subsistence" and "evidence" by "demonstration." Stuart speaks of "confidence" and "convincing evidence." The Latin has "Substantia" and "demonstratio." Now of the things hoped for and not seen, "faith" is a real solid ground, subjectively. It is



the point of departure in all the battle. The Dutch translates it "*vaste grond*," solid ground. And the German translates, "*Fest zuversicht*," the certain prospect. It is quite evident that the "solid ground" here is the ground on which the believer starts in the entire life's course: faith, as the solid confidence that the things hoped for are real, true, all that they purport to be. They have substance, and will not evaporate as the mirage in the desert. Faith is more than mere subjective confidence; it is the body itself. That is the mystery of this faith as it reveals itself in the midst of the display of patience.

However, faith is also the "evidence" of things not seen, the things hoped for. When you see this faith in action you see the *evidence* of the age to come. There is a magnitude to this faith and its evidence which only the ages to come will justify. Then the approved character of this faith, its evidence of things not seen, will be found to be unto praise, honor, and glory of God, even in the day of Jesus Christ. Such is the mystery of faith which is great! And we may not equate this faith with the general faith of the heroic deeds of natural man, the world's great men of courage and achievement.

The great men who are here presented to us as living demonstrations of this faith, and as incentive for the saints who press on in the battle, are all taken from the midst of the saints. They are really not "heroes" of faith in the strict sense of the term. The whole concept of the Greek "*Heeros*" must here be ruled out once and for all. He was a mythological or legendary figure, often of divine descent, endowed with great strength and ability; or he was an illustrious warrior, a man

admired and emulated for his great achievements and qualities. And in the dramatic works he was the chief character, the central figure in a period or event. In the Greek hero it is the glorification of man, to demonstrate what a mere human mortal can do. The world has its heroes. Strikingly the Bible does not know the term "hero," nor the concept. All these great men of faith were weak men, poor sinners. It was not they who were great; it was the secret, the mystery of faith! It was the secret that faith as a mustard seed is so great that when one has it he says to this mountain: be cast unto the sea, and it comes to pass when the cause of God demands it. It is faith which sings: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord, Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become by salvation!" (Isaiah 12:2) Here is not a "hero" of faith, but here are humble saints who drink water by faith from the wells of salvation.

We should be very careful about the term "heroes of faith," for such are qualitatively different from the world's great!

When we, therefore, turn our attention to the examples of faith as it is manifested as substance of things hoped for, and as evidence of things not seen, we will not rivet our attention upon the "hero" but upon the living God, who energizes this faith in the hearts of man of like passions as we are, in the sure confidence that He who made these Old Testament saints strong, is equally able and willing to make us strong in the conflict, so that our boasting may not be in man's strength but in the faithfulness and mercies of our Covenant God!

## *Studies in Election*

# **Its Well-Spring Its Confessional Expression**

*Rev. Robert C. Harbach*

ELECTION: *Its Well-Spring* (concluded)

We have seen how God views man in His eternal purpose of election, namely, first of all as the man, Christ Jesus, and then as man in Christ. In God's view of election, Christ is seen first as the Head of the church, and then as the Savior of the body. We have also seen in the great Proverbs VIII passage that there Christ is, in the eternal decree, especially viewed as the ordained Savior of the body, as the Word incarnate in living connection "with the sons of men," and so also in necessary connection with the cross, wherein alone the sons of men are viewed with delight. We have fur-

ther seen that there simply is no real or valid preaching of the gospel unless preached on the background, on the basis and in the light of the truth of election. When it is really perceived that Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), then it is surely understood that the gospel and election are inseparable. One cannot preach *the* gospel without principally preaching election; and with election discovered, the gospel is revealed as never before.

Then let it also be preached that the names of the elect "are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Rev. 21:27), that they are "written among the living in



Jerusalem" (Isa. 4:3), as, in fact, "in Thy Book all My members were written" (Ps. 139:16). The Book of Life, containing the register of all the elect, reveals not only the accurate, but also the saving knowledge God has of all who are His, and also proves that eternal election is of particular persons, for *names* are there definitely recorded. The Book also teaches the absolute safety and security of the elect, for their names shall never be blotted out of it. It is called the Lamb's Book of Life because His name is at the head of the register (Heb. 10:7, Gk.). So His name is at the head of the New Testament (Matt. 1:1). It is the Book of Life because He is the Life, the Prince of Life, Christ our Life, and because election is unto eternal life. Believe with a true faith that the Lamb of God was sacrificed for you, to take away your sins, and you have the evidence and assurance that your name is written in that Book!

### 3. *Its Confessional Expression*

This aspect of the truth of election has to do with its witness. If there is any one truth the church, throughout the ages, has always testified, it is that of election. The witnessing church has left in the world an indelible and irrepressible testimony in its confessions. That is why this truth is plainly, yet beautifully, declared in all the Calvinistic, Presbyterian and Reformed statements of faith. For example, the whole Heidelberg Catechism presupposes it. There the entire glory of the gospel is exemplified as experienced by the full-grown, mature, perfect, redeemed man in Christ, with all things subservient to his salvation. In this most beautiful biblical instructor, Christ and His people are viewed through the telescope of the divine decrees, in their historical connection through the ages in the midst of the world. For "the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends and preserves to himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and forever shall remain, a living member thereof" (HC, Q. 54).

According to that statement, the Son of God is first, not man, not the lost, not the redeemed, nor the church. He is before all things, all things being created by Him and for Him, especially the church. Next noted is His own peculiar work: He gathers a church. Under-score the exact language: it is not that He proposes to gather a church, hence desires to do so, making many efforts, some fruitless, to that end. No, the statement being so severely biblical as it is, the Son of God is seen actually gathering a church, and continuing to gather it from the beginning to the end of the world. This work He does invincibly, for He effectually defends His church. He successfully completes it to the end, without interruption or hindrance, for He preserves His church. The Son of God now actually gathers a people, a church. This He does, not merely saving sinners, as

though rescuing individual pieces of flotsam and jetsam. Christ gathers not a loose aggregate of milling hordes like the swarming mass of humanity at an international airport. He gathers a church, the body of the redeemed and glorified saints in union with Him as Head. The peculiar character of the church is denoted in its being *chosen*. It is an elect church. It is then no second-guess work, no emergency measure, no substitute for a second-best, failed original. *It is the original!* The church is chosen. It is chosen *in* before it is chosen *out*. It is, as to God's great end in view, chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world; then, as to the means taken to realize that end, it is chosen out of the whole human race. This means that the church is seen in its historical setting, in the fallen mass of humanity, corrupt, polluted, helpless in its spiritual impotency and degradation, no better than the rest of depraved mankind, indeed, not as "good" as the majority of humanity, but chosen, not for any good in it (God adjudges, "there is none good, no, not one"), but for the glory of His own sovereign grace. So that the church was not chosen *for* anything man did or could do, but *to* every saving good, as summed up in "chosen *to* everlasting life." The church being chosen *to* eternal life, shall it not, then, *have* eternal life? Shall it not also agree in true faith? It shall! For it subsists upon the faith of God's elect! Shall the Son of God fail in His own wonder-work of grace? Never! Jesus never fails! Not one member of His blood-bought, chosen race shall fail to be gathered into, continue in and forever remain a living member thereof!

The next point in the Reformed Confessions on the subject is at Article XVI, *On Eternal Election*, in the Belgic Confession, which reads,

We believe that all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest himself such as He is, that is to say, merciful and just: merciful, since He delivers and preserves from this perdition all, whom He, in His eternal and unchangeable counsel, of mere goodness, hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works: just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.

Admittedly, there is much that disappoints us in this article. It is not only shorter than any article ought to be of such grand and lofty theme, but it is somewhat out of place, logically belonging, not in the loci of Anthropology, but in that of Theology and in connection with the counsel of God. Also the article is not as accurately titled as it might be, for it is not limited to sovereign election, epitomizing, as it does, the whole doctrine of predestination, with its two, positive and negative, parts, election and reprobation. Further, it only very sketchily outlines the doctrine of predestination; nothing more.

Still, the disappointments in this connection are not as serious and regrettable as in the case of the Eighteenth article of the (Reformed Episcopal) Thirty-five



Articles of Religion. There, election, predestination and free will are not only not treated under theology proper, nor even under anthropology, but rather in connection with soteriology. Further, unlike the Belgic Confession article, the Reformed Episcopal article is in its title misleading, for it does not, actually, treat of Election, Predestination or Free Will; no, not even in sketchy outline. There merely appears the statement that "this church (Reformed Episcopal — RCH . . . simply affirms these doctrines as the Word of God sets them forth, and submits them to the judgment of its members, as taught by the Holy Spirit. . . ." But no explanation is offered as to just how the Word of God does set forth these doctrines. Then to leave such a great essential of the faith "to the individual judgment of the church's members" for its reception, interpretation and expression is hardly satisfactory, showing theological incompetence. Such a statement is inherently unworthy of a theological, confessional declaration. Its phraseology is really non-confessional, even anti-doctrinal. Where witness to the highest of Reformed truth is expected, none is given. The mere mention of the doctrinal peaks of the Christian Faith, and the leaving of them to the individual judgment of members in the church, is not only the height of rank individualism, but is certainly, and sadly, no confession, or witness to the truth.

But these hollow sounds are not echoed in our Ar-

ticle XVI. While it is extremely brief, that lack is more than made up in the Canons of Dordt, where predestination is treated at length in eighteen consecutive articles. Yet *this* article *does* contain the essentials of the doctrine of predestination, with the basic elements of election and reprobation. Weakness there is, to a degree, evident in this article, as shown, above; but that weakness lies not in the fact that the truth is herein viewed in its historical setting. The fact that, with humankind fallen into the pit of perdition, God delivers and preserves from this perdition all whom He has elected in Christ, is no weakness. Nor is this infralapsarianism. It is not infralapsarian to state that after the fall, and from the fall, God delivers *and preserves* His chosen ones. The article fits in well enough with the supralapsarian scheme. So often this article is said to be *Infra*-. But that God delivers from perdition all He has elected *in Christ*, certainly implies an election made in the first place with Christ in view, and not first with sin and the fall in view; with viewing Christ first as the Head of the church, then as the Savior of the body. Although the article is not infralapsarian, neither does it press the switch on the supralapsarian floodlight. It does not enter upon the *Infra-Supra* question. But it definitely does not state that God chose out of the fallen human race. The article is not weakened with infralapsarianism.

(To be continued, D.V.)

### NOTICE!!!

The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a qualified teacher to teach Grades 1 thru 4. If interested, contact Mr. Henry Hoekstra, (Sec'y.) R.R. No. 1, Hull, Iowa, 51239.

### NOTICE!

An Office Bearers conference will be held, the Lord willing, Tuesday evening, April 6, in the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church. All present and former office bearers are welcome.

P. Knott, Sec'y.

### ATTENTION!

All Standing Synodical Committees are reminded that their reports for the Synodical Agenda must be sent to the undersigned on or before the April 15 deadline. Supplemental reports may be submitted later, but material for the Agenda must be submitted by April 15.

Rev. D. H. Kuiper Stated Clerk of Synod  
1314 Main Street Pella, Iowa, 50219

### ANNOUNCEMENT

The Protestant Reformed Federation of Christian Schools is sponsoring a "Seminar-Workshop", Friday, February 26, 9:00-4:00 p.m., at the Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School. The theme for the day will be "Literature Studies in the Christian School." All interested teachers, college students, board members, and parents are invited to attend the sessions of this workshop. For more specific information you may contact the principals of the Adams, Hope, and South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

### ANNOUNCEMENT!!

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in regular session on Wednesday, April 7, 1971 at the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church. Material to be treated at this meeting must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least ten days prior to the convening of the session.

J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

## News From Our Churches

Rev. Van Baren has declined the call extended to him from Southwest Church, and Rev. Schipper has declined that from Grand Rapids Hope Church.

Our Kalamazoo congregation has taken upon itself to print 1000 copies of the booklet, "The Three Forms of Unity." According to its Sunday bulletin, only



about 200 copies remain — the rest having been “sold and/or distributed.” The little booklet has gone in largest quantities to Jamaica, but copies have also ended up in New Jersey (“next greatest distribution”), Pennsylvania, Florida, Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, Texas, South Carolina, North Carolina, Illinois, Colorado, the Dakotas, and to London.

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That booklet, incidentally, is only one of many booklets, pamphlets, books, brochures, and periodicals that have long been available from various organizations in the Protestant Reformed Churches — available that is, to anyone who happened to know what to ask for and who to ask. The Reformed Free Publishing Association has recently printed a little yellow folder which lists and describes much of the literature available from our churches. Perhaps you’ve already seen it. It includes such items as the “Beacon Lights,” Sunday School papers and pamphlets, catechism materials, and books by Rev. Hoeksema. The R. F. P. A. is also acting as central distributors for this literature. Thanks to this little folder, much more effective use will certainly be put to what it describes as our “veritable gold mine of worthwhile and instructive reading.” Mr. H. Vander Wal, R. F. P. A. business manager, who has done much to prepare the catalog, reports that results are already impressive.

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If you have already read the insides of this issue of the *Standard Bearer*, you know that Rev. Van Baren was asked by the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen to present a lecture in Kalamazoo. The bulletin of our Holland church had the following interesting information concerning that speech: “One of the striking aspects of this lecture, which dealt with the anti-thesis, is the fact that it was delivered in the very church where the three points of ‘Common Grace’ were drawn up and adopted in 1924 and which led to the separation of our churches because we refused to accept these three points and rejected them upon the basis of Scripture and the Confessions. This First Christian Reformed Church is the one in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where the 1924 Synod met.”

The audience at this particular meeting was rather small, but apparently appreciative. The chairman, in his opening remarks, mentioned that the A. C. R. L. had come into being because “disturbing voices are heard in our churches.” He drew attention to, among other things, doubts concerning the historicity of Gen. 1, and the growing attraction of the social gospel for some of the leaders. He stressed also the “educational function of the organization,” pointing out that they were not an ecclesiastical power and that their only intention was to defend from error.

After Rev. Van Baren’s fine lecture, the chairman stated that, though hardly the customary thing in our circles, “I would like to hear an ‘Amen’ from this audience.” The result was rather meager, of course, but that’s hardly surprising from an audience made up of people who, under such circumstances, are typically reserved and hesitant to give that sort of vocal response to the words of a speaker. But the attempt itself was an indication of deep appreciation for what Rev. Van Baren had to say. According to the chairman, “God has been speaking to us through the voice of his servant.”

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In looking back over some old school news, we discovered some material that should, perhaps, have found its way into this column several months ago. It’s from the Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed Christian School, from the pen of the administrator, Mr. John Kalsbeek. You perhaps recall that the teachers of Doon, Edgerton, and Loveland met in convention last November. The remarks of Mr. Kalsbeek concerning that convention give some insight into the state of Protestant Reformed Education in our western schools — “small but . . .”

“A small group — only six teachers plus three ministers — quietly met together Friday and Saturday, November 6 and 7, in Edgerton, Minnesota.

“An insignificant gathering of no account in the eyes of the world. Had the world known or paid any attention it would have mocked and ridiculed. Scornfully they would have derided such a ridiculous gathering.

“However, it is not numbers that count, for our Lord says that where two or three are gathered in my name there will I be. God was present at this meeting. We met in accordance with His good pleasure. Small — yes — but significant in the eyes of Almighty God.

“The central issue through out the meetings dealt with covenant instruction. . . . Together, in the unity of one faith and one doctrine, we enjoyed the wonderful sensation of covenant fellowship.

“All returned to their work renewed in body and spirit, thankful that we could meet together as Protestant Reformed Teachers.”

From the Loveland “Ledger,” we notice that the students were not at all unhappy about that teachers’ convention, either. Miss Beverly Hoekstra, the principal, usually includes some contributions of the students in the “Ledger.” A seventh grader wrote, “We enjoyed the nice vacation we received when the teachers went to the teachers’ convention.” And then, as if as an afterthought, “We also hope that the teachers enjoyed it.”

Mitte nuntium

D.D.