

**The
Standard
Bearer**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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The Approaching End

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Decision of the Gereformeerde Kerken

Parochiaid Is Dead! Long Live The Christian School!

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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Meditation**The Approaching End**

Rev. M. Schipper

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer."

I Peter 4:7

A word of comfort is this Scripture intended to be to the addressees of this Epistle, that is, to the elect strangers who in the preceding context are exhorted to be armed for suffering.

Armed they must be with the same thought that controlled and motivated the Saviour as He stood in the midst of suffering; the thought, namely, that he

who suffers in the flesh hath ceased from sin. Because the Saviour was without sin, He became an object of revilement and reproach by the wicked world. Because the elect strangers through grace are in principle holy, they also must expect persecution from the world. The evidence of their holiness is seen in the fact that they no longer live as do the wicked, in all manner of sin

and corruption; but they live now according to the will of God. So radical was this change in their life and walk that they were wondered at by the wicked world, and then hated, despised, and persecuted. Not only does the apostle assure them that God will take their persecutors to task for their wickedness in His just judgment — which in itself should afford comfort to His persecuted church; but in our text he also assures them that because of the nearness of the end of all things, the end of their suffering is also very near.

But the end of all things is at hand!

To be sure, there would be no comfort for the elect strangers in this truth if they were setting their affection on these things. Then, indeed, there must be a note of sadness in it that all things come to an end. For, mark you, the text declares that all things come to an end! No reason is there to limit the all things. It refers to the present, visible world, which includes the heavens and the earth, and all that they contain. It refers to all that takes place in time, and in the ultimate sense it includes time itself as we know it. Everything has an end!

When the Lord said to Noah after the flood, “while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease,” He did not infer that all things would never come to an end. He only implied that all things would continue only as long as the earth remaineth. But also the earth, the visible, created, and now renewed world through the waters of the flood, would be destroyed after it had reached its end, and this time by fire.

Not haphazardly do all things come to an end; but they all come to an end that has been stipulated by the Lord. We must remember that the term “end” in the text does not only refer to a termination in the temporal sense; but it also, and chiefly, refers to end purpose. When the text, therefore, declares that the end of all things is at hand, it has in mind the end purpose that God has determined in His counsel for all things. That end purpose is the complete glorification of His church in the new heavens and new earth where righteousness shall dwell. It is His own everlasting glory as it shall be attained through Christ Jesus in His elect people whom He forms for His praise that is the end purpose of all things.

With a view to the realization of that glorious purpose all things created and now under the service of sin must serve. The things do not happen by chance to be what they are or do what they accomplish. They are all so governed by the determinate foreknowledge and counsel of God that they serve as scaffolding to build His house. These things include, of course, seedtime and harvest, the changing of the seasons, time as we know it. Included are all the things of creation, sun, moon, and stars; the ambling brook, the ocean tides, the morning mist; the singing bird, the roaring beast,

the movements of the sea monster; the lightning and thunder, rain and sunshine, tornado and storm. Included is the fall of the angels and of man, the long history of sin’s development. Not missing among the things are science and invention, atomic energy and moonships, books and learning, apostasies and church councils, the cross and antichrist, the apostles as well as the messengers of satan, prosperity and adversity, sickness and health, suffering and persecution, life and death. All these things, and many more too numerous to mention, have an end, — a fixed end. And toward that end they all run, yea, fly, and work. And all shall attain to that end at the same time, at the fixed and final moment. And that is the end that is fast approaching. It is very near.

But was not the apostle mistaken when he wrote some nineteen hundred years ago that the end of all things is at hand?

How could he have written this whereas we know that all these centuries have elapsed, and the end is not yet?

Was it so perhaps that he thought the end would come only in a few years because that end was the object of his fondest hope?

That the apostles had the thought in their mind and the hope in their hearts that the Lord would soon return, and bring an end to the world with all its things, especially an end to their suffering for Christ’s sake, we can freely admit. It is also undoubtedly true that they did not always understand completely the things whereof they wrote. It is also true that the Lord, when asked about the end of the world and all things, never told His servants the precise date of His return. All the precursory signs of the end He gave them, even leaving with them the impression that He would return quickly. But though they may have been mistaken in concluding that the end would come in a few years, we must never conclude that the Word of God which they by inspiration wrote could be mistaken. Our text is not the word of man, but the Word of God which cannot be in error.

How then shall we understand the nearness of the end?

Should we perhaps join the camp of the mockers, who, according to Peter’s second Epistle, ridiculed the idea of an imminent return of the Lord and the end of all things? Who asked: Where is the promise of His coming? and who argued that all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation?

God forbid!

But we shall have to lay hold on the Scriptures which clearly inform us that the Lord does not reckon time as we do; for with Him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. We shall have to take note that His Word clearly indicates that the present dispensation, which is also the last, is called the last hour. On the clock of God, so to speak, there are

registered several hours, all of which have ticked off with the exception of the last. And in that last hour, we and the world with all its things presently exist. With respect to the end of that last hour the Scriptures also give us many signs. Precursory signs we call them of the Lord's return, which must be revealed before the end will come. And with respect to these signs we may say all of them have already been revealed. O, it is true that we have not yet seen the revelation of the antichrist in all of his magnitude; but already when the apostle John warned us of his coming, he declared there were many antichrists. We have seen and heard of wars and rumors of wars. We have heard of earthquakes and great destructions. While we are writing these words, word has come to us of the awful devastating effects of a great tidal wave that wiped out thousands in Pakistan. We have seen the highest possible development of science and the wisdom of man. The Gospel has gone into every nation under heaven. In one word, we have seen the effects of the broken seals, the blowing trumpets, and are now seeing as it were of the poured out vials. We ask: is there anything more wonderful and more terrible that can happen that has not already occurred? It would seem that there is not much more to be done.

O, indeed, the end of all things is much closer to us than it was when the apostle first told us about it!

As we stand at the end of another year, we can say with the confidence of faith: but the end of all things is at hand!

As we suggested before, if all our hope is bound up in the things which have an end, then, indeed, this announcement of the apostle must needs cause us only sorrow and grief. For, make no mistake about it, all these things have their end. The scaffolding shall be pulled down and destroyed. Only the house of God's covenant in which He will tabernacle with His people, as it shall be realized in the new creation, shall remain.

But how comforting is this Word of God to the weary pilgrim, who all the day long is troubled on every side, who must fight the battle of faith, who is required to bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, who must hear the blasphemy of the wicked, who is not able to buy or sell because he belongs to Jesus.

And how urgent it is that he also heed the last part of the text: be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer!

Be ye therefore sober and watch!
Unto prayer!

Our attitude with respect to the end of all things will not be that of fear and fright. Nor will it be one of remorse and bitterness. But we will need to heed the exhortation of the text to assume the attitude of prayer.

This, of course, should not be difficult to understand. Surely, if the hope of the pilgrim is tied in with the end purpose of God with respect to all things, if his heart is set on dwelling forever in the house of God's covenant, if he believes with all his heart that he shall see his God face to face in the face of Christ Jesus his Lord, and if it is his only desire to be praising God unto all eternity with all the saints, then, O, surely then, his prayer will constantly be: Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly! Then surely as a member of Christ's body, and one of that great host that in Scripture is described as the bride of Christ, he will manifest the spirit of the bride which with great longing desires and prays for the coming of the great Groom.

Then, surely, the bride of Christ will be constantly thinking of her appearance at His coming, of her attitude of heart and mind that properly befits the moment of His appearance. And it follows that she will not be anxious about the things that have an end, but she will be heeding the exhortation of her Lord to cast all her care upon Him and believe that all other things will be added unto her.

And shall we be in the proper attitude of prayer, it follows that we must be sober and watch. To be sober means to be of a sound mind, to be in one's right mind, to be able to make a right assessment of things. The opposite of this is to be spiritually intoxicated. The drunken man is not able to see and act correctly, he cannot walk with balance, he is confused in all that he does. And to watch means to be calm and collected in spirit, to be temperate and circumspect, to be spiritually alert. One who is watching is earnestly looking for something.

How necessary both of these spiritual qualities are with relation to prayer! Without them we cannot pray as we ought, nor shall we be able to assume the proper attitude over against the things which come to an end.

As this year comes to its end, therefore, fellow pilgrim, be reminded that the end of all things is at hand. All that is of this weary night shall soon pass away. The dawn of eternity shall soon be ushered in with the appearance of the Bridegroom. Let us not like foolish virgins be found wanting, but be sober and watch, with the fervent prayer in our hearts and on our lips: Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly!

There are those who speak of a "less absolute antithesis." "Less absolute" is obviously not absolute at all, but relative. And "relative" and "antithesis" are contradictory terms. Those who use such terminology actually mean "synthesis."

Editorials

Editor's Notes

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

By the time this appears in print the first volume of *The Triple Knowledge* reprint should be off the presses and on its way to those who ordered copies in advance. We urge all those who do not have this thorough commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism and who have not placed advance orders to purchase this worthwhile volume — and also the two volumes yet to come.

* * *

Our apologies to Rev. H. Veldman, editor of "Contending for the Faith." The article which appears in this issue should have preceded the article appearing in the Dec. 1 issue. Through an editorial oversight the

sequence was spoiled. Sorry!

* * *

We call attention to the Feature article by Rev. D. Engelsma. By special request we are publishing these thoughts on a very relevant issue in two installments. Be sure to read them in this issue and the next!

* * *

In this issue Rev. R. Decker wields his pen for the department "The Strength of Youth," which he is sharing with Rev. Kortering during the current volume-year. Welcome!

Decision of the Gereformeerde Kerken

In the December 1 issue we wrote about the issues confronting the General Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands. The crucial session dealing with many protests about the so-called "new theology" has been held. A decision has been reached. At this writing we are not acquainted with reactions to this decision in the Netherlands. But, as we feared, the Synod attempted to straddle the issues, rather than to face them; and the result was that the Synod reached a decision which can only be bad, very bad, for the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. Whether the "concerned" (*verontrusten*) in the Netherlands will be somewhat appeased by this decision, or whether they will detect that it actually represents a victory for the "new theology" and its adherents — this remains to be seen.

Because of its importance and interest, we will quote the decision as it was reported in *Calvinist Contact* (Nov. 26, 1970). Our translation is as follows:

"The general synod of Sneek in its session of Nov. 4, 1970 has expressed and decided the following with respect to the protests received which give evidence of growing concern about the development of Reformed church life in general and (protest) against a number of more specific matters in particular:

"A. *With regard to the so-called concern in general.*

"Synod wishes to express, in the first place, that in everything which brings about unrest, uncertainty, and concern in the church in our days not fear, but faith

must be our guiding star. For our mutual relationships this means that as long as we know ourselves to be united in the one faith and the one hope, we will also continue to embrace one another in love, and under no condition may withdraw ourselves from our common responsibility over against God and the world, but no less over against one another. That therein sometimes mutual tensions and — sometimes serious — differences of opinion come to light must in itself not surprise us too much, when we take note of all the questions by which the churches in general and their members in particular find themselves confronted in every respect, and when we are mindful that all of us know only in part and prophesy in part. This obligates all of us to propriety and moderation of judgment over against one another, also when we think we must differ in view from one another.

"From this point of view synod is of the opinion that concerning various subjects which are under discussion among us a more balanced and differentiated, and with a view to persons frequently also a more fair judgment is in place than that which is manifested in many missives to synod and in various publications. For her part, the synod will gladly help to further the moulding of such a judgment (see sub B.).

"While synod gives this priority, she does not wish, on the other hand, to hide the fact that she notes with anxiety the increasing influence of living and thinking

which is worldly and alienated from Scripture, and which threatens the faith of the church, her conduct toward those outside, theology, and the preaching. Especially is she apprehensive of this influence of the efforts to relate the meaning of the person of Christ, of the kingdom proclaimed by Him, and of his resurrection from the dead to the modern consciousness in such a manner that that which the apostle Paul calls the offense of the cross is removed therefrom.

"Synod is therefore of the conviction that the churches also in these times must seek their strength and unity above all in the preaching of the unabridged gospel of Jesus Christ and in being consciously bound to the confession of the Christ of the Scriptures, of justification by faith only, of election and the atonement, of the infinite worth of the Lord's sacrifice for the life of the world as this (confession) comes to expression so powerfully and unambiguously in the Reformation creeds.

"While synod deeply realizes that neither she herself nor any ecclesiastical gathering, but only the Word and the Spirit of Christ Himself can lay hold upon the hearts of men, she wishes at the same time to exhort the churches to see to it that in dependence upon and in the Spirit of their Lord, both for their own unity and for their calling in the world, they build upon no other foundation than upon that of the apostles and prophets as it is delivered to us in the Scriptures.

"B. *With regard to the protests filed with synod* with respect to the honoring of the authority of Holy Scripture, the interpretation of the first chapters of the book of Genesis, so-called horizontalism and the Christian expectation of the future, the being bound to the creeds, the nature of the preaching, and others,

"1. seeing that in the requests for the retraction of the decision the synod of Amsterdam 1967/68 (Acts, art. 209) by which the binding character of the declaration of the synod of Assen 1926 concerning the paradise-account was removed, no arguments are adduced which were unknown or not fully weighed at that time, not to accede to these requests;

"2. in harmony with the content of the report filed by the committee to send to all the churches a pastoral letter in which

"a. the intention of the decisions of Amsterdam 1967/68 concerning the setting aside of the doctrinal decisions of Assen 1926 is more precisely set forth;

"b. the nature of the authority of Holy Scripture as standard for doctrine and life is more precisely elucidated in connection with that which is under discussion in the churches at present and which arouses unrest,

in this sense, that, on the one hand, the task of the church to make the gospel understandable for modern man is fully

honored, and, on the other hand, the danger is guarded against that it either can or can not be believed as revelation and either does or does not require our obedience.

"c. with respect to the so-called horizontalism, the content of the Christian expectation of the future as well for this life as for the future life is maintained over against one-sided conceptions,

in this sense, that, on the one hand, the full emphasis is laid upon our calling, (living) out of the promise that Jesus Christ makes all things new, believingly, to pursue in this world life- and world-renewal, and, on the other hand, the idea is repudiated as though the kingdom of God is only to be expected as the result of human activities during this present dispensation;

"d. clear position is taken both against a formalistic handling of the confession and against tendencies which relativize the confession in such a way that the door is opened for doctrinal liberty (*leervrijheid*)."

"The general synod of Sneek decided in its session of November 5, 1970 with respect to the protests against Dr. H. M. Kuitert regarding his views of Genesis 1-3 and Romans 5 to express:

"1. that the protests filed have a fragmentary character and as such have little evidential force (conclusive force, cogency, *bewijskracht*);

"2. that the synod nevertheless must affirm that the denial by Dr. Kuitert of the historicity of the fall as man's turning away from his God at the beginning of human history is not in harmony with that which the synod of Amsterdam 1967/68 has indicated in its declaration sub 3 (Acts, art. 209): 'that meanwhile that which is expressed in the confession of the church (Lord's Day 3 and 4 of the Heidelberg Catechism; Art. 14 and 15 of the Netherland Confession of Faith) about the origin of sin and the results of the fall clearly sets forth the fundamental meaning which Scripture in the Old and New Testament (among other passages, in Romans 5) ascribes to this history, and therefore also as being of essential importance for the preaching of the gospel by the church must be maintained as authoritative;'

"3. that meanwhile it has appeared that Dr. Kuitert also at synod does not stand alone in his opinions;

"4. that in this situation, however unsatisfying this may be with respect to the mutual unity, it may nevertheless also be asserted with joy that all the members of the synod hold fast to the confession that God created man good and for the fellowship of love with Himself, but that man in wilful disobedience refused and refuses to live in this fellowship, that all of

humanity is alienated from God, is fallen into the slavery of sin, and can only be saved by God's gracious intervention;

"5. that she (synod) therefore judges that the unity of the ecclesiastical confession must not be considered to be at issue in such a manner that at present more specific decisions ought to be taken concerning this;

"6. that she appoints a committee to carry on the discussion (consultation) in this situation, in an earnest seeking after mutual unity, also in those matters in which clear difference of opinion has been manifested."

Commentary on the above decision is hardly necessary.

It is evident that this decision fulfills our worst fears, as expressed in our earlier editorial on this subject. The decision is one of those miserable, compromising, "although . . . nevertheless" decisions which aims at preserving the outward unity and peace of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* by reproving everyone to some degree, by leaving the impression of maintaining the confessions and frowning upon views which depart therefrom, which apparently attempts to satisfy everyone somewhat, but which can actually satisfy no one, whether liberal or conservative.

It would seem to us that Dr. Kuitert can hardly be satisfied with a decision of this kind. For though he goes scot free as far as any discipline is concerned, he is nevertheless ticked on the fingers.

And it would certainly seem as though the protes-

tants cannot be satisfied with this decision: for though they are justified to an extent, their protests are nevertheless not maintained.

But the simple fact is that when all is said and done, the synod has decided nothing which is ecclesiastically conclusive. The decision is obviously an attempted compromise. As such, it is full of ecclesiastical contradictions, the chief of which is: we recognize that there is heresy among us and that there are heretics present at this synod (i.e., those who, according to our own decision of 1967/68 propagate teachings contrary to the confessions), but we refuse to do anything about it.

The synod presents the sad picture of an ecclesiastical body which stands helpless to express anything at all with finality, though confronted by a dreadfully serious situation.

And yet by the very fact that it takes no clear-cut decision and refuses to exercise or to advise doctrinal discipline the synod has nevertheless left the door open for the very doctrinal liberty against which it purports to warn in this decision.

The decision is nauseating.

It is a decision worthy of Laodicea, the church nauseating to the Lord Who is in the midst of the candlesticks.

My only hope is that there are still those in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* who will pay attention to the knocking Lord, Who calls His church to repentance and reformation!

Parochiaid Is Dead! Long Live The Christian School!

In the November election in the State of Michigan Proposal C, the so-called antiparochiaid amendment to the state constitution, was approved by an overwhelming margin.

This means that in Michigan, as of December 18, state aid to non-public schools is constitutionally prohibited.

In other words, parochiaid is dead! Though the legislature had passed a bill granting such aid, and though this had been hailed as a step in the right direction by many public officials as well as by officials of various non-public schools, including those of the National Union of Christian Schools and its constituent schools, and by many churchmen, — nevertheless the electorate of the state clearly and decisively expressed disapproval, with the result that when this amendment becomes effective, all state financial aid must cease. Parochiaid is dead!

Perhaps it is not quite buried as yet.

Apparently the issue of private schools' exemption from property taxes is no more an issue. In fact, it now appears that this never was a real issue, but was used as a scare tactic to induct people to vote against the proposal. At least, there is no longer any mention of this matter by the media.

But there is considerable discussion and question among public and non-public school officials about some of the so-called fringe benefits which may also be prohibited by the new amendment to the constitution. On the one hand, apparently some Christian school men and Roman Catholic school men have still not learned their lesson, but are desirous to salvage what they can out of the lost cause. They want to retain whatever "benefits" they had in the past, such as remedial education programs, driver education programs, shared time courses, etc. On the other hand, some

public school officials are also striving to save some of these programs for the non-public schools. It seems that there are two reasons for this. For one thing, there seems to be a possibility that public schools might lose some federal aid on the ground of discrimination if private schools are denied the right to participate in some of these fringe programs. For another thing, especially in a city like Grand Rapids, where there is a rather large private school constituency, public school officials would like to curry favor with private school supporters, so that the latter will help to pass future proposals for more public school tax millage.

But while parochiaid may not be completely buried, it is indeed dead in Michigan. And it is very doubtful whether, for some time to come, in the light of the popular vote, a majority of legislators can be induced to attempt a resurrection.

Parochiaid is dead!

Long live the Christian school!

The reader will understand, I am sure, that we do not share the attitude of the enemies of Christian education with respect to parochiaid. There is no doubt about it that there were and are such enemies, who fondly hoped that the death of parochiaid would also mean the death of all non-public schools, including our Christian schools. Some have openly expressed this hope. And they had reasons to think that this hope might be realized. For did not some Christian school men — shame on them! — base their case in favor of parochiaid on the argument that their schools *needed* such aid, that they could not remain open without such government funds?

But this animosity toward Christian schools, of course, we do not share.

Nevertheless, we can only see the death of parochiaid — whatever may have been the motives and the reasons of the world's proponents of "death to parochiaid" — we can only see this death as a real benefit to the genuinely Christian school. i.e., to the parental school devoted to covenantal education, education in the fear of Jehovah which is the beginning of knowledge. We see this as a benefit, in the first place, because we can only see parochiaid as principally wrong, as we have repeatedly argued in the past. We see it as a benefit, in the second place, because we can only see parochiaid as a grave threat to the whole idea and existence of Christian education: once parochiaid would become a reality, it would eventually mean the death of Christian education in any real sense. We see it as a benefit, in the third place, because it removes a grave temptation from our path. There is no question about it, from a financial point of view, that there is something attractive to many parents about the idea of getting back a share of those painfully paid tax dollars and of being relieved of some of the expenses of the education of our children. And when we get dollar signs in our eyes, it can become a severe temptation to forget

about principles. So I am happy that this temptation is removed — for myself and for others. We see it as a benefit, in the fourth place, because it may serve to purge and to strengthen the Christian school movement. For if it be true that some Christian schools were so little a matter of real principle that they could not continue without state aid, this will now certainly become evident: they will die. And the Christian school movement is better off without that kind of schools and school supporters. The men of principle will now have to stand up and be counted!

And so we say: long live the Christian school! That is, long live those schools whose parents are thoroughly devoted to the principle that it is a parental calling and privilege to train their children in the way of God's covenant, in the fear of the Lord, and to prepare their covenant children to live their entire life out of the principle of regeneration, antithetically, to the glory of our God!

Are there any lessons to be learned from this history?

We think there are.

In the first place, we ought to learn the lesson that the real line between Christian and public education is not a private/public line, but a light/darkness line. In all the propaganda in favor of parochiaid there have been those who were singing a siren-song of friendship and cooperation between Christian and public education forces. Now it has become plain that there is no real friendship for our Christian schools on the part of the world. This was more than a mere pocket-book issue, remember. It is frequently true that it takes a pocket-book issue, a money issue, to bring principles to light. But in the deepest sense, this was a principal issue. And the electorate demonstrated that their sympathies were by no means with the Christian school. If we have not learned this heretofore, or if we have forgotten it, let us learn it now. And let us learn to expect that the time will come when the world will not only refuse financial help to the Christian school, but will flatly forbid us to have our schools. Be prepared! Be not deceived!

In the second place, if we have any Christian school principles in us, let us learn anew the lesson which Israel of old so frequently was taught in the hard school of experience and which is aptly expressed in the prophecy of Isaiah: "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion." (Isa. 30:1-3) Or again: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they

are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!" (Isa. 31:1) "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest

shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." (Isa. 30:15) May that dreadful word never have to be added of us: "...and ye would not!"

All Around Us

Calvin Seminary and the New Hermeneutic

Prof. H. Hanko

There are apparently rumors abroad that Calvin College and especially Calvin Theological Seminary has adopted "The New Hermeneutic." That is, there are those in the Christian Reformed Church particularly who believe that Calvin Seminary has adopted principles of Biblical interpretation which deny the truth of the infallible inspiration of Scripture. In a recent article in *The Banner*, John Stek, associate professor of Old Testament in Calvin Seminary, takes note of this. He writes:

It has come to my ears that there are rumors abroad that "the New Hermeneutic" is accepted at Calvin Theological Seminary. That rumors should be around in these confusing and anxious times is, I suppose, not surprising, however regrettable. And the mere presence of rumors could hardly be enough to evoke a public comment, much less a comment of this length. But it appears that the rumors have been given credence by persons in responsible positions in the churches so that here and there consistories are beginning to wonder if they may continue to channel financial support to the seminary, or recommend the Seminary to young men wishing to prepare for the ministry.

These are serious suspicions, to be sure, which have risen in the minds of various parts of the constituency of the Christian Reformed Church. And it is little wonder that Prof. Stek is interested in allaying these suspicions and putting these rumors to rest once and for all. The article from which the above quote is taken is intended to do that.

In order to accomplish this, Prof. Stek reviews an article which originally appeared in *The Expository Times* and in which the author adopts this new hermeneutic. It is a relatively liberal presentation of this new hermeneutic, and Prof. Stek finds much in it with which he disagrees. He concludes this review with the categorical statement:

It is transparently clear that no one committed to the faith confessed in the historic Reformed creeds can work theologically out of the "New Hermeneutic".

In applying this to the situation in Calvin Seminary, he writes:

But it ought to be evident . . . that these rumors, so damaging in their effect, if they are not malicious, can only arise from confusion as to what "the New Hermeneutic" is, or from an irrational fear in the face of the many dangers, both real and imagined, which besiege the Reformed faith in our day.

The times call for sobriety, not mindless anxiety; for brotherly confidence and concern, not harbored suspicion and distrust; for open and orderly inquiry, not irresponsible reception of rumors and wild accusations; for truth spoken in love, not falsehoods accepted with credulity.

It would be for me personally a joy if we could accept the word of Prof. Stek at face value and believe with all our heart that this assertion of his is true. How wonderful it would be if there were no evidence of this "New Hermeneutic" in Calvin Seminary; but that rather the teaching there was based upon a Hermeneutics which had as its fundamental principle the organic and infallible inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

And, indeed, we would be ready to accept Prof. Stek's word for it if there was no evidence which pointed to an opposite conclusion. And this is, as a matter of fact, the case. Prof. Stek, and other college and Seminary professors, have written on this question in other places. And their other writings seem to contradict what Prof. Stek says here. It is true that the most liberal views of the New Hermeneutic are probably not adopted by those who teach in the Seminary — liberal views of Hermeneutics which produce a social gospel and liberal theology. But the New Hermeneutic takes on many different forms, not principally different from the kind of Hermeneutic so expressly repudiated by Prof. Stek in his article in *The Banner*. One of these hermeneutical ideas is the so-called *Sitz im Leben* theory of Scripture. What this theory teaches, in brief, is that the writers of Scripture were influenced by the "situation in life" in which they found themselves and that these influences are also to be found in God's Word. For example, it was commonly believed by those who wrote the Scriptures that the earth was flat. This, we now know, was a misconception; but their

incorrect understanding of the spherical shape of our planet was a misunderstanding which found its way also into their Scriptural writings. In other words, the Holy Spirit, Who inspired Scripture, did not preserve the men whom He used to record God's revelation in written form from these errors. Hence the Scriptures are not, in this sense, infallible.

Now it is quite obvious that there is a good sense in which this whole idea of *Sitz im Leben* can be applied to Scripture. Surely the books of the Bible are written in such a way that they are addressed to particular circumstances which existed in the Church in the days in which Scripture was inspired. For example, Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians to show the evil teachings of those who wanted to cling to the works of the law as a means of salvation. And the men who taught these views were hard at work in the Churches to which Paul wrote, most probably the churches Paul established in Asia Minor on his first missionary journey, to undermine the work of the apostle and to lead these churches away from the truth as it was in Christ. Furthermore, to give one more example, the parables which Jesus taught in the days of His earthly ministry were parables taken from the life of Israel as Israel lived that life while the Lord was on earth. No one would deny that these things are true.

But this is quite different from saying that the erroneous views of people who lived during the years in which Scripture was written were incorporated into the Scriptures. This is a denial of the *infallible* inspiration of Scripture.

Yet it seems as if this is precisely what Prof. Stek wants – in spite of what he writes in his *Banner* article. In the *Calvin Theological Journal*, Vol. I, No. 2, Prof. Stek writes a review of two books which support the doctrine of creation in six days of twenty-four hours. These two books are "Creation Revealed: A Study of Genesis Chapter 1 in the Light of Modern Science" by F. A. Filby and "Studies in the Bible and Science or Christ and Creation" by H. M. Morris. Prof. Stek, in this review, expressly rejects the position these men take with respect to creation. And he does so by means of a certain *Sitz im Leben* hermeneutical principle. He writes:

Undoubtedly Genesis 1 was written, not for the few, but for the many and, consequently for the "common man". But it was written for the "common man" of Israel at a given time in Israel's history. Its mode of speaking is, therefore, very much historically conditioned, and *far more than the Hebrew language stands between the modern reader and Genesis 1*. Three thousand years of human history, including many cultural revolutions of which the last is but the most radical, intervene.

Only by a painstaking recovery of the modes of thought of ancient Israel to whom these words were first addressed can we finally resolve the question of the precise mode of speaking present in Genesis 1.

Now it is plain that, while Prof. Stek is not prepared to say whether Genesis 1 is saga, myth, legend, poetry or whatever, he refuses to adopt a literal interpretation of this passage and refuses to accept the fact that this passage records actual historical material and gives to the Church a description of how God, in six days of 24 hours, created by the Word of His power the heavens and the earth. And he refuses to accept this because it does not take sufficiently into account the fact that "the mode of speaking" in Genesis 1 is "historically conditioned." And it fails to reckon with the fact that "many cultural revolutions of which the last is but the most radical" have intervened. This can only mean that Moses, who was used by God to write this for the Scriptures, permitted error of one sort or another to be incorporated into his narrative – error to which he himself was prone because of the times in which he lived. The Holy Spirit failed to keep error from his writing.

Prof. B. Van Elderen, who also is professor in Calvin Seminary, does the same. In an essay in the book *Jesus of Nazareth: Saviour and Lord*, edited by Carl F. H. Henry, Van Elderen has an article on this whole matter of *Sitz im Leben*. (cf. pp. 113ff.) He distinguishes between the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus in the gospel narratives and the *Sitz im Leben* of the authors of the gospel narratives. Concerning the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus, he writes that this is almost impossible to recover although a tentative formulation may be of aid in Scriptural interpretation.

Concerning the *Sitz im Leben* of the gospel authors, Van Elderen explains the differences between the four gospels as due to this. He writes:

Can the Gospels still be described as inspired writings? Most assuredly so. These were written under and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Spirit of Jesus through the Evangelists is interpreting the ministry and sayings of Jesus to meet the peculiar needs that had arisen in the Church some thirty years after the resurrection. Hence, these are authoritative and trustworthy accounts and interpretations. In some cases it will be impossible to recover the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, since at times these have been adapted and interpreted to meet the needs of the *Sitz im Leben des Verfassers*. However, it is more honest and respectful to Scripture to recognize this than to engage in dubious harmonizations which the genre of New Testament literature scarcely allows.

Although the language is careful, here already Dr. Van Elderen seems to suggest that this *Sitz im Leben* allows for mistakes of one sort or another. No real harmony of the gospels is possible. And this is due to the *Sitz im Leben* of the authors. This can only mean that somewhere, somehow there are errors.

This suspicion is strengthened by the fact that in a personal "confession" of his views concerning inspiration, Van Elderen omits any reference to infallible

inspiration. He writes:

I consider the Bible to be the Word of God. It is in this book that I have been confronted with a call to repentance in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit I have heard the voice of God speaking to me in the Bible. Since this book has the unique role of revealing the way of redemption in Jesus Christ, it, as the Word of God, is authoritative, trustworthy, reliable — the product of the inspiring guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because of this experience of redemption revealed in this book, I accept it in faith as the Word of God (Note here that Van Elderen makes no mention of the fact that our Belgic Confession speaks of our receiving Scripture as authoritative because they carry the evidence of this in themselves and because the Spirit witnesseth of this in our hearts. Cf. Art. V. H.H.) and recommend, defend and proclaim it as such.

Why does Van Elderen leave out of this “confession” any mention of infallible inspiration — especially

because he is speaking of the authority of Scripture? It is perfectly obvious that the Scriptures cannot be accepted as authoritative because of one’s subjective experience of redemption. This is subjectivism. But when one rests the authority of Scripture upon Scripture itself, as all the Reformers did, then one must rest this authority upon an infallible book. This Van Elderen refuses to do. And apparently he refuses to do this because he accepts *Sitz im Leben* as a hermeneutical principle.

Is it any wonder then that there are suspicions in the Church? After all, the differences between these views and the liberal, Scripture-destroying views of Bultman are only differences of degree. Basically it seems as if Stek and Van Elderen have accepted Bultman’s position.

We would be very interested in any article in which Prof. Stek would demonstrate how he avoids the “New Hermeneutic” in his article quoted above.

In His Fear

A White Christmas

Rev. John A. Heys

For many in these northern climes it just does not seem like Christmas unless there is a cover of white snow upon the ground.

Our flesh so quickly associates a snow cover with the celebration of Christmas, and then it gives the pre-eminence to the incidental and loses the essential. The white snow on the ground becomes in our thinking essential as a part of Christmas. Its absence detracts from the significance of the holiday for us, even though it has absolutely nothing to do with the true meaning of Christmas.

Those who live in warmer climes are not so distracted from the truth, not because they are more spiritual and understand the meaning of Christmas better than we, but because they have not experienced the presence of snow on the ground at Christmas time. These quite quickly would think that snow on the ground in their area would distract from Christmas and make it seem as though it were not time for the holiday at all.

Even then in these areas where snow is so common in December, the holiday is by no means a white Christmas in many respects. In fact it is a most colorful, if not indeed the most colorful of all the holidays. Christmas trees are strung with colored lights here and also in the South. Buildings have their outlines set off with colored lights that shine brilliantly in the cold air, and blink on and off in patterns of color and design.

The use of red and green is everywhere to be seen for decorative purposes. It is called the season to be gay. Colorful greetings cards are mailed in staggering numbers and volume. Tinsel and the holly and the ivy are used in abundance to give a little more color to the holiday.

One almost feels ashamed to speak of that drab picture there on the Judean hillside with colorless sheep and even less colorful shepherds, to say nothing of that drab, dull, foul, ill-smelling, wholly undecorated grotto where among donkeys and camels the Christ-Child made His appearance in our world. There were no beautiful, colorful wrappings and ribbons containing a gift for Him. All was commonplace and dull. All lacked the lustre that we now try to bring into the picture, not in His fear but in the satisfaction of the flesh.

God’s color was there. There was the bright light of the angel of the Lord, and a few moments later that of an host of these pure, white creatures from heaven. There was the colorful message, that at the same time shown with white brilliancy, “Fear not: for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” In the darkness of our night of sin the light shone so brightly in those words. For us, who are so black with sin, this

was a truth of brilliant whiteness which gives such wonderful significance to Christmas unto us. And the shepherds, who were white with fright, were suddenly engulfed with another heavenly message of glory to God in the highest, and they saw a white flag of peace on earth to the men of God's good pleasure waved before their eyes.

We said a "message," for, although we read in the writings of men of the "song" which the angels sang, we are not told in Scripture that it was a song. They were praising God and "saying" those words which we designate as a song. What music did they sing? O, it was indeed in a major key and not in a minor key, if they sang. It was a most joyous, if not the most joyous melody, with the richest harmony, ever heard on this earth, if their words were set to music by the angels that night. It was not recorded. Men did not remember the melody, if indeed they heard a song. But then it would have been music that cannot be duplicated here below, and music which we shall hear and make only when we are in heaven with this exalted Christ and with those angels.

But the message was one of peace. The white flag which the angels waved before these shepherds, and through them before our eyes, was not a flag of surrender. It was the white flag of victory. Do we not read in Revelation 6 of the *white* horse, and that He that sat on it went forth conquering and to conquer? White stands there for victory. And do we not again read in Revelation 19 that He Who sat on this white horse is called "Faithful and true, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war?" A verse later we read that His name is "The Word of God." In that light also we must read Revelation 2:17, where we are told that "to him that overcometh" this Babe of Bethlehem, Who now is the Lord of Lords and King of kings, will give "to eat of the hidden manna" and "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." This does not mean that we receive a name of those who surrender. It means that we receive the name of victor, through Him Who rides this white horse that symbolizes victory, and that we shall sit and reign with Him because He goes forth conquering and to conquer.

Christmas speaks of victory for the Church. It tells us that though our sins be as scarlet we shall be made to be whiter than snow. Christmas declares that He Who is pure and holy, Whose record before God is white and clean, has come to make ours white and clean as well. Ours is a white Christmas because it speaks of this purity, this victory over all sin and evil which is realized for us by the Son of God Who came in our flesh to purge us with hyssop and to make us whiter than snow. Psalm 51:7.

And yet with all the color and brilliancy of our decorations and ornaments, wherewith we "try" to celebrate Christmas, we cover up this Word of God so

completely that it is lost sight of, and is covered up without even being missed! Shame on us! Imagine! We cast so much of our light — which is darkness — upon the scene and upon our Christmas celebration that our light actually hides, covers up, blots out the thought and joy of that victory in Christ. Our flesh turns us from the Christ to that which the flesh can enjoy at this season of the year. Our colors and our lights have nothing for the soul that is troubled with sin. They have nothing to say to the soul that is seeking for salvation. They have that which the world — that cares not one snap of its fingers for salvation or victory over sin, or to be as white as snow in God's sight — can enjoy with us. They provide nothing that needs a re-birth to appreciate. Except a man be born again, he cannot see that white flag of victory which Christmas waves before us. He can, however, see our colorful decorations and that which takes on such significance for our flesh at Christmas. And the reborn can and do see in all that filth and shame of Bethlehem's grotto and manger beauty, victory and a colorful life of glory before God's face.

Of course, all this color, this earthly beauty of color, is not sinful in itself. But when these are essential for our Christmas celebration and this IS our Christmas celebration, we have lost that joy of that victory; and our Christmas has become a bleak, drab, dark and forboding day! Its true joy and color, its real happiness and blessedness are covered up and lost. God grant us a white Christmas that fills our hearts with the joy of that new name and white stone of being more than conquerors in Him that loved us even unto death.

The same loss of that joy of the victory in Christ we experience with all of our gift giving. Let it be clearly understood that our gift giving is not a reflection of His gift giving to us. He gave us what we need and could not possibly obtain by our own works. He gave everlasting gifts whose value does not fade the day after its reception. Nor do we ever outgrow or wear out that which He gives. And He gave not to receive something else from us.

If we want to simulate His works let us give to those who cannot give back again to us. Let us prepare a feast for those who go hungry the other days of the year, or have only a few crumbs and the bare necessities of life. Let us strive to make others happy without any thought of happiness coming to us except that of knowing that we are pleasing in God's sight.

This Babe of Bethlehem told us that the poor we always have with us. And this will be the case unto the very end. If we really want to simulate His deeds and walk after His pattern, we can find these poor, even though we live in a land of such affluence and prosperity. And you may be sure that in the future they will be here, next to you and me, in abundance. There are other horses that ride as well as that white horse. There is the black horse of famine, social inequality, of

hunger and want. The red horse of war also brings sufferings and robs men of their homes, incomes, food and convenience. These are running today, running throughout the world and are providing us with abundant opportunities to give without expectation of a return gift for our flesh. And we do not need to wait for a day in December in order to wrap up a gift and deliver it. So often we pass this Babe of Bethlehem by in His prison, on His sick bed, in His nakedness and in His hunger. We may, then, be those who some day will ask Him, "When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee not in? or naked, and clothed Thee not? When saw we Thee in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, and came not unto Thee?" How terrible it will be, then, to hear Him say, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

What a tremendous amount of money is spent every year on Christmas presents, and then spent upon ourselves, our families, our friends! How quickly our flesh would complain, if we were asked to give the same amount that others might hear that message of the white Christmas of victory in Christ Jesus over the

blackness of sin and death! How much it would spoil our Christmas not to get a single present from anyone in our family or among our relatives and friends because we all contributed the amount we otherwise spend for these gifts for the spread of the gospel to the four corners of the earth, and to feed those, and to clothe those who are in need. Would the suggestion strike a joyous response that we either start a Christmas Club account in the bank of our choice to have a sum on hand when next Christmas has arrived to use for such purposes, or to begin setting aside — boys and girls as well — our nickles and dimes, and dollars for those that have need? Or would Christmas take on a new and richer meaning for us than this commercialized day of the flesh?

It IS more blessed to give than to receive. But then it must be giving to those who have *need*, and must not be adding riches and possessions to those who already are weary of their many gifts.

May God grant you a white Christmas of victory in Christ. And may He take from you the scarlet color of your sins.

Contending for the Faith

The Doctrine of Atonement

SECOND PERIOD — 254-730 A.D.

Rev. H. Veldman

Concluding our discussion of the history of the doctrine of the atonement in the second period, 254-730 A.D., we wish to quote a certain letter which was written to an unknown heathen, Diognetus. The late Dr. Bavinck, in our quotation which we quoted from him in a previous article, also refers to this letter. This passage which we promised to quote appears, according to Philip Schaff, in an epistle by an anonymous author to this Diognetus. This epistle has sometimes been ascribed to Justin, but is probably of much earlier date. In this epistle is a beautiful and forcible passage on the mystery of redemption, and it shows that the root of the matter was apprehended by faith long before a logical analysis was attempted. This need not surprise us. The church of the living God certainly apprehended the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by a true and living faith, although it was not able to give a full and complete account of the atonement of Calvary in all its rich and wonderful significance. This would come later when the enemies of the truth would also attack this fundamental teaching and doctrine of the Word of God. This particular passage, now, reads as follows:

When our wickedness had reached its height, and it had been clearly shown that its reward — punishment and death — was impending over us . . . God Himself took on Him the burden of our iniquities. He gave His own Son as a ransom for us, the holy One for transgressors, the blameless One for the wicked, the righteous One for the unrighteous, the incorruptible One for the corruptible, the immortal One for them that are mortal. For what other thing was capable of covering our sins than His righteousness? By what other one was it possible that we, the wicked and ungodly, could be justified, than by the only Son of God? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O benefits surpassing all expectation! That the wickedness of many should be hid in a single righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors!

This is certainly a beautiful statement. In it we read that the Lord took upon Himself the burden of our iniquities, that He gave His own Son as a ransom for us, the holy One for transgressors, and that we, the wicked and ungodly, could never be justified except by the only Son of God.

In this period, according to the late Rev. H. Hoeksema in his notes on the History of Dogma, we are no longer concerned with the Eastern Church as far as the history of dogma is concerned. In these notes Rev. Hoeksema mentions John Damascenus, a theologian in the East, who closes the second period. According to Hagenbach, the mythical notion of the atonement, developed in the preceding or second period, setting forth a legal transaction with the devil, and the deception practised upon him on the part of God and Christ, was also adopted by John Damascenus. This theologian in the east, to whom must be attributed the honor of having made an attempt to produce a completely systematic work, defended the general will of God unto salvation. However, after 730 A.D. the history of dogma finds little of importance and interest in the Eastern Church. Hence, we must confine our attention from now on to the church of the West, the so-called Latin Church.

This third period is known as the "Age of Scholasticism." Basing our remarks upon the notes of Rev. Hoeksema, we note that it is characteristic of this third period that the church and the theologians of this time labored with the materials they inherited from the past. Up to this time the church had developed several doctrines, such as: the doctrine of the Trinity, the relation of the Son to the Father, of the Holy Spirit, of the Godhead of Christ, etc. In this third period the church worked with these materials, and the leading men of the church, the scholars and dogmaticians, aimed especially at two things: 1) They sought to systematize these separate dogmas into one whole, to build one structure of the materials at hand. It was indeed the age of systematizing. 2) They aimed at demonstrating the truth of these doctrines by rational proof. Their work, therefore, was not pre-eminently exegetical, but rather dogmatical and philosophical.

In his notes, Rev. Hoeksema gives the following general estimate of the work of the Schoolmen during this third period:

Scholasticism undoubtedly has its points of commendation. It was no doubt a period of brilliant intellectual activity, that produced a shining light, both from a philosophical and theological viewpoint. Besides, in distinction from a former period, the Age of Scholasticism is characterized by a serious attempt at systematic work. This really has been wanting heretofore. Formerly materials had been gathered, and separate truths and dogmas had been developed. But hardly an attempt had been made to build them into a systematic structure. This was different with the schoolmen. They collected the material that had been found in a former period, and their logical mind as well as the fact that they followed Aristotle caused them to seek a systematic whole in the scattered parts. Then also it may be mentioned that they developed several distinctions in dogmatic truths and lines of reasoning that are of an abiding value. We can

refer, for instance, to Anselm's "Cur Deus Homo." On the other hand, it cannot be denied that there are several elements in Scholasticism that are to be condemned. The Schoolmen were undoubtedly overzealous to demonstrate philosophically and rationally the rational nature of Christian truth, the harmony between faith and reason, — a zeal that led them frequently to ignore the limitation of reason and to forget the absolute necessity of revelation. Besides, Scholasticism proceeded on the assumption and took implicitly for granted that the faith of the church was the absolute truth, and set itself the task of demonstrating the truth of ecclesiastical dogma and of the *sententiae patrum* (the opinions of the fathers), rather than testing those dogmas by the criterion of Holy Writ (this is certainly true in the Roman Catholic Church; in that church one must believe what the church believes and how the church interprets the Word of God — H.V.). In close connection with this last remark, we may add that exegesis did not occupy an important place in the work of the Schoolmen. They worked with the materials at hand, offered them by the church and the fathers, and to it they applied all the efforts of reason. Then, too, it may be said that the Scholastics' love of intellectual exercise and discipline and their emphasis on logical distinction often led the Schoolmen to busy themselves with fruitless questions, rather than with the riches of the truth in Christ. Such questions, for instance, as how many angels could dance on the point of a needle, or whether God could create two mountains without a valley in between, probably had their disciplinary values, but no more. Finally, it may be said that to an extent Scholasticism construed a false synthesis between Hellenistic philosophy and the truth of Scripture. And it is by no means impossible to show that the synthetic theory of a *gratia communis* has its origin in this period.

Although in general it may be said of the Scholastic Period, and, in fact, of the entire period from 750 to the Reformation, that there was little or no progress in doctrine, we may note that the following doctrines were established: 1) The supremacy of the pope was strongly emphasized in this period. 2) The number of the sacraments was finally fixed at seven. These sacraments are the following: baptism, confirmation, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, matrimony, and the doctrine of transubstantiation in connection with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

When the doctrine of atonement is discussed as developed during this third period, the name of Anselm is prominent. Writing about Anselm, Philip Schaff has the following in his History of the Christian Church, Vol. V, 598 f.f.:

Anselm of Canterbury, 1033-1109, the first of the great Schoolmen, was one of the ablest and purest men of the mediaeval Church. He touched the history of his age at many points. He was an enthusiastic advocate of monasticism. He was archbishop of Canterbury and fought the battle of the Hildebran-

dian hierarchy against the State in England. His Christian meditations give him a high rank in its annals of piety. His profound speculation marks one of the leading epochs in the history of theology and won for him a place among the doctors of the Church. While Bernard was greatest as a monk, Anselm was greatest as a theologian. He was the most original thinker the Church had seen since the days of Augustine.

Anselm was born at Aosta, in Piedmont, at the foot of the great St. Bernard, which divided Italy from western Switzerland. He had a pious mother, Ermenberga. His father, Gundulf, a worldly and rude nobleman, set himself violently against his son's religious aspirations, but on his death-bed himself assumed the monastic garb to escape perdition.

In his childish imagination, Anselm conceived God Almighty as seated on a throne at the top of the Alps, and in a dream, he climbed up the mountain to meet Him. Seeing, on his way, the king's maidens engaged in the harvest field, for it was Autumn, neglecting their work he determined to report their negligence to the king. The lad was most graciously received and asked whence he came and what he desired. The king's kindness made him forget all about the charges he was intending to make. Then, refreshed with the whitest of bread, he descended again to the valley. The following day he firmly believed he had actually been in heaven and eaten at the Lord's table. This was the story he told after he had ascended the chair of

Canterbury.

A quarrel with his father led to Anselm's leaving his home. He set his face toward the West and finally settled in the Norman abbey of Le Bec, then under the care of his illustrious countryman Lanfranc. Here he studied, took orders, and, on Lanfranc's transfer to the convent of St. Stephen at Caen, 1063, became prior, and, in 1078, abbot. At Bec he wrote most of his works. His warm devotion to the monastic life appears in his repeated references to it in his letters and in his longing to get back to the convent after he had been made archbishop.

In 1093, he succeeded Lanfranc as archbishop of Canterbury. His struggle with the kings of England over investiture (the king of England claimed to have the right of investiture with rod and staff, which meant that bishops really received their authority and power from the king) led to his exile on the Continent of Europe.

The archbishop's last years in England were years of quiet, and he had a peaceful end. There, "as morning was breaking, in the Wednesday before Easter," April 21, 1109, the sixteenth year of his pontificate and the seventy-sixth of his life, he slept in peace. Anselm was a man of spotless integrity, single devotion to truth and righteousness, patient in suffering, and revered as a saint before his official canonization in 1491.

Feature

The Pilgrim's Involvement In Earthly Affairs (1)

Rev. David Engelsma

There is tension in the topic, "The Pilgrim's Involvement in Earthly Affairs." There are two elements in the topic that appear to hang together and harmonize only with difficulty, if they harmonize at all. That a pilgrim should involve himself in the societal affairs of the country in which he is a pilgrim and a stranger seems incongruous at best and wrong at worst.

The tension, or difficulty, inherent in the topic finely expresses a real tension, or difficulty, in life, that is, the life of the Reformed believer. The Reformed believer recognizes that, on the one hand, he is a pilgrim on the earth. Without reservation, he sings Psalm 39:

"I am a stranger here,
Dependent on Thy grace,
A pilgrim, as my fathers were,
With no abiding place."

On the other hand, he is equally well aware of a calling to involve himself with "earthly affairs," the matters of politics (the rule and order of the *polis*, or city), of

labor, of education and more. Not only does the question of the harmony of these two truths become a problem in the heart and mind of the Reformed believer, but it also becomes a problem in his life, his daily existence.

In the history of the Church, men have resolved this tension and removed the difficulty by denying one or the other of the two elements that make up the tension, that is, men have denied either that the child of God is a pilgrim or that the child of God ought to involve himself in earthly affairs. They regarded the proposition as a contradiction and denied the element they considered false. The incredibly grim condition of the nominal Church of Christ at present is due, in no small measure, to the denial that the believer is a pilgrim. And that denial of the pilgrim-character of the believer is made in the name of social concern, is made so that the believer may plunge himself into society's maelstrom, from doing which he is prevented if he regards himself as a pilgrim. The believer is no pilgrim

here below but citizen, and a citizen with deep roots. Naturally, unsurprisingly, he involves himself in social affairs. Several weeks ago, I heard Bishop James Pike speak in Longmont, Colorado. Excoriating the Church of the past for preaching to its members contentment on earth with a view to bliss in the world to come, and asserting that the Church must teach men to get all they can out of this life, he cried out, "I like it here! I am at home here! Don't come, Lord Jesus; stay away!" He is no pilgrim here, but himself confesses that the alternative is being a stranger to the coming Kingdom and its King.

There have, however, also been those that denied the calling of involvement in earthly affairs, in the name of their pilgrim status. The group known as the Anabaptists, who sprang up soon after the Reformation, and those known as Pietists carefully cultivated the piety of their souls but banned all activity in society. There is a reference to this "solution" to the problem in Article 36 of the Belgic Confession, which sets forth the truth about civil government: "we detest the Anabaptists . . . who reject the higher powers . . ." This charge has, in the past, been leveled against our Protestant Reformed Churches. We have been accused of resolving the tension by denying that a believer may and should be involved in earthly affairs of politics, "culture" and the like. Our accusers have alleged that we make this denial, not only in actual, practical life but also in principle and theory. The ground of the accusation is our denial of the theory of common grace. The origin of the theory of common grace was, especially, the philosophy of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, who set forth common grace as the basis on which the believer could stand, in co-operation with the unbeliever, to engage in the affairs of earthly life and present society. Denying common grace, we were reproached for an anabaptistic denial of the calling to involvement in human society. This of course does not follow. To deny a certain *ground* (common grace) for the activity (involvement in earthly affairs) is not to deny the activity.

Now, I take it that the topic was deliberately framed to express this tension and that it indicates the desire that I wrestle with that difficulty. The topic is not, "The *Believer's* Involvement," but "The *Pilgrim's* Involvement." We address ourselves specifically to this tension, tonight.

I. THE CHURCH IS NOT TO INVOLVE HERSELF IN EARTHLY AFFAIRS

In order clearly and definitely to make our position known regarding the pilgrim's involvement in earthly affairs, we must deny that the Church has a mandate to involve herself in earthly affairs, that is, in matters of politics, labor and education. To affirm that the pilgrim has such a calling does not imply that the Church has this calling. I mean the visible, instituted Church that functions through the offices of elder and deacon and that also works in alliance with other

churches. The opposite is the case. The Church has no such calling; she becomes disobedient when nevertheless she meddles in such affairs and, in reality, hinders the pilgrim's involvement in earthly affairs. It is necessary for us to take up this issue, in connection with our topic, because confusion reigns on this issue. The impression is left that, because the *believer* has such a calling, the Church must have such a calling also, or the believer and the Church are assumed to be the same as far as involvement in earthly affairs is concerned.

We are all aware, I suppose, that apostate Protestantism asserts with might and main, and to a great extent successfully, that the central, if not exclusive, calling of the Church is involvement in society, the change and betterment of political structures, the alleviation of poverty, the removal of social evils as segregation, and the like. The Church and her servants have one reason for existence and that is the study of, labor in, and improvement of society. The insistence of these churchmen that the Church has the calling to involve herself in society does not concern us, tonight.

What does concern us is a similar contention now being made by men within the Reformed community, men who head a movement to propagate Christian and Reformed principles in every sphere of society. Their contention that the Church has a calling in this regard comes out mostly through sharp, even bitter, criticism of the Church for failing to work at this calling. Perhaps, the sharpest of the critics of the Church is Dr. H. Evan Runner. In his pamphlet, "Can Canada Tolerate the C. L. A.," the keynote address delivered at the Christian Labor Association of Canada's 15th Anniversary Convention held in Toronto, Ontario on April 29, 1967, he delivers a biting attack upon the Church. His basic concern is with the failure of the "orthodox ecclesiastical assemblies . . . to speak out about the humanistic, anti-christian spirit which is the driving cultural force in the modern labor movement," that is, the failure of the Church to condemn the AFL-CIO and similar godless, but so-called "neutral," unions. This concern and anger are legitimate. Not only is such failure "irresponsible", it is dereliction of the duty of the Church to warn the saints against sin and to discipline those that walk in sin. Membership in such unions makes one guilty of the anti-christian principles of the organization, of the intrinsic rebellion of the union against the God-ordained authority of the employer, and of all the deeds of violence and murder that they commit. Indeed, the members in a church that tolerates members of these unions must seriously face the question whether they do not also become responsible before God for the evils of the unions, by connivance with those who belong. But Dr. Runner means to say more. He means to criticize the Church for not involving herself in the affairs of society, in trying to establish Christian organizations in politics and labor. In his speech, he declared, "It is not strange

that men have been busy leaving the organized churches in droves for the last hundred years: it has had literally nothing to say to them, nothing existential, that is, nothing having to do with man's flesh and blood existence on this planet . . . I tell you, it is high time that we speak, or our children will all be lost to a church which has nothing significant to say to them." So wretched on this count does he find the church that he warns of being spewed out of God's mouth.

We have questions and a reason for questions. Is this a criticism of a church that does preach the gospel, that does exercise discipline, and that does administer the sacraments properly, because it does not become a holy "pressure-group", a "sanctified lobby", in the world of politics, labor and education? Does he mean to assign to the church, in addition to the spiritual task Christ gave her, the task of becoming really a political party? Does he mean to criticize the consistory that says to the individual who complains of civil wrong, "Man, who made me a judge and divider over you?" or that advises the defrauded laboring man, "Do violence to no man and be content with your wages?"

What Dr. Runner has in mind becomes clearer: "the organized church has consistently and steadily withdrawn into its bourgeois comfortability or introverted prayer chamber, allowing the affairs of our public life to be progressively organized or ordered by the spirit of modern humanism. . ." Again, "the most fundamental battle of our time is not to be thought of in the first place as one for preservation of a familiar and so-called orthodox church organization, or of an abstract system of theological propositions." "A church organization or a world of Christian theological activity, standing alone within a culture all the other activities of which are directed in an anti-Christian spirit must remain impotent and has become irrelevant, and it will in the long run fade away." "Even to preserve the organized church therefore we must fight for an integral Christian society."

One's instinctive reaction to this is to ask incredulously, "Can he mean this? Can he mean that the Church of Christ depends for its existence upon a Christian society? Can he mean that, without a Christian state, a Christian labor union, and a Christian educational system, the Church cannot live? How, to speak only from history, has the Church survived throughout all the ages? Does not then the Church depend upon Christ? Is it not the plain testimony of Scripture that the Church is and always will be in the world, as light in the midst of darkness, as a little flock among the wolves?"

Dr. Runner is not alone. Others in the same movement make the same charges against the Church. Bernard Zylstra, in his pamphlet, "Challenge and Response," another address to the C.L.A.C. (in 1960), criticizes the church in terms of pietism and tellingly commends the Roman Catholic Church which, he says,

is least guilty of neglect with respect to the calling of the Church to engage in social affairs. Rome indeed openly works, as Church, in all spheres of societal life. But to hear one commend them for this causes me to ask in amazement: Have we so soon forgotten Luther? In his commentary on Galatians 2:14, Luther indicated the Pope, "He hath also confounded and mixed political and ecclesiastical matters together; which is a devilish and hellish confusion."

This searing criticism of the Church by Reformed men — it is no light matter to threaten the Church with being spewed out of Christ's mouth! — for failure to plunge into the affairs of society curiously parallels the attack made on the Church by apostate Protestantism. Oddly enough, it seems that both look away from the Church to other, man-made organizations. As apostate Protestantism delights in the "underground church," these Reformed men pin their hopes on various christian organizations.

Implied in this condemnation of the Church is the contention that the Church has a calling to involve herself in social affairs, a calling she has failed to undertake. This contention is a crucial issue. Those that make it cannot mean merely that the Church should faithfully express and apply to the members the principles of government, labor and education, as they are set forth in Scripture. If this is all they intend, their criticism of the Church is much too severe, even from their viewpoint. They mean that the Church, the instituted Church, must become a force that deliberately works in the sphere of government and the like to change and structure these ordinances of God.

I am reminded of the famous passage in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* in which Ivan Karamazov relates to his brother his "poem" of the Grand Inquisitor. The story is this. In the late 16th century, after the Reformation, Jesus returns to earth in Spain, while the Inquisition is going on. He is immediately met by an old Roman Catholic cardinal, a haunting figure, who imprisons Jesus, although he knows Who Jesus is. In a direct confrontation with Jesus, he informs Jesus that he intends to burn Jesus at the stake the next day, because the Church had decided to side with the Devil against Jesus. The issue over which the Church has broken with Jesus is that contained in the first temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. The Inquisitor analyzes the Devil's first temptation this way: "seest thou these stones in this parched and barren wilderness? Turn them into bread and mankind will run after thee like a flock of sheep, grateful and obedient, though forever trembling lest Thou withdraw Thy hand and deny them Thy bread." But Jesus refused. This refusal the Inquisitor (and the Church) bitterly assail: "Thou didst promise them the bread of heaven, but, I repeat again, can it compare with earthly bread in the eyes of the weak, even sinful and ignoble race of man?" He informs Jesus that the Church now is

“not working with Thee, but with *him* (the Devil).” Because the Church has made it her mission to provide earthly bread and because it has taken upon herself to establish an earthly government for men, she has “corrected Thy work.”

This passage brings out the basic issues in the matter of the Church’s calling, as given by Christ.

The Church has one task, one mandate. Her task is the gathering and upbuilding of Jesus’ Church (Matt. 28:19,20; Eph. 4:12). Or, the Church labors at the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, which is not meat and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17); the Church has been given the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Church carries out this task by preaching, both publicly and from house to house. To the preaching has been joined discipline and the sacraments.

It is Christ Who has authorized the Church to perform this task. Those who would add another task or replace this task or redefine the Church’s task have no warrant for doing so. Here, obedience to Christ is of the essence. The Church may not take one step out of the bounds Christ has set for her. His will for the Church is the Church’s calling. For the Church on the crucial matter of her calling to follow her will is fatal. It is for her to side with the Devil. It is a striking fact that proponents of a social mission of the Church seldom, if ever, appeal to Scripture to prove their contention in the will of Christ Jesus. It is easy enough to brush aside this demand for proof by claiming that the social mandate is the general tenor of the Bible, or by characterizing the one who demands evidence as a fundamentalist proof-text seeker. Let it be an established fact that on the basic issue of her calling, the Church needs definite, clear proof from Scripture.

There is in our day, within and without the Reformed Churches, a minimizing, if not a despising, of the preaching. Preaching is regarded as just talk. What we must have, it is said, is action. That the preaching is a means of grace, *the* means of grace, that through the preaching Christ Jesus Himself speaks to His people is not understood. Thus, the Church’s engagement in the task of preaching, with its concomitant of theology, can be disparaged as a mere activity of formulating abstract theological propositions and as the idle, meaningless activity of an ivory-tower Church in isolation from men’s real needs.

What are men’s needs? Their real needs? Does it have to be established again, by struggle, that the need of man is his sin, his misery over sin, and the deliverance from sin by the gospel? Must we hear that in concerning ourselves with this, we ignore men’s needs, their flesh and blood needs? This was the charge of the Grand Inquisitor against Jesus Himself. What we should have is *more* preaching and believing, also as regards the relationships of men in society. What is the

root of the problem of capital and labor? The absence of love. And whence love, if at all? Through faith in Christ, which faith is worked by the Word preached. The trouble in the realm of labor is the hatred of man for his neighbor. The employer hates and bleeds the employee; the employee hates and smashes the employer. Are we to plump down on one side or the other? We are neither for capital or labor, but for Christ. And the “cure” is love, the love of God and the love of the neighbor for God’s sake, whether that neighbor be Henry Ford II or Joe Smith, breadwinner. A Christian labor organization has to have this at its center, or it will not be Christian. We know enough of old capitalism, the murderous capitalism of the financial barons, who did not atone for their sins by their philanthropy, to know that it invited the insurgence of the working man. But the answer to the violence of the employer is not the greater violence of the employee. Again, a Christian labor organization must stand here or fall. The “answer” is the love of God shed abroad in man’s heart. Apart from Christ and faith in Christ, there is no answer.

Ministering to the spiritual needs of men is certainly worthy work, also in comparison with instituting a Christian government and a Christian labor organization.

And preaching is full-time work! The Church has no time for involvement in social affairs. Experience teaches that when she engages in social affairs the true calling of the Church suffers. And when the true calling suffers, the pilgrim-believer is hindered in the exercise of his calling to be busy glorifying God in every sphere of life.

For the Church certainly sustains a relationship to all earthly affairs. It is the believer, not the Church, that has the calling to labor in the spheres of earthly life. But it is the Church, that is, Christ through the Church’s preaching, discipline and sacraments, that calls, equips, strengthens and assists the believer to be busy in earthly affairs. The Church does this by faithfulness to her spiritual task; the more she gives herself to the preaching, the more the pilgrim can be expected to involve himself in earthly affairs rightly.

At this point, however, the Church does well to examine herself in the light of Scripture. *Does* she, as part of the gospel she preaches, confront her sons and daughters with this calling; *Does* she take pains to explain the reason? *Does* she unfold the principles that govern the spheres of earthly life, such as government, labor, marriage and home, education and the like? *Does* she comfort them also with regard to the struggle in these spheres?

The antithesis is absolute, or it is not an anti-thesis.

The Strength of Youth

Practical Preaching

Rev. Robert D. Decker

Probably the most difficult aspect of writing articles of this nature for our *Standard Bearer* is choosing the various subjects. This particular rubric is directed to the youth of our churches and must deal with subjects of interest to them or it will fail in its purpose. When casting about in my mind for subjects of interest and concern to covenant youth, it occurred to me that the best way to find these subjects would be to ask the young people themselves. This is what I did. I approached several of the youth of my congregation and asked them: "What topics would you like to see treated in the *Standard Bearer*?" The results were interesting indeed! Among the topics suggested are: "How far does obedience to parents go?", "what is breaking a commandment?", "How must we as Christians relate to social, economic, and environmental problems of today?", and at the top of the list is the subject of this article; "Why isn't the preaching in our churches more practical?" (meaning: "can sermons be made to apply more directly to our everyday lives?").

It is not surprising that one finds this topic of interest and concern among our covenant youth. They are very much a part of the time in which we find ourselves, and at the moment preaching is up for a good deal of inspection and discussion in the church world. It must also be admitted with all candor that preaching in our day has fallen on rather bad times. Preaching is not appreciated (we mean in Reformed circles) as it once was. Worse than that, preaching is not regarded as essential or necessary to the obedient worship of God by the church. Prof. Nicholas P. Woltersdorff writes in the July-August 1970 issue of the *Reformed Journal*, p.7: "I fail to see that it would necessarily be a mark of disobedience on the part of the Christian community if it decided, for a time or on occasion, to worship without having a sermon. It would be a mark of disobedience if it ceased evangelism . . . if it ceased baptizing. It would be a mark of disobedience if it ceased celebrating the Lord's Supper. It would be a mark of disobedience if it ceased offering prayers. It would be a mark of disobedience if it ceased taking alms or otherwise helping the impoverished. It would be a mark of disobedience if it ceased pursuing justice and peace. But it would not necessarily be a mark of disobedience if it did not have a monologue address delivered in its worship services by someone ordained to give such addresses." Woltersdorff goes on to assert that: "... it seems to

me that as a *general* practice we cannot do better than commission someone with Christian wisdom to reflect, throughout the week, on the needs of the congregation and on the Word of God to be spoken to those needs. This it seems to me is wise as a general practice. It seems to me extremely unwise, however, to make it the *invariant* practice. The sermon has its defects, and the other modes (drama, film, music, and poetry, and spontaneous dialogue and testimony R.D.) have their merits, as means of prophetic proclamation and witness bearing. What is needed is diversity. Pluriformity." Now, it is not my purpose to devote this article to a negative criticism of these contentions. I only cite them to illustrate the point that preaching is not appreciated and not considered essential to worship in the minds of some in Reformed circles. The fallacy of the above remarks will become evident when we examine together what the Bible has to say about preaching and its place in worship.

While it is not surprising to find this a topic of interest to our youth, it is, indeed, gratifying. Especially a pastor finds reason for joy in this. We may be profoundly thankful that our young people are vitally interested in and concerned with preaching. The question indicates that the youth sincerely desire to have preaching speak to them and to their needs and to their everyday living.

At the risk of "turning you (I mean you young people) off" I am compelled to make a critical observation of the question. The question is: "Why isn't the preaching in our churches more practical?" That question assumes that there is preaching that is not practical. This is not true. True, Biblical preaching is always practical. To assume that the preaching in our churches is not practical as the question does, or at least is not practical as much as it should be, is to be of the conviction that our preaching is not true preaching. That is a charge that I do not wish to make. But, I do understand what the question means. We speak in our churches of practical and doctrinal preaching. And we assume that doctrinal preaching is rather objective and has little bearing on our everyday living, while practical preaching is of a "lighter character" and relates to our lives. That is a very wrong distinction to make and we ought to be done with it. There is no practice of the Christian life apart from the doctrinal principles revealed in the Scriptures. Doctrine is the basis of practice. Hence the only practical preaching possible is doctrinal preaching.

At the same time, it must be said, that the task of the preacher is to make clear to the congregation the practical implications of the various doctrines of the Scriptures. He must show the congregation week by week what the doctrines mean for their everyday living. This, by the way, is the difficult part of sermonizing and preaching! If the preacher fails to do this he is failing in his holy task of preaching the Word. And not only the youth, but also all others in the congregation who feel that their preacher is failing should discuss this with him at once.

With these introductory remarks let us turn to the Bible and our confessions to see what the Lord says about preaching. Then we can draw some conclusions concerning what true Biblical preaching ought to be.

Jesus said in answer to the Jews who wanted Him to tell them whether or not He was the Christ: "... I told you and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me: And I give them eternal life" (John 10:25-28) Without going into a detailed exegesis of this passage let us notice that only the sheep of Jesus who are given (election) of the Father believe on Him. These sheep hear the voice of Jesus, are known by Jesus, and follow Jesus. Thus they are given eternal life, i.e. they are saved. Now the point we wish to make is that according to this passage the sheep hear Jesus' voice. And only because they hear the voice of Jesus do they follow Him. To put it very simply, one must be given of God (elected), and thus HEAR the voice of Jesus in order to be given eternal life.

The question then becomes, how do we hear Jesus' voice? That the disciples heard Him is easily understood. But how do we hear His voice today? Jesus has ascended to glory and no longer walks and talks among us. Do we still hear His voice? We must, else we cannot be saved.

We do hear His voice. Jesus speaks to us and we hear Him through the means of the preaching. This is plainly taught in Romans 10:13-15: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? . . .". Briefly, this passage tells us: that whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved, that one cannot call upon the name of the Lord unless he believes in him, that one cannot believe in the Lord unless he hears him, and that he cannot hear the Lord without a preacher who is sent. This is plain as soon as we understand that the translation of this text is erroneous. The little word "of" in the phrase: "of whom they have not heard" does not appear in the original text. The text should be read: "and how shall

they believe in him whom they have not heard." In the preaching, therefore, we do not hear *of* Jesus but we hear Jesus Himself! We hear His voice, and hearing His voice we follow Him and are saved. That means it is not merely wise to have preaching as a general practice in our worship along with other modes of communication, but it means we cannot do without the preaching. Preaching is indispensable to our salvation!

That same precious truth is obvious from other texts. Take, for example, II Cor. 5:18-20, where we read: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Here we learn that God has reconciled us, brought us into harmony to Himself by Jesus Christ. That is an accomplished fact. The good news of that reconciliation, "the ministry of reconciliation" God has given to the Apostles. He has committed to them the word of reconciliation. And, therefore, they are ambassadors for Christ through whom God beseeches us. This means that the Apostles were the official representatives of Christ. They brought His Word and spoke in His behalf ("we pray you in Christ's stead"). And the official Word of Christ which they brought is: "Be ye reconciled to God!"

The same may be said for preachers today. The apostles, together with the prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone, formed the foundation of the Church. That means that when the Word of reconciliation was committed to them it was committed to the Church which sends, calls, and ordains the preachers. True preaching then is the official Word of Jesus Christ which proclaims the glad news of reconciliation by God in Him.

Our Reformed Confessions recognize this crucial significance of preaching and give it its proper place. The Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 25, q. 65 says that faith comes from the Holy Spirit who works it in our hearts "by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments." That same confession in its exposition of the third commandment says in Lord's Day 35, q. 98, that God: ". . . will have his people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of the word." In Lord's Day 31 the fathers cite preaching as one of the keys of the Kingdom by which the Kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut to unbelievers. Article 29 of the Belgic or Netherlands Confession of faith teaches that preaching is one of the marks of the true church. And in the Canons of Dordrecht, Head I, art. 3 we read: "And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings,

to whom he will and at what time he pleaseth; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified.”

While many more references to both the Bible and the confessions could be cited, these are sufficient to indicate the indispensable place of preaching for our

salvation. Preaching is absolutely necessary for our salvation. We cannot get along without it. It is the means through which Christ speaks to us His powerful and effective Word of salvation.

We shall have more to say about this in our next article.

Studies in Election

It's Origin

Continued

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

In the previous article we saw that election has its origin, according to Scripture and one of the Reformed confessions, in the decree of God. The purpose or aim of God's decree is His own glory. Since this is God's own ultimate end and aim which He has in mind, it must also be man's chief end. There is no higher purpose or goal than the glory of God, and He will have nothing less than the highest (than himself) for man's aim. God must always be man's aim. He must have his sights always, unwaveringly, on God. So that when we say that the chief end of man is to glorify God and fully to enjoy Him forever, we do not mean that there are other, but subordinate ends which God may have or allow, or for which man may strive. There is only this one sole end. Some theologians do speak of certain lesser ends, such as the earning of temporal support, the acquisition of knowledge, the gratification of lawful tastes and the furtherance of the welfare of society. But the aim of earning temporal support is a legitimate one only if taken as a steward under God, that there may be made to Him an honest account of all entrusted. Then, and only then, will that earning be to the glory of God. The mere acquisition of knowledge, as with mere earning of temporal support, is actually nothing good of itself. Neither of these do necessarily glorify God. Both may be and often are used to the glorification of man and the contempt of God. Acquisition of knowledge is only an increase in wickedness, unless that knowledge is in the service of faith. If it is not, it cannot be to God's glory. Then, lawful tastes, what are they, but only those which the law of God and the glory of God allow! What really is beneficial to the welfare of society? that which society itself determines? or that which the aristocrats of society would dictate? or is it not rather the directives of God's revealed will; nothing less! Therefore, we understand the expression "chief end" to mean "exclusive end", as the metrical psalter has it, our "chief and only good." "The Lord hath made all things for himself" (Pro. 16:4), for His own end. For from Him and

through Him and unto Him are all things (Rom. 11:36).

Election is the great fountain out of which flows every saving good. The source of the fountain is the sovereign will of the triune God. We say "triune God," because all three persons of the trinity are involved. They are of the same one divine essence, and have but one will. "He (the triune God) is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and whatsoever His soul desireth (wills) even that He doeth!" (Job 23:13). What God wills to do, He does do. The will of God is not a mere part of His divine nature, nor a mere objective effect of His determination, but "the will of God is the living God himself willing."

Then, what we may say of God's will, we may say also of divine election. That is, God's will is immutable. So is election. God never changes His will, although He does will change. His will is one, and none can divert Him from it. With Him, in His being, there is no variation, nor shadow cast by turning (Jas. 1:17). His will is eternal, for the Word speaks of "His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ" (Eph. 3:11). That His will and purpose are practically synonymous is plain from Eph. 1:5, 9, 11, where to be predestinated according to the good pleasure of His *will* is again expressed in these words, "being predestinated according to the *purpose* of Him." Also when we read of the revealing of His *will* according to His good pleasure which He has *purposed* in Himself, this is not fundamentally different from preordaining according to the *purpose* of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own *will*.

God's will is the only absolutely free will, sovereignly free. That must be quite evident from the passage just referred to in Ephesians 1. God's will is absolutely free in the sphere of nature. He was not bound to create. He could do so, or not, as He chose. Choosing to create, He was perfectly free to do so whenever He pleased, earlier or later than He did. (Yet, strictly speaking, it is absurd to think of God, inhabiting eter-

nity, doing anything either earlier or later.) Conceivably, He may have made the earth smaller or larger than it is. That He made it the size it is, was only because that happens to be the best of all possibilities. No other determination in this regard could have been better. But in making and realizing His determinations He was influenced by no considerations outside Himself. That God should have made the whole universal order "very good," and then should have ordained sin to come into the world, was not only all settled by God's decree, but was also for the best of things. He could have made a world without sin. It is difficult, if not impossible, for carnal eye to see that any other kind of world could possibly be for the best. But the reason why God created and then ordered sin into the world is only to be ascribed to His own indisputable will. Then divine election is sovereign and free. None was His counsellor (Rom. 11:34) to advise Him how to form His purpose according to election (9:11). God's determinate counsel and foreknowledge was decreed in absolute sovereignty. "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy! and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion!" (9:15). It all emerges from God's eternal good pleasure (Eph. 1:4, 5, 9, 11).

No one or nothing can get beyond or behind the will of God. God's will is the origin, the continuance and end of all things. From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. From eternity the will of God determines creation, time, and what shall be in the world. That is God decreeing. Providence, whatsoever comes to pass, is God executing His decree. And this perfect decree and will of God is realized in love. His will moves in the sphere of His being (its only limitation), which is love. Then God's decree of election comes forth from electing love. Our confessions say that "the good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election." Then a gracious election and election love are certainly one and the same thing. The love of God is the motive for election, as the Canons of Dordt state when they refer to "the purpose of God according to election . . . as it is written, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated'" (Rom. 9:13). Election is there described as God's "so great love towards" the elect (I, 13). The Word of God bears this out. God chose Israel to be a special people to himself above all people. The Lord did not set His love upon them, nor choose them because they were more in number than any people, for they were the fewest of all people. But rather because the Lord loved them He chose them. He did both, the one the moving cause, the other the effect. He loved them, therefore He chose them. Why did He choose them? Because He loved them! Why did He love them? Because He loved them, that is, because He willed to love them. (Does this sound like reasoning in a circle? Then let it be understood that every thinker begins and takes each step in his reasoning process from basic presuppositions. He, therefore, has his own

circle. Nor can he escape it. But our basic presuppositions are not neutral, as to whether there is or is not a God. We presuppose God and His will as ultimate. We, then, *begin* with God, and so are sure to *end* on safe, rational ground, with God, and not somewhere without Him or against Him.) So, because His love is everlasting, His election is eternal. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3). His love from all eternity is in sovereign choice of the persons loved in Christ.

At this point it may be seen that the infralapsarian view of predestination at least *on* this point, is not the most in harmony with Scripture. The infralapsarian says that an object must exist before it can be loved; that "God cannot love a non-entity." But certainly all God's people do exist, in His decree, and are not nonentities to Him. Many of them have not yet been objectivized in history with their physical and spiritual being, yet His sovereign choice and love of them from eternity makes them real to Him. But if the above infralapsarian principle were true, then not only could there be no justification from eternity but there could be no love of God to His people from eternity. They are all in the eternal decree of God. There and then God loves them. Otherwise He could not love them from before the foundation of the world. He decreed their existence even before He decreed the means and place of their existence.

The origin of election is the sovereign will of God. The sole cause of election is the good pleasure and love of God (Canons I, 7, 10). The character of election is that of grace. Being a gracious election it is spoken of as "the free grace of election" (I, 13, 15, 18). Scripture mentions "the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5). Grace is not the origin of election. Grace better fits in with the end of election than with its beginning. Yet God's grace is not an abstract from His will. Certainly His will is a gracious will. Yet the end of election is expressed in the words, "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph. 1:6). The end of God's decree of election was the magnifying of His grace. The phrase "the election of grace" is therefore not to be understood as containing a genitive of cause or origin, but of quality or character, as "the Sun of Righteousness," "the shield of faith," and "the children of light." Divine election is directly traceable to the invincible and indisputable will of God. We are predestined according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph. 1:5). He made known to us the mystery of His will (1:9), and did so "according to His good pleasure which He purposed in himself." He works "all things after the counsel of His own will" (1:11). "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan. 4:35). God wills himself the ever blessed God, perfect in all His attributes. His wisdom is infinite, yet by a sovereign act of His will He determines the exercise and the manifestation of it (I Cor. 1:19-21). God

is merciful, but He has mercy on whom He will. God is uncompromisingly just, yet His will decides He shall

mete justice directly upon the sinner or through a Representative. (To be continued, D.V.)

BOOK REVIEWS

WHOSE LAND IS PALESTINE?, by Frank H. Epp, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970; 283 pp., \$3.95 (paper).

This book is an attempt to solve the vexing problems of the Middle East in a Christian context. The author claims to find the solutions to the perpetual struggle between Jews and Arabs in the Christian religion. The trouble is that his conception of the truth of Scripture is not very accurate. The value of the book is in the vast amount of historical material leading up to the present crisis. Necessary reading for all who wish to understand the roots of the conflict.

H.H.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS, by Menahem Mansoor; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967; 210 pp., \$4.00.

Written in outline form to be used as a college text and study guide, this book contains a wealth of material on all aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is especially recommended for students of textual criticism and for those who are interested in the more technical aspects of these important documents.

H.H.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, by Arthur W. Pink; Baker Book House, 1970; 193 pp., \$3.95.

This is a reprint by a popular author who has gained a reputation over the years for his strict Calvinism. The book is primarily of devotional value, has strong mystical tendencies in some parts of it, and is not always as Calvinistic as one would like. Nevertheless, Pink always makes for excellent reading and the book is recommended to all our readers. For those who have read other books by Pink, this book will not be a disappointment; for those who have not made the acquaintance of this author, this book is an excellent place to start.

H.H.

REFORMED BISHOPS & CATHOLIC ELDERS, by Eugene P. Heideman; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970; 267 pp., \$6.95.

Aware of the fact that traditional views of church polity, especially views of the offices in the Church, are undergoing re-examination, the author addresses his study in this book to the question of whether traditional ecclesiastical structures are to be preserved in our modern day. The question is approached from a

two-fold viewpoint: one is the viewpoint of ecumenism; and in this connection recent decisions by Vatican II, by COCU, and by the WCC's Faith and Order Commission on this problem are discussed. The second approach is the approach of the relevance of the Church in today's world. On the jacket appears this quote: "How can the church, as it lives and functions, be more open to the work of God in its midst, in its worship, in its statement of the faith, and in its ministry in the world?"

While the book has considerable historical material in it and while it offers some worthwhile analyses of modern trends in the field of church polity, the author is too ready to sacrifice the principles of presbyterian church polity as founded on the Scriptures in the interest of furthering ecumenicity and of making the Church a more effective influence in the world.

H.H.

ONE MOMENT WITH GOD, by Edward L. R. Elson; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970; 192 pp., \$1.95 (paper)

The book contains an extremely short devotional paragraph for each day of the year with a suggested Scripture reading and a short prayer. Here too the emphasis is almost completely on a superficial morality with little that is worthwhile or that leads to a fuller knowledge of God's revelation in Christ as recorded in Scripture.

H.H.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, D.V., Wednesday, January 6, 1971, at 9:00 A.M. in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church.

—Stated Clerk

NOTICE!!!

All present and past Office Bearer's PLEASE attend our next Conference! This meeting is to be held, the Lord willing, on Tuesday evening, January 5, 1971, at 8 P.M., in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. G. Van Baren will speak on the subject — "The Individual Consistory's Responsibility in Giving Information to their Congregation in regard to their Disciplinary Cases."

John N. Dykstra, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

At the annual Congregational meeting of Grand Rapids' Hope Church, held on November 27, Rev. C. Hanko was called to be minister, from a trio consisting of Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. J. Heys, and Rev. B. Woudenberg. By the time you read this, Southwest will also have chosen a minister at their December 4 Congregational meeting.

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Southwest Church, by the way, has recently organized a Choral Society which will present its first program on Sunday evening, January 3, at 9:00 in the church auditorium. Perhaps their former pastor will be in attendance, for we read that Rev. Lubbers expects "to be home here for a brief visit beginning on Dec. 21."

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From our school in Edgerton, Minnesota, we have some news of interest, gleaned from the "Northern Lights," seasonal news bulletin of the Free Christian School. The school, incidentally, is currently under the administration of Mr. Tom De Vries, formerly of Grand Rapids. According to Mr. De Vries, Edgerton was the site, on Nov. 6 & 7, of what might be called a regional Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute Convention. The Convention was attended by "the six teachers from our three western schools, Misses Beverly Hoekstra and Barbara Zandstra from Loveland, Mr. John Kalsbeek and Mrs. Walter Fair from Doon, and Mr. and Mrs. Tom De Vries." Several ministers were also, at least part of the time, in attendance — Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. Kortering, and Rev. Lanting spent some time there.

At the first session of the convention, the western teachers shared, by means of tape recordings, part of the program of the convention of the eastern teachers. The forum of The Christian and Ecology, presented at Hope School by Mr. John Buitter, Mr. Tom Newhof, and Prof. H. Hanko, was taped at the request of the western teachers. This tape, then, was the basis for discussion in the first meeting at Edgerton. In another of the meetings, "Mr. Kalsbeek gave a talk on individualized reading." Mr. De Vries writes that "the rest of the time was spent in discussing other areas of Christian instruction." And, further, "We are thankful to God for the opportunity of meeting as Protestant Reformed teachers, and felt it was profitable to all. We hope that this may become an annual event."

Further along in the same newsletter, we find that plans are being made for a chapel exercise in Edgerton,

with the students of our school in Doon also attending, and with Rev. Engelsma, pastor at Loveland, as guest speaker. One could probably be excused for calling that togetherness.

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Then there's the speech by Rev. Heys, given at the fall meeting of the Mr. and Mrs. League. His topic was "Training Our Youth in Covenant Distinctiveness." He began by reminding those in his audience that they were in the most important period of their married life — the time in which they must teach and train their children in covenant faithfulness. He mentioned that, because of the fact that we are living in days of rapid development of sin, the task is harder for them than it was for their parents, and would, no doubt, be still more difficult for their children. The task is difficult, he stated, because, by virtue of the fact that corrupt stock brings forth a corrupt offspring, the simple fact is that every child born into this world is born an *unbeliever*. They, therefore, lust for the things of the world. Our children are, by nature, no different than children of the world. But, thanks be to God, we can say more than that. Besides being children of *our* sinful flesh, they are also born of the Spirit of God. There is, therefore, in them the desire to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and at the same time an attitude characterized by, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" But it is precisely because they have the new life, that they *can* be trained.

Very important, in this training, Rev. Heys mentioned, is instruction by *example*. Children must not only be *told* what to do, but *shown* how to do it. Mothers, for example, who wear short minis, cannot expect their children to get as far away as possible from that sin. "Sin in which the parents walk, their children run."

We've probably already passed our space limit so we'll just add his concluding remarks. In spite of the disappointments and failures on our part, as parents, we count it a blessed privilege that God is using us as his chisel, with which He forms this people to Himself.

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Did you know that our church in Redlands was broken into on Thanksgiving Day and relieved of about \$600?

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Note to editor-in-chief — Why don't you delete a paragraph from somebody else's column this time, so that all of mine can fit in?

D.D.