





A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Editor-in-Chief: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Mr. Donald Doezema, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

Editorial Office: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema 1842 Plymouth Terrace, S.E. Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Church News Editor: Mr. Donald Doezema

1904 Plymouth Terrace, S.E. Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

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Business Office: The Standard Bearer,

Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.

P.O. Box 6064

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Meditation

Mary's Babe A Contradicted Sign

Rev. M. Schipper

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Luke 2:34b, 35b.

Nunc Dimittis!

Now lettest Thou depart!

The first two words in the Latin version of the Song of Simeon! Simeon's swan-song — that which he sang before he folded up his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost.

Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation! This said he when he beheld the Wonder, Mary's Babe, resting in his arms, when he beheld the object of his waiting hope, and he was ready to depart with the peace that passeth all understanding in his

heart.

Strange but wonderful scene it was that took place in the temple at Jerusalem, when Mary's Babe, according to the custom was presented unto the Lord, when aged Simeon, who was about ready to disappear from the stage of things called earthly, but who was sustained and kept from descending into the grave only by the power of hope and the promise of the Holy Spirit - that he should not die until he had seen with his eyes the Lord's Christ. Holding in his arms what appears unto all but a mere babe and nothing more, only a few weeks old, weak and helpless. Yet with his eyes raised to heaven, and complete satisfaction written all over his face, Simeon, the aged, utters words which have since remained the song of the believing church, and which is still often sung at Christmastide:

"Now I can leave this world," he cried;
"Behold, thy servant dies!
I've seen thy great salvation, Lord,
And close my peaceful eyes."

"This is the light prepared to shine Upon the Gentiles lands; Thine Israel's glory and their hope, To break their slavish bands."

Jesus! the vision of thy face Hath overpow'ring charms! Scarce shall I feel death's cold embrace, If Christ be in my arms.

All the hope of a gray-haired man fixed on a mere Babe!

Now Lettest Thou Thy servant depart!

And turning to the Babe's mother, he said, after he had pronounced a blessing, and had seen the Lord's salvation: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against..."

Wonderful sign! Sign of the Babe!

How often God made known His will and good pleasure through signs all through the dispensation now passed. Often accompanied by the spoken Word of revelation the signs were intended to confirm the truth of His Word. Think, for instance, of the sign of the rainbow. The Lord had spoken unto Noah that He would not again destroy the earth with a flood, and He commanded Noah and his seed to multiply and replenish the earth, and He gave to Noah the sign of the rainbow as a symbol of the truth that His covenant would be sure. And with many other signs did the Lord confirm His judgments, commandments, and promises unto His people. But all of the signs together find their center in the sign of the Babe. Never would there have been signs before Him, had He not cast His

shadow over the pathway of time that was before Him. And never would there be any signs after Him, had he not come into the world.

And since signs are also wonders, He is also the central Wonder of the grace of God!

His Name is Wonderful!

All He is and does is wonderful!

He is the sign which wicked king Ahaz refused to ask for, but which God nevertheless would give unto him in spite of his refusal.

A Babe!

Born of a virgin!

God in the flesh, Immanuel!

Wonderful in His birth! Amazing in His wisdom! Marvelous in His works and words! Men would marvel at the gracious words He would speak. Men were confounded by the wonders of His death and resurrection. In His death He works the signs of darkness and earthquake, splitting the rocks and opening the graves. In His resurrection, He appears in the sign of Jonas, the prophet. And when He comes again in the Spirit, He is accompanied by signs of rushing wind and flaming tongues. And finally, when He comes in the Parousia, He will appear in the sign of the Son of Man.

Indeed, wonderful Sign!

A Sign which shall be spoken against, contradicted! Set by God in the very center of all history that all may see Him! Born He was to be noticed. Though conceived in the womb of an obscure virgin in a town of ill-fame, though born in a lowly cattle stall as it were on the periphery of the world and in a world where men had no room for Him, the heavens must break and shining messengers must appear to make known to lowly, frightened shepherds as they watched their flocks by night His glorious advent and the sign of His lowly entrance into our world: "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. And this shall be a sign unto you. Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Moreover, the lowly advent is accompanied by the wonder star that must arise out of Jacob inviting the representatives of the nations afar off to come and to worship him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And the theologians of that time, though they had no personal interest in the Babe, are forced to open the Scriptures and inform the tyrannical king of the Jews that according to the Scriptures His birth is, according to prophecy, in Bethlehem, the smallest among the tribes of Israel. And soon He becomes famous, so that all the world is attracted to Him. Pharisees, Sadducees, publicans; wise and prudent, but also the babes; Pilate, Herod, the daughters of Jerusalem. soldiers, and disciples – all must see this Sign, so that even in His death a superscription must appear over His head in letters of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, that all

may read it.

Indeed, a Sign set by God that all may take notice! A Sign to be contradicted!

Not only does the Sign speak in all He says and does — when He declares: "I am He that should come into the world, the revelation of the God of Salvation;" "I am Christ of the Most High;" "I am anointed to be Lord over all;" "I am the Rod that shall break down all the works of darkness, and overcome the world;" "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" "Come unto Me, therefore, and I will give you rest."

But the people who see the Sign must also speak! They must respond. In the presence of the Sign they cannot remain silent. They must believe on Him, or reject Him. So they will worship before Him and bring their gifts, or they will attempt to choke out of Him His life. They must praise Him, or express their anathemas. They must say He is good, or that He has a devil. They must sing His hosannas and exclaim: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord;" or they must cry out: "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Small and great, rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles, scribes and fishermen, wise and babes — all must see Him and express their verdict, answering the question: "What think ye of the Christ, whose Son is He?"

That the thoughts of many hearts may be uncovered!

That is God's purpose in the Sign!

God is not satisfied merely to know the thoughts of the head. This Sign does not present itself to men as a mere intellectual problem. It is not merely an object of philosophical contemplation. Though it is true that men have speculated about Him. Many are the treatises that have been written. O, how they have speculated about His virgin birth, His real manhood and true deity, His atoning death, and the wonder of His resurrection. Volumes have been written about this Sign by friend and foe — but these are merely the thoughts of the head.

God would uncover the hearts! He presses you and me, and all men until all reveal the thoughts of their hearts. The heart is deep. Out of it are all the issues of life. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. The thoughts of the heart reveal the condition of the heart, and bring to light the ethical worth of men. And when all men are confronted by God with the Sign of the Babe, they reveal their hearts. The wicked, that his heart is desperately wicked. The righteous, is impelled to cry out: O God, be merciful to me, the sinner!

But why does God set the Babe for a sign!

The ultimate answer must be — the theodicy; that is, that God may be justified when He judges. When He judges and condemns the wicked, when He purposes to cast the wise and prudent, the great and noble, those righteous in themselves, those white-washed sepulchres, into hell and eternal desolation, it must beome

perfectly evident that He is righteous when He does so. And when He exalts the righteous, those who know they have no righteousness of their own, but they have the righteousness of grace instilled in their hearts, who are the babes in Christ, who are condemned with Christ by the world, who suffer all the day long for their righteousness — when God purposes to take them into the glory of the house of His covenant forever, it must become perfectly evident that He is justified when He does so.

And this purpose of God is always realized!

The Sign is effectual!

The Sign which shall be spoken against, and which shall reveal the thoughts of many hearts, is also for the fall and rising of many; yea, to all to whom it is presented.

Not, we must understand, does the Word of God here refer to the same persons. This would be quite impossible. The one who through the Sign rises again, i.e., is raised from the dead, does not first fall because of the same Sign. And he that falls because he comes into contact with this Sign, never rises again — he falls irrevocably. The word "again" which appears in the translation must not confuse us. We may therefore read the text thus: "This child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many." Nor does the "fall" here refer to a fall into sin. Those that fall by this Sign are fallen in sin, and when they are confronted by the Sign they stumble over Him and fall into eternal condemnation. Thus it would be with many in Israel.

The falling and rising, therefore, refer to the eternal destiny of those upon whom the Sign takes effect. The fall refers to eternal condemnation. The sin of the wicked outside of Christ must become exceeding sinful. Their iniquity, their depravity, must be clearly exposed when God judges them worthy of eternal hell-fire; and He is perfectly justified when He sends them into everlasting darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

On the other hand, the rising refers to eternal resurrection life. We must remember that the Sign is also God's power unto salvation. Through this power many shall rise again. Having died, they are raised from the dead. They are quickened by the voice of the Sign unto newness of life. Because of the power of the Sign in them, death can have no dominion over them.

Indeed, a mighty, working Sign!

Respecting many in Israel! It must become clearly revealed that they are not all Israel that is called Israel. It is in Israel where the rejection of the Sign first appears, because it was in the midst of Israel where the Sign first appears. But there is no reason to limit the antipathy, the falling, and the rising only in Israel. When the Sign is raised up on the cross of Calvary, the whole world stands before Him and is affected. And so it is always.

Always there are souls that are prostrated by the Sign, and who cry out for the mercy of God, and whom God raises up by the power of the Sign to everlasting heights of glory. And always there are souls that rebel yet more and more when they are confronted by the Sign, and God is justified when He casts them into

perdition.

Serious Sign!

Demanding your and my answer!

What will ye do with Christ, the Son of God?

The answer of grace is: Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift!

Editorials

The Crisis In The Gereformeerde Kerken

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken, which has almost become a continuing body through its bad habit of recessing and reconvening, was scheduled to reconvene in the month of October in order to deal with some 200 protests on its agenda, dealing for the most part with the doctrinal departures which have come to be known by the name "the new theology." Those who have followed our occasional reports on the ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands will know that for a long time already all has not been well in the Dutch churches and that there has been an increasing conservative-liberal polarization there. It seems as though the churches have been moving from crisis to crisis, and each time moving farther in an apostate direction. There is hardly an issue of the Dutch paper, Waarheid en Eenheid, which does not carry some new ill tidings about the utterances of some theologian or the false ecumenical tendencies of some congregation.

But it would almost appear that the present crisis must somehow be the last of the series.

First of all, it appears that the doctrinal issues by which the Synod is confronted are not doctrinal issues which are peculiar to the Reformed faith (such as, for example, sovereign predestination and the covenant of grace), but issues which may be characterized as broadly fundamentalist. In the broadest sense, it seems, the question has become whether the *Gereformeerde Kerken* are going to remain at all evangelical or whether they are going to turn officially in the direction of liberalism.

This is plain from the nature of the issues themselves.

It is well-known, for example, that one of the underlying issues is that of the doctrine of Holy Scripture, its inspiration and authority. This was emphasized by Dr. M. J. Arntzen, of the Netherlands, in a recent lecture in Grand Rapids. It is also emphasized in an earnest letter of appeal directed to the Synod jointly by the Society of the Concerned and the Press Association "Waarheid en Eenheid." In this letter one finds

the following characterization of the crisis (translation mine): "For we are deeply convinced that the scriptural character of our churches is being assailed, and that, if things continue thus, another gospel will be proclaimed in our churches, a gospel of which Paul says that it is accursed, even though it be preached by an angel from heaven."

In detail, such matters as the historicity of Adam and Eve; the order of creation, fall, and grace; the denial that death is the punishment of sin; the error of denying that the coming of Christ belongs to the hereafter and teaching that His coming belongs to this present time and this present world; the denial of everlasting punishment; the denial that Jesus was aware that He was the Christ in the sense that the church later confessed Him to be; the denial of the relevance of the question concerning our only comfort in life and death; the denial of the relevance of the doctrine of justification by faith; and even the denial of the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ; — such matters are at issue, according to reports.

It is plain, therefore, that unless the Synod takes a clear-cut and firm stand on the basis of the Word of God, the *Gereformeerde Kerken* will indeed have lost their evangelical character even in the broadest sense of the term.

In the second place, it is highly doubtful whether the tide of liberalism will be stopped. For one thing the Dutch Synods generally in recent years and the current Synod in particular have not distinguished themselves by their strong and clear-cut stands on any issues. For another, it is contrary to the lesson of history that when once the church has proceeded so far down the path of apostasy, she ever returns as a denomination. When things have reached such a sad estate, there simply is not the doctrinal and spiritual strength and will to return; besides, the numerical strength at this stage has long been on the side of liberalism and apostasy. It is simply too late for the Gereformeerde Kerken to return to the Reformed faith

in purity; and unless they return, and return all the way, they will inevitably go over the brink. It would seem that the only hope of reformation in the Netherlands is that of reformation by separation.

In the third place, I, for one, sincerely hope that the General Synod will not take one of those miserable, two-faced decisions which will only serve to prolong a tenuous external unity, a decision which throws a sop to the conservatives while it really justifies and protects the apostates. According to my observations, the movement of the concerned is none too strong as it is. And perhaps the memory of past ecclesiastical miseries already serves as a deterrent to reformation by separation. Nor does the conservative movement appear to be very strong numerically. And therefore the best cathartic — unless the General Synod wants to return to the old paths — would be a show-down decision. I am afraid that unless the crisis is soon reached and passed, all hope will be gone.

Time will tell.

Meanwhile, there is a lesson in this situation for the churches in this country, both Reformed and Presbyterian. The lesson is that those who hope to preserve the Reformed faith for themselves and their generations must not make the grave mistake of waiting too long and of fostering a vain hope that they can reform the church from within. The effect of such delay is usually detrimental. And perhaps the greatest detriment is that while the older generation may succeed in holding fast the faith, their children and their children's children through the delay and hesitation of their elders are lost for the faith. I am frequently reminded of a statement which the late Prof. Ophoff made rather often in connection with departures from the faith or failure to follow up the calling to reformation. "Remember," he said, "when you take a step, you take that step not only for yourselves, but for your children and your children's children!"

That is indeed a thought to ponder!

Full Circle?

Many of our readers have either read or read about a publication of the Calvin College Chimes staff called the bananer. This diabolically clever and devilishly humorous little publication was in every respect - in appearance and format and contents - a wicked lampoon, or parody of The Banner. It was, in fact, so much like the latter in appearance that one could easily pick it up for The Banner, only to discover when he began to read that it could not possibly be the weekly magazine of the Christian Reformed Church. It mocked shamelessly the Christian Reformed Church, calling it throughout "the Philistine Rewarmed Crutch." It mocked Scripture and The Banner's use of Scripture. It mocked morality and apparently what it deemed to be the church's attitude toward morality. In fact, it mocked virtually every department in The Banner and many a phenomenon in the Christian Reformed denomination.

It is not my intention to give a full review and detailed criticism of this diabolical little publication. In fact, it had not been my intention to react to it editorially whatsoever. Nor will I do so now. However, the reactions to this lampoon have now turned virtually full circle, from indignant condemnation to qualified approval. This I deem to be more serious than the original publication of *the bananer* itself. And to these reactions I wish to react editorially: for they are significant.

First of all, in the June 19 issue of *The Banner*, Editor John Vander Ploeg (now retired) responded in righteous indignation by means of a lengthy editorial in

which he condemned the bananer from beginning to end in no uncertain terms as sinful and publicly offensive. In fact, as I think back, it seems to me that this was one of the most outspoken editorials to come from Rev. Vander Ploeg's pen during his career as editor of The Banner. In his article he criticized the Communications Board of the Calvin Faculty and Student Senate. as well as the Calvin College Faculty as a whole, for their extremely mild official reaction and for their failure to express themselves about "the wickedness of this thing and the grievous sin against the Lord." He also criticized the Calvin Board of Trustees for "the meekness and the mildness of (their) reprimand, when the need for a stern rebuke is so obviously in order" as being hardly virtuous in view of the seriousness of the situation. Moreover, he proposed that Chimes should either no longer be college subsidized, or that if it is to continue to be subsidized, there should be insistence upon a "distinctively Christian student newspaper." And he asked for "full assurance that such a climate is being provided at Calvin College as to encourage, foster, and produce literary writing that is in keeping with the purpose of our church school and not at crosspurposes with it."

A little later (cf. *The Banner*, June 26) Dr. Wm. Spoelhof responded in an "Open Letter From Dr. William Spoelhof To The Editor," in which he expressed his reactions both to Rev. Vander Ploeg's editorial, and, inevitably, to *the bananer*. To say the least, President Spoelhof's reactions were very much milder than those of Editor Vander Ploeg, and even mildly apolo-

getic and defensive of the bananer. He "urged (Rev. Vander Ploeg) to overlook the thoughtlessness of youth in order to uncover whatever thoughtfulness there might be associated with their venture." He does not specify this "thoughtfulness," but only assumes its presence. This writer could detect much "thoughtfulness" and also many thoughts – all of them evil. Dr. Spoelhof, moreover, was prompted by concern for any ill effects which Rev. Vander Ploeg's adverse publicity would have on youth's reaction to the church. This writer cannot understand how calling sin by its right name could be responsible for ill effects, however. President Spoelhof, further, attempted to minimize the seriousness of the thing by claiming that it had to be judged from "a college campus orientation." All in all, he practically denied the sinfulness of the whole thing, as is plain from the following language:

"The students attempted a parody. Such a thing is always a dangerous venture, for it can be greeted either with pleasure and profit or with anger and annoyance. If one accentuates the hyperbole of a parody, anger and annoyance will prevail. This need not be the reading, however. (One feels constrained to remark here that Rev. Vander Ploeg did not accentuate the hyperbole, but only called attention to its wicked mockery. HCH)

"Undoubtedly, the students did not give thought to the feelings of those they might offend. I do not defend them for this, nor for their improprieties. (Is "improprieties" a euphemism for "sins"? HCH) But I cannot accept your ascription of unchristian motives and devilish work to the students who were involved. It is this kind of reading of their work to which I object."

The fact of the matter is, however, that the Rev. Vander Ploeg evidently read *the bananer* in all its objectivity (and gave proof of it in his editorial). The problem was not in Editor Vander Ploeg's "reading," but in the material which he read.

Since that "Open Letter" of June 26 no more has been written about the subject in *The Banner*.

But now apparently reaction to the bananer has come almost full circle. For the new editor of The Banner, Dr. Lester De Koster evidently does not share the righteous indignation of his predecessor, the Rev. Vander Ploeg. Nor apparently does he share Dr. Spoelhof's minimizing of the bananer and his tendency to excuse it as student thoughtlessness. Dr. De Koster has not expressed himself on the subject in *The Banner* thus far. However, Chimes (Oct. 2, 1970) gives a report on the third of a series of four lectures delivered by Editor De Koster at the Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. It reports that Dr. De Koster characterized parts of The Banner as "unfortunate" and deserving of "reproof." But he characterized most of the publication as containing "extremely perceptive analyses" of inconsistencies in the Christian Reformed denomination. And he is reported to have

said of the bananer, "I found it more instructive than offensive."

If the latter report is accurate — and it has met with no contradiction on the part of Dr. De Koster — it is evident that official reaction to *the bananer* has now come almost, if not completely, full circle. It has proceeded from righteous and indignant condemnation to qualified approval. It has proceeded from "devilish" to "more instructive than offensive."

What is *The Standard Bearer's* opinion and reaction to all this?

In the first place, I wish to make it crystal clear that we cannot rejoice in or gloat over the appearance of the bananer or the reactions thereto. On the contrary, we share fully the Rev. Vander Ploeg's righteous indignation and his forthright condemnation. There was very much in the contents of the bananer which was morally reprehensible. And as far as its method is concerned, even though as Dr. De Koster suggested, the bananer may have put the finger on some sore inconsistencies in the Christian Reformed Church, the method of a satirical and sarcastic and wholly destructive lampoon is altogether ungodly, unworthy of a Christian. It is a blot on the name of the Christian Reformed Church and its college that its sons and daughters of college age respond and are allowed to respond to mother church, whatever her faults may be, in such a fashion as this.

In the second place, we agree with the Rev. Vander Ploeg's request "for full assurance that such a climate is being provided at Calvin College as to encourage. foster, and produce literary writing that is in keeping with the purpose of our church school." In fact, we would go further. We would suggest that the bananer is not an isolated student prank, but that it is a reflection of a bad atmosphere at the college and of bad tendencies in the instruction. If the bananer were an isolated symptom, we would not draw this conclusion. But to anyone who follows the college scene, it is evident that the latter is not the case. There is abundant evidence that the sharp lines of the antithesis are steadily being erased. I would even suggest that investigation would reveal some of the same mocking attitude about the "Dutch, white, middle-class, Christian Reformed ghetto mind" on the part of instructors, would reveal that there are faculty advocates of radical liturgical revisionism, would reveal that there are faculy advocates of the social gospel and of social activism of the Father Groppi type. Perhaps students give more radical expression to these ideas than do their mentors – this is the tendency of students, to go farther than their teachers. But I do not believe that students pull these ideas out of their own hats, so to speak. And if I were asked what the root of this increasing blotting out of the lines of the antithesis might be, my answer is: common grace and its debilitating effects!

In the third place, it seems to me that Dr. De

ly deeply concerned about the unity and unification bananer, and to the end that the inconsistencies may of the Christian Reformed Church, would do well to be corrected. Moreover, if Rev. Vander Ploeg's confoster that unity by sharing with the churches the – inconsistencies, to the end that the churches may predecessor wrote.

Koster, the new editor of The Banner, who is apparent- share the instruction, rather than the offense, of the demnation was incorrect, Dr. De Koster should make "extremely perceptive analyses" of Christian Reformed correction in the same editorial columns in which his

All Around Us

Creation and Evolution in California Schools **Proof for Evolution**

Prof. H. Hanko

CREATION AND EVOLUTION IN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS

The question has recently come up in the California public school system whether it is a violation of the First Amendment to the Constitution of this country to teach creation in science classes of the school system. The history of this controversy dates back to about a year ago. At that time a committee presented a report which contained guidelines for teaching science. This report was referred back to the committee by the State Board of Education because several members of the State Board objected to the fact that evolution alone was supported in the report as an explanation for origins. The new report was changed in such a way that the possibility of teaching both evolutionistic theories of origins and special creationism would be permitted in science classes. The pertinent paragraphs read:

All scientific evidence to date concerning the origin of life implies at least a dualism or the necessity to use several theories to fully explain relationships between established date points. This dualism is not unique to this field of study but is also appropriate in other scientific disciplines such as the physics of light.

While the Bible and other philosophic treatises also mention creation, science has independently postulated the various theories of creation. Therefore creation in scientific terms is not a religious or philosophic belief. Also note that creation and evolution theories are not necessarily mutual exclusives. Some of the scientific data (e.g. the regular absence of transitional forms) may be best explained by a creation theory while other data (e.g. transmutation of species) substantiate a process of evolution.

(The quotes in this article are from Liberty magazine.)

The idea behind this revision is clear. The State Board of Education wants both evolutionism and creationism taught in the science classes of the school. It wants both taught as possible explanations of the origin of the world. It wants both examined and the pros and cons of both taught in the classroom. And it wants both taught because in the opinion of the State Board, the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. But it wants creation taught from a scientific viewpoint, not a Biblical viewpoint.

It is not surprising that many scientists objected strenuously to the inclusion of creationism in science teaching. One noted scientist, obviously quite angry, wrote:

Should a scientific course on reproduction also mention the stork theory? Did it require the Apollo 11 mission to prove the moon is not made of green

If creation is taught in science classes we might as well also teach that the earth is flat, that the sun passes around the earth, and that the cause of disease is evil spirits pervading the body.

But the big question which is at present being discussed is whether such teaching would violate the First Amendment of the Constitution. The Argument is clear enough. If creationism is taught in the science classes of the public school system, then a particular religion is taught. And this violates the principle of church-state separation and the constitutional prohibition respecting the establishment of religion. The courts of the land have spoken clearly on the matter: there is to be no religion taught in the public school system.

There is something a little bit silly about this part of the argument. It is presumably true that if creationism were taught in the public schools this would indeed constitute the teaching of religion. But what is so often conveniently forgotten is the fact that evolutionism is also a religion. It is a false religion, to be sure. But it is a religion for all that. It is a religion in the first place because it has something to say about God. Evolu-

tionism denies God, of course. But this is saying something about Him nonetheless. It is denying His existence. It is a religion in the second place because it is dealing with matters which are beyond the reach of scientific investigation. It is quite obviously a fact that while scientific technique can study various parts of the creation and can even study changes in the creation it cannot, with its present tools and by means of its developed techniques study how the creation came into being. When it makes statements about the subject of origins, it is simply engaging in speculation and guessing; it is establishing conclusions without the least bit of scientific evidence. In the third place, evolutionism is a religion because evolutionism does not simply discuss even the matter of origins as an abstract question. The theory of evolution speaks on any number of other subjects which are religious in character. The theory of evolution has its own answers to the question of what man is – whether created as image bearer or descendant of the ape; of what sin is whether vestiges of animal ancestry or rebellion against God; of what ethics is all about - whether the prevailing opinion of the majority or the keeping of the law of God; of where this creation is going - whether to an everlasting future of this present world or the judgment of the second coming of Christ. All these are religious questions - no matter how they are answered. And when educators say that by teaching evolution they are keeping religion out of the classroom, this is so much nonsense - and they know it. What has been put in the classroom is a false religion. an apostate religion, a religion which denies God, but a religion nonetheless. It is impossible to have neutrality in religion in the classroom as it is impossible to be neutral in any area of life.

Nevertheless, the State Board of California apparently feels the force of the objection and is very afraid of putting any kind of religion in the science course. It has answered this objection in a very interesting way. It has asserted, first of all, that the theory of evolution is not really proved. There are especially three areas, according to the State Board where this is true. First of all the record of paleontology has been an extremely inconclusive record. There is no evidence in all the present fossils which have been found that there is any development from lower forms of life to higher forms. Secondly, the whole study of genetics has led to only one conclusion: that any change brought about by interbreeding and genetic experimentation is always change within a kind. Never has man been able to demonstrate that genetic change results in another species. Never has any scientist been able to force one species into another. Even though there have been many new breeds of dogs created, a dog is still a dog. And there is nothing known which can make a dog anything else but a dog. In the third place, never has science been able to create life. Always evolution must fall back upon the completely unproveable theory of the spontaneous generation of life. This is weak and silly. And there is almost no hope that at any time in the future science will succeed in creating this deepest principle which pervades all living creatures.

But the answer of the State Board goes farther than this. It asserts that the truth of creation as an explanation for the origin of the universe can be taught in the existing public schools without violating the First Amendment if only it is taught from purely scientific viewpoints. One who explains this position writes:

Although it is clear that mention or discussion of an event in both the Bible and in a public science class is not grounds for claiming that religion is being taught in public schools, the way this material is presented in the classroom is significant. If the teacher uses the Bible as his source of information and attempts to persuade his students of certain beliefs concerning God and religion there could be valid criticism based on constitutional grounds. However, if Creation is presented solely from scientific evidence, without using the Bible as the source of information and without any attempt at religious indoctrination, inclusion of Creation would not be a conflict of church and state.

The point is that creation must be taught from purely scientific viewpoints. It must therefore be taught only insofar as it is ascertainable from the investigations of science and an object of study by means of the scientific method. In this way, it is maintained, it will be isolated from all beliefs in God and all matters of religion.

One wonders what such a doctrine of creation would be. What kind of doctrine of creation will be taught if God is not mentioned as the Author of creation? If the investigation is carried on only by the scientific method, the miraculous is automatically ruled out. If creation is taught in isolation from the rest of the truth of Scripture and distinct from the particular ethics which Scripture teaches and bases upon the creation ordinance, does one even have a doctrine of creation left? Quite obviously not. The attempt is utterly futile. It smacks of some kind of wicked compromise between the truth and the lie. And such a compromise is always a devil's compromise with the devil the victor. How can the truth of God as revealed in the Scriptures be made compatible with the evil inventions of men's minds when the two are absolutely mutually exclusive and are constantly at war with each other? How can the scientific method, when divorced from Scripture and faith be a means of learning the truth of God? The result is bound to be another invention of evil.

The Scriptures are insistent on the point that the truth of creation as well as the truth as a whole is known only through the Word of God and can be received only by faith. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so

that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Hebrews 11:3.

As pious as all this may sound let us beware of compromise which destroys the truth of God's Word. PROOF FOR EVOLUTION?

As we noticed in the above article, scientists who accept the theory of evolution accept it in the light of the fact that there does not exist one iota of proof for the transmutation of species. Aware of this fact, learned scientists will go to absurd lengths to establish their theory nonetheless and search about in the most unlikely places for some evidence of their pet ideas.

in an article which appeared in a recent issue of *Newsweek* there is a remarkable example of this. The article is very learned and is supposed to set forth some remarkable proof for the evolutionistic thesis.

The article begins with these startling words:

Except for religious fundamentalists, few people any longer question the proposition that man and apes have a common ancestor. But enormous gaps remain in the knowledge of just how man evolved into what he is today. How, for instance, did the human descendants of the nonpredatory, vegetarian apes turn into predatory, steakchomping carnivores of modern times? In an attempt to answer that question, two scientists have now come forward with a radical new theory — and to support it, they cite the results of an experiment in atavism worthy of Tarzan of the Apes.

One looks forward to a very profound discussion of an elaborate experiment that was subsequently carried on and which leaves us with irrefutable proof that at least the "behavior patterns" of men evolved from animals and quite possibly man himself evolved from animal life.

Well, the experiment consisted in this: These two very learned scientists spent a whole week in the bush of Africa attempting to kill animals and rodents with their bare hands after stalking them on foot. They did not actually kill any animals. They simply marked up what would have been kills if they had actually followed through in killing. They had a base camp where a full-fledged meal was cooked for them daily and served along with chilled beer.

The results of their experiments confirmed beyond argument that earlier forms of human life, but a small step removed from animal life, actually did live this way and acquired their supply of food by killing animals and living from their carcases. They also proved that two or more men working together were more successful in acquiring food than one individual.

Now, really. Does a reputable magazine have to devote a fair share of its magazine to such inanities? Have these scientists accomplished such astounding things by doing what they did? Is *this* what has resulted in "a radical new theory"? And now do we have support for the evolution of man's social system and perhaps even the evolution of man himself? How silly can one get?

And yet of stuff such as this the theory of evolution is constructed. Paul says in I Corinthians: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

Come Ye Apart... And Rest A While

Candid Camera on Thanksgiving 1970

Rev. C. Hanko

The church service is well under way. Mr. Richman occupies his usual place in the audience. These Thanksgiving services, he thinks, are pretty much routine, not much different from the Sunday services, actually quite drab and lifeless.

He listens while the minister reads the text and begins his sermon. And then after a bit his mind wanders. The stock market has been very unsteady. Unemployment seems on the increase in the country, especially now with the soldiers returning from Viet Nam. This unrest in the Middle East creates a lot of uncertainty. Real problems all of these.

The minister is saying something about being thankful in everything. Wonder if this is the same sermon he preached a year ago with a different text placed over

it.

That fellow can talk. He has a steady income, free rent of the parsonage, retirement pension for himself and his family when he cannot work any more.

I had better stifle this yawn that is coming up; it doesn't look too well to those round about me. The service is just about over anyway, and then to the car, and home.

Yes, that car. It is really only a year old and still in good shape. Maybe I had better put it on the market. I would like a better one anyway.

Ah, now the service is finished. Dinner will soon be ready.

Mrs. Grateful also came to church this morning with

her family. She woke up this morning with a song in for proper storage. This year was the summer of the her heart:

drought. The grain crop was fair, but the corn had

How good it is to thank the Lord,

And praise to Thee, Most High, accord,

To show Thy love with morning light,

And tell Thy faithfulness each night;

Yea, good it is Thy praise to sing,

And all our sweetest music bring.

Now she bows her head in silent prayer for the minister, but no less for herself.

"God is good," she thought, as she looked about her, first at her husband and then at her healthy, growing family. So much has happened through the years since she and her husband had stood at the altar and vowed to each other before God: "For better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and health; to love and to cherish, 'till death us do part." There had been times when it was hard to suppress the thought, "I never imagined that it would be this bad." And yet, God had always made all things well and taught them many valuable lessons.

Yes, there were still problems, — growing children bring bigger problems every day. But she is even grateful that the Lord had entrusted this responsibility to her. And she is sure that the Lord will dissolve all her problems as morning mist before the rising sun.

Wholeheartedly she joins the congregation in singing praise to God. A thrill passes through her soul as her voice mingles in harmony with all the rest. Young and old, men and women, all together tell of their Maker's love and Fatherly care.

How easy it is to pray along with the minister. She imagines her prayer joined with all the rest and arising as smoke from the altar before the face of God.

What an unusual text for Thanksgiving: "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

The minister wants the word *Gift* capitalized, as referring to Christ in Whom all fulness of blessedness dwells even for us forever. How carefully He outlines this beautiful truth. How clearly she sees it.

She hopes that her husband is enjoying this service as much as she is. Her thoughts wander a moment to the children, and her lips form a faint smile as she sees them attentively listening. How much do those little minds grasp of this great mystery of salvation?

She looks up with surprise that the time has flown so fast. But her heart rejoices in God, her Savior, also today.

Mrs. Ne'er-do-well sits a short distance from Mrs. Grateful. They nodded to each other as she came in church, barely on time. They are not exactly friends, but they do pass as acquaintances.

Mrs. Ne'er-do-well remembers that it is Thanksgiving. She tells herself as she sits there that she actually has much to be thankful for. True, the corn crop was not so good this year. Last year they had a bumper crop, but what a time they had to dry it out for proper storage. This year was the summer of the drought. The grain crop was fair, but the corn had turned yellow already by the end of August. But I shouldn't complain. Things could be worse.

I must remember the three points of the sermon. My husband likes to ask me about them on the way home.

The minister is bringing Jesus and the cross into this sermon. On Thanksgiving! That makes it sound almost like Sunday.

Yes, I really have much to be thankful for today. I'll put aside the many things that keep coming up, the unpleasant things, for which I certainly am not thankful. I'll concentrate on the pleasant things. I don't want to spoil the day.

Now he is up to his second point. He is speaking about all things working together for good.

Nice that the relatives can come today. So glad to have them over. Yes, there will be twelve of us around the table this noon. Wonder if that won't be a bit crowded. Set up another table?

John is nodding a bit. I won't nudge him. Poor man, he is so tired, and he did get to bed late last night. He is a good husband, I'll say that for him.

Now the third point. This is always short, so we'll soon be going home. And there are just dozens of things that must be done before the company comes.

Out near the front of the church sits Mr. Deaconaid. He looks lonely out there by himself. A year ago his wife was still with him; now he is all alone. She was all he had of kith or kin.

He looks at the empty spot next to him and breathes a sigh of thanksgiving. She was a good wife, always patient in her suffering, always patient with his many faults. Now she is rejoicing before the throne! How wonderful that must be. Heaven seems a bit closer now that she has gone to join Christ in His glory.

Realizing even now his own sins and unworthiness, he attentively keeps his eye on the minister. He is carried along to the cross, to Christ in heaven. His soul rejoices as the minister speaks of Christ bestowing upon us all His merited grace and all His benefits. How wonderful it is to be a son of God, righteous in God's Beloved, and heir of salvation. If that God is for us, how can ever anything at all in this vale of tears be against us? Truly, God is good to Israel, to all who are of a clean heart. And after all the weary night is past, I shall awake in Thee, to behold . . . Thee!

Occasionally he catches himself nodding in agreement. He breathed the prayer: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Yes, Reverend, how wonderful those Scriptures are! Fountains of living waters flow from them upon a dry and thirsty soil. How they lift our hearts from depths of despair to heights of hope and Glory!

A little that the righteous hold is better far than . . . any other thing. For they have GOD.

In His Fear

The Standard Bearer In His Fear

(Conclusion)

Rev. J. A. Heys

This does not mean that knowing Him in that salvation which is in Christ we now dare to sin against Him. Faith does not give us the courage to sin against our God, Whom we know is a consuming fire. Instead this fear of the Lord causes us to run to the cross to find refuge underneath it. The man who knows and believes the awfully destructive power of electricity and the perfect safety of the insulation on the wire does not. because he believes in the safety of that insulation. now dare to touch that bare wire. Neither does the child of God who knows this refuge and safety in Christ now dare to sin against the Holy One. In fact he appreciates this safety in Christ exactly because he knows this Holy One in His dread majesty. He is not afraid that this unchangeable God will go back on His promises, and that He will pluck out of Christ, the true Vine, that which He had engrafted into Him. But he is deathly afraid of walking apart from Christ. And that is what he does when he walks in sin.

Now through the ages there have been men who were not afraid to manufacture and teach doctrines that were designed to whittle this majestic God down and to rob Him of some of His glory. All false doctrine does that in one way or another and to one degree or another, as you know. And through the ages there have been those who accepted these evil teachings, defended them and boldly proclaimed them. And just prior to the appearance of the Standard Bearer such false doctrines were also accepted, defended and proclaimed in what is called the "Reformed Community." Arminianism was there. Pelagianism, Modernism and Liberalism had their places. And a new and subtle form of Arminianism and Pelagianism appeared under the name, "Common Grace." I say subtle, because it seems to be the fear of the Lord in that it also seemingly says, "O, God, how good Thou art!" And yet it is an attack upon God's majesty, because it maintains an offer of salvation to all who hear the preaching of the gospel. And a God Who offers, invites and pleads with you to let Him save you is a God Who is bound to fail in some of His attempts instead of being sovereign in all His works; and He will be no longer an unchangeable God, but one Who will find Himself forced to change, over against that creature that He cannot persuade. You see, we have here the same lie of paradise only in a new form. Then Satan deceived man to believe that he could climb up to God's position, and

thus would not need to fear Him. In the heresy of Arminianism God is brought down to man's level, and even below man to be begging this creature for the opportunity to show how great and good He is. And the fruits of that "common grace" today is a love of God for everyone head for head, and an atonement that is universal. These again result in a frustrated God who finds himself obliged to change from love to hatred and unable to accomplish that which he wills to do. These certainly whittle down the majesty and wear down the respect for such a God. These, although they say, as far as the sound of the words is concerned, "How good Thou art!" actually say, as far as the meaning is concerned, "O, God, Thou art not so great!"

But in His goodness God did raise up men in that period, when these heresies were conceived and born, who still saw Him in His majesty and loved Him therein as the Holy One. They organized the RFPA in order to publish pamphlets and booklets to hold forth the truth concerning this majestic God. And in process of time they decided to publish the *Standard Bearer*, that there might be a more regular and wider distribution of the truth of the greatness and goodness of our God. And in His fear our magazine had its birth.

It was not published then to air the views of a man. It was not published to add to the number of religious magazines, or so that we as churches might have an organ of our own. It was published to instruct others about this majesty of our God and to maintain and develop the truth of the true greatness and goodness of our God. And by God's grace it still does that today with various departments or rubrics, each in its own sphere and way, showing the majesty of our God and declaring: "God ALL, man nothing except that which God was pleased to make him be. Soli Deo Gloria!"

II. Written In His Fear

Now through the ages since its birth that Standard Bearer has stood in need of men who would write in His fear. The RFPA is the Reformed Free Publishing Association. And a publishing association needs writings and writers whose works can be published. These may be writers of the past who wrote in His fear. But they must also be men who write about current problems and whose writings are relevant. A publishing association which has no writers with works worthy of publication is a publishing association that is out of

business.

But a publication association that would publish in His fear and has a staff of writers that have not this fear of God, or will not write in it but for the exaltation of the flesh of man, finds itself in a tragic situation. And when it finds that its writers are beginning to write void of that fear of God it must dismiss them at once. A Reformed Free Publication Association must not sail under a false flag and publish that which is unreformed. The Reformed Faith is the faith that maintains this transcendent majesty of God; and the Reformed Faith has for its theme, "O, God, how great Thou art!" The Reformed Free Publication Association must therefore publish only that which is Reformed, and it must stay free from everything else (even though this is not the meaning of the word Free in the name). And it must free itself, rid itself of any writer who will write one word that detracts from this majesty of God.

The writers, therefore, also will have to be filled with that fear of the Lord to be impelled by it to write, in order to display this majesty of our God. They are, you know, a staff of fearless men, that is, fearless before men. They write faithfully and often voluminously, not because they are afraid of you, the association, or of you, the Board of the association. They are not even answerable to you. Let me point out to you the fact that you do not even appoint them, either as an association directly, or through your Board. Maybe that ought to be changed. I am not ready to say at the moment. Let me also point out to you that little line that is seldom read by those who begin to read either with the Meditation or (more likely) with the News from our Churches. I mean on the inside of the front page before the Meditation: "Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own article." That gives him freedom, but also reveals that unless he has the fear of the Lord in his heart, he is not going to write that which the RFPA can publish.

Again, these writers have no fear either for the threats of the Editor-in-Chief that he will publish two blank sheets with the name of the editor of that department, if he fails to send in copy. They know that you, the association, through your Board will not allow such a waste of space, the cost of printing also being what it is today. Nor do they fear the staff that does appoint them each year. What is there to fear? Loss of a place on the editorial staff is no financial loss. Once again, although that is not the meaning of the name, "Reformed *Free* Publishing Association," the work is done free of charge, without any salary or remuneration. In fact there would be gain to being put off the staff in a saving of paper, typewriter wear and tear, and postage.

Yet, they continue to write year in and year out, and often tear up a whole article and start over, or

revamp the unsatisfactory copy, burn the midnight oil, give up social engagements, do research, and pound the typewriter at fifteen day intervals to produce copy for the *Standard Bearer*. Why? Because they are *impelled* by the fear of the Lord, and not because you or any man *compels* them. And only the fear of the Lord will keep them writing in His fear.

We must remember that. And we must remember that it all depends upon the grace of Him Whom we fear. For forty-six years the *Standard Bearer* has upheld the Reformed Faith and said on every page, "O, God, how great Thou art!" During that time magazines have come and gone. Magazines that were in existence before the birth of the *Standard Bearer* have filled their pages with man and his "majesty," and presented a God who stoops before the creature and can be disappointed by him, a frustratable and a frustrated God! But we can also go that way; and we will go that way, unless the grace of God keeps us in His fear.

It behooves you and all the readers, therefore, to pray for these writers and not to assume that they cannot err, defect, or change. It is, you know, quite easy to criticize these writers as being too long-winded, too deep, not practical enough and the like. But, if you have not prayed for them, do not criticize them. If you have not brought them up to the throne of grace, do not bring them down to your judgment bar.

This is not a time to boast, and this speech is not meant to be in praise of men. For that is exactly contrary to the fear of the Lord which sees the majesty of God and man's utter dependency upon Him for all things. The fear of the Lord says, "In Him we live and move and have all of our physical but also all of our spiritual being. Therefore, pray to the God Whom we fear that He may keep the writers in His fear to provide the association with material worth publishing and the readers with that which truly is edifying.

III. Read in His Fear

We come now to you as a reader as well as a member of the association. And, truly, all efforts fail, if the Standard Bearer is not read in His fear. Perhaps, in passing, I might shorten that last sentence before I continue. All efforts fail, if the Standard Bearer is not read! It will give the RFPA some financial support, if you subscribe and do not read what it publishes. You may give the mailman some beneficial exercise by continuing your subscription. But unless you read what has been published, the association's goal is not reached, the toil of the writers is in vain, and you yourself will receive no blessing from these efforts. To me it makes no difference whether you begin reading from the back page to the front page, or from the Meditation to the Church News. Interest in our churches is good and commendable, and in His fear will be there. But read, by all means read!

And then read in His fear. Read in order that you

may learn to know this God in His majesty more fully and richly. If you approach the magazine to see who is being attacked this time, or to find out what is being condemned, you are not going to receive a blessing out of the reading. But if you read in order to meet this God in His majesty and to be filled with a loving reverence and awe before Him, you will go away saying, "O, God, how great and good Thou art!" You will go away ascribing all the glory to Him.

Reading it in His fear will also work within you the desire to have your children know this God as He truly is, and will move you to recommend the articles of the *Standard Bearer* to them. They read and study heavier material than this in high school. Begin early in their teens by giving them those articles which you are sure they can digest. And get them in the habit of reading the pages of the *Standard Bearer*. If ever there was a time when they needed to see the God of all majesty, it is now. Amid all the philosophies that are so subtle and numerous today, they need a standard bearer, something to which they can look and turn for guidance and instruction. They need the standard that bears the inscription: IN HIS FEAR.

Let me suggest then, in conclusion, that you have a set time for your reading. There are those widows, shut-ins, and retired individuals, who are home when the mailman delivers the *Standard Bearer*, and who tell me that they sit down and read it from cover to cover, and later on reread it. Now all do not have that time. There are also those who when they get home from work ask whether the *Standard Bearer* came, and if it did, sit down after the evening meal and read it through. If you can, by all means do so. But usually one is tired from the day's toil and is not in the best condition for thoughtful reading. It is better, then, to set aside a period of the Sabbath to read slowly and thoughtfully that which you did not find time to read the day that it was delivered to your home.

Reading in His fear means reading it thoughtfully and carefully. It may take you only ten to fifteen minutes to read an article that took all day to plan, to conduct the necessary research, to outline and type out and proofread. And it certainly is true that "The husbandman that laboureth must be the first partaker of the fruits." Therefore the writers obtain more benefit from their writings than the reader. Yet the reader will be partaker of the fruits in the measure that he reads thoughtfully and carefully.

And, by all means, reading in His fear means that the fear of the Lord rules us in our reading. This means that we will reject all that which in any way detracts from the transcendent glory of our God and attributes anything to man, regardless of who writes the article. We must not write in fear of men. We must not read either in fear of men but in the fear of the Lord. It is not in His fear to defend a man, a congregation, or a denomination that to any degree by its teachings brings our majestic God down the smallest step from His transcendent glory.

I do not advocate critical reading in the sense of being a fault-finder. But reading in His fear means that the reading public that know this God in His majesty of transcendency will also be on guard to keep the RFPA publishing that which ascribes all the glory to God and will point out any departure that may have been published. I repeat, if you do not bring them to the throne of grace, do not bring the writers, and the association, before the bar of your judgment. But if prayerfully you have approached the matter, and believe that you have found written and published that which is not in His fear, be sure first of all that your position ascribes all the glory to God, and then by all means take the steps to correct in His fear.

If we are walking in His fear and we wish to publish a magazine in His fear, we will welcome all advice and corrections from those who in His fear present them. For the fear of the Lord produces the fear of the Lord. And when you have a publishing association, writers and a reading public all living in His fear, you have a force that Satan fears; and a force that has no fear of Satan and his hosts; and a force that not only knows God in love, but which God knows in love.

Feature

The Concern of the Reformation for Christian Education (3)

Rev. David Engelsma

Luther suggested that there were two main purposes for educating the children of believers, a "spiritual" purpose and a "temporal" purpose. By the first was meant the spiritual welfare of the Church and the spiritual welfare of the child himself. The welfare of the Church requires an educated ministry. Those that will be the theologians and preachers in the Church must be learned in the languages, not only their own native tongue, but also the original languages of Holy Scripture, Hebrew and Greek. And because so much of theology has been written in Latin, they must also know the Latin language. Both for defending the faith against the heretics and for the positive work of the ministry of the gospel, especially, the expounding of the Word, the young men who aspire to the ministry must be well educated.

In proportion then as we value the gospel, let us zealously hold to the languages. For it was not without purpose that God caused his Scriptures to be set down in these two languages alone — the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New in Greek. And Let us be sure of this: we will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17) is contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined . . .

("To the Councilmen of Germany")

Luther's idea was that all of the children would be given several years of schooling and that those young men who showed themselves to be capable and who inclined to the ministry would go on to more advanced education.

But the "spiritual" purpose of education was not limited to those boys who would become ministers. It was the contention of Luther that every child must be educated, at least, for several years. Also girls must go to school.

And would to God that every town and a girls' school also, in which the girls were taught the Gospel for an hour each day . . .

("An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility") In like manner, a girl can surely find time enough to attend school for an hour a day . . .

("To the Councilmen of Germany")

The insistence of the Reformation that every child is to be educated was something new. Prior to the Reformation, only some of the boys received any schooling, while the girls were almost entirely deprived of an education. The Reformation desired this universal education of all boys and all girls because it desired their spiritual welfare. As children of believers, they must all be able to read the Scriptures, in the Church, to confess their faith intelligently, and to instruct their own children in time to come. Without schools, these basic requirements would be severely hampered or rendered completely impossible. Living as they were in the midst of widespread illiteracy, the Reformers saw the evil consequences of this ignorance for the basic callings of every believer.

There is a relationship, a close and important relationship. between the school and the Church, and between education and one's spiritual welfare. The Reformation saw this at once. The great Dutch Reformed theologian, Dr. Abraham Kuyper, explained

this relationship in his commentary on Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

Indeed, when in the church of God the preaching of the truth goes forth, there must not only be someone who speaks, but there must also be those who hear. and this hearing is impossible (gaat niet) unless the hearers, from youth on, are established in the paths of truth. Hearing in the church is not merely a listening but a being able to follow what is spoken; a penetrating with the entire consciousness into that which one hears; and also spiritually to "live along" with the preacher. Now, this is impossible, if our children are educated "heathenishly" and then once a Sunday are placed in an entirely different world of thoughts. Such an unprepared faculty of hearing hears sounds. but understands nothing. . . . For the right blossoming of the preaching it is, therefore, not only necessary that there be schools where the preachers learn to preach, but, likewise, schools where the hearers learn to hear. (E Voto, Vol IV. My translation from the Dutch - DE).

The Reformation cried out for the establishment of Christian Schools. One reason was its desire that all the children be able to read the Scriptures and to carry out the spiritual duties they had from God with regard to the truth of those Scriptures. This concern for the Christian education of all of the children of believers had a profound, theological motivation.

First, it reflected the Reformation's fundamental belief that God had given Holy Scripture into the hands of every believer, for every believer to read, to understand, to confess, and to teach to others (especially, to his own children). It never was important to the Roman Catholic Church, and still is not today, that her members read the Bible. According to Rome, it is enough that the member be joined to the Church Institute, that he use the sacraments, especially, the Eucharist, and that he believe what the Church tells him, simply on the authority of the Church itself. Rome even has a teaching that it is sufficient for a man to have "implicit faith," that is, that he have a disposition to believe whatever the Church holds as truth, although actually he is ignorant of the truth, having no idea what it may be. Therefore, it did not trouble the Church institute just prior to the Reformation that many of the members were totally ignorant of Scripture and were even unable to read it. The Reformation, however, restored Scripture to its central place in the life of the Church and of every believer. It called on each man, woman and child to read, understand, defend and confess the truth of Scripture. Schools, naturally, have an important place in seeing to it that all the children of believers have the ability to work with the Scriptures.

Secondly, the concern of the Reformation for the education of all the children stemmed from the Reformation's teaching of the priesthood of all believers. Prior to the Reformation, the corrupted Church con-

cerned itself only with the education of the priests. Only they had vital work to do in the Church. The Reformation grasped the truth of Scripture that all believers (girls included) are priests. As a priest, each believer has vital work to do in the Church and also in his daily life in God's world. Essentially, his work is to

consecrate himself and all his family, possessions and labor to God in thankful love. Education, if it be Christian, serves to equip all believers for this priestly calling. This leads us into what the Reformation considered the second purpose of education, namely, the "temporal" purpose. (to be continued)

From Holy Writ

Exposition of the Last Part of Hebrews

Rev. G. Lubbers

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS ON Hebrews 10:19, 13:25.

We now come to our reflection upon the last part of the book of Hebrews. We might call it the practical, exhortative part. This entire section begins with a brief statement of the chief thrust of the entire epistle. The believing Hebrews must not attempt to go back to the shadows and types of the Old Testament Dispensation, which really helped no one as pertaining to the conscience, but must press on in the new and living way which is prepared for us by the blood of Jesus Christ!

In a general way it may be said that this entire remaining part is controlled by the spiritual realities of faith, hope and love. Even a superficial reading of the text here in question (Hebrews 10:19-25) will prove abundantly that the readers are urged to walk in faith, hope and love. The exhortations are: 1. To draw nigh in full assurance of faith. 2. To hold fast in unwavering hope. (Vs. 23) 3. To give heed unto each other unto the sharpening of love, knowing that the day of the Lord is drawing nigh. There is truth in the observation of one commentator, that the remainder of the book of Hebrews is the working out of this threefold theme. and in that very order. It should be obvious that the entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews speaks of the nature and power of faith in the lives of all the Old Testament saints. Chapter twelve deals with the life of hope as it clings to Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith, even unto the shaking of both heaven and earth in order to bring in an unmovable inheritance. And the last chapter of this book refers to the theme of love, love for the brother and for the stranger, which is the evident token of a living faith and hope in Christ Jesus.

And this book ends with a prayer and benediction resting in the work and mercies of God through Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and with an appeal that this book, which has been written in a few words, be read carefully considering the compass of the subject treated.

THE ENTIRE ARGUMENT SUMMED UP IN ONE GRAND STATEMENT (Hebrews 10:19-21).

The writer here looks back upon all that which he has thus far shown to be the truth of the Gospel from the Holy Scriptures. This is the entire thrust of all he has thus far written. Two things he had shown and which he here briefly states. 1. We have freedom (boldness) to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. 2. We have a great High Priest over the house of God, Jesus.

These are two pivotal truths and realities upon which we can lean as upon the Rock of Ages.

Yes, we have freedom to enter into the holiest. We have this as a continuous and abiding possession. The term *boldness* is not to be interpreted as reckless daring, but rather that we need not have any misgivings whether we indeed may come into so holy a place as the very presence of God, where the angels cover their faces. Sinners that we are, evil consciences that we have because of our sins, yet we may "draw nigh." We need not stand afar off, but may come with uncovered faces and behold the glory of the Lord.

For this is a boldness to draw nigh *in the blood of Jesus*. This is the blood which he shed for us at Calvary. He did this *once* in the end of the ages. (Hebrews 9:7, 26, 27, 28) Never need another sacrifice for sins be brought. For where there is remission of sin no more sacrifice for sin need to be brought. (Hebrews 10:18) And so we *have*, as a rightful possession and claim, access to God. We have the right to be called the children of God. We can come to the throne of grace and find help in the time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

The writer adds the second glorious reality. We have a great priest over the house of God. We may be certain that this "house" of God is not merely a building, made with hands as it was in the Old Testament with the temple. The writer to the Hebrews referred to this question of the "house of God" in Hebrews 3:1-6. Here the writer teaches us that in the Old Testament tabernacle Moses was merely a servant, be it then a

faithful servant in all God's house. But Moses was not the builder of the house. Nor was his place that of the Son of God in the house, but merely that of a servant. But Christ, the Son who is Jesus, He is the builder of all things, of the house of God. And the house which Christ builds is not one of worldly stones, of this creation, but it is made of spiritual stones. And these stones are the holy nation, the royal priesthood, called out of darkness into God's marvelous light. And over this house of God, the church of the living God, Christ is the great High Priest. He is the Head of the church; He ever lives to pray for the church. He asks the Lord, God Omnipotent, to apply his merits to us, so that we may be atoned, covered with his blood.

For this Jesus has made a new and living way for us into the holiest of God, into His very presence. This way is called "new," whereas in the Old Testament Dispensation there was not such a way. The entire testimony of the Holy Spirit was that the way into the holiest was not yet opened (manifested) while the first temple stood. But now the veil has been rent. At the very moment that Jesus' flesh was rent, and Christ passed through his own flesh into the Most Holy place of heaven itself for us, the veil in the symbolical, parabolical temple rent in twain from top to bottom. The way is opened unto God. Only unbelief denies this. It is the unbelief which will not enter into the rest of God.

That has been the grand testimony of the letter to the Hebrews up till this point, and this becomes the great reason for us to be reconciled to God. Here we have the great theme: God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their sins unto them. Wherefore, as ambassadors of God, we beseech you in Christ's Name: be ye reconciled to God. For he who knew no sin, hath God made sin for us, that we might be made righteousness of God in Him!

Such is the entire argument of the grace of God in the Gospel in a nut-shell.

IN THE FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH (Hebrews 10:22)

He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6) For without faith it is impossible to please God! Unbelieving Israel could not enter into the promised rest because of their unbelief. Therefore their carcasses were strewn in the wilderness along the route of their journeyings and wanderings.

Yes, we must draw near in faith, in humble trust, that there is forgiveness of sins for me, everlasting righteousness and eternal life, merely for the sake of Christ's merits on the Cross. That is the faith here spoken of. It is a faith whereby we appropriate all the merits of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This faith is here described as a faith from a true heart. Such a true heart is not false; it truly seeks forgiveness

of sins, and truly seeks to draw nigh to God. The heart must be true. The heart determines. Only a *true* heart is a believing heart. With the heart we believe unto salvation. Only a true heart has full assurance. Full assurance means that all doubt and misgivings as to our having the right to draw nigh to God have been taken away! Thus in full assurance we let ourselves rest in the great and rich mercies of God.

None of us has a true heart as we are by nature. Shall we have a true heart then we need a "sprinkled conscience." We then need by faith to appropriate the blood of Christ. It means that we look at all of our sins, our present inclination to sin even now, and that we believe that the verdict of God is that we are righteous before God in Christ and an heir of everlasting life. The Spirit of Christ applies this so to our heart that our conscience no longer condemns us. We stand in God's court and are free from sin and guilt.

This is the pure water with which we are sprinkled. Surely this is the "pure water" of which the prophet Ezekiel writes (36:25-28) "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

It is quite clear from this passage of Ezekiel, to which the writer of the Hebrews refers, that this water which is pure water, is none other than the cleansing power of the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Here is no reference to any "holy water" which man may devise and make. Here is a cleansing which gives a new heart, a new spirit, so that we now will walk in the way of God's commandments and in His judgments.

Having thus been cleansed we are the house of God! Thus we are those who can draw nigh in the full assurance of faith. For then the new covenant, which the Lord will make in the latter days, has been established in our hearts.

HOLDING FAST THE CONFESSION OF OUR HOPE WITHOUT WAVERING (Hebrews 10:23)

Here the writer exhorts "Let us hold fast the confession of the hope without wavering, for he is faithful who hath promised."

Here, too, is an admoniton in which the writer includes himself. He will submit to the Word of the Gospel in obedience with his hearers. This is supreme spiritual pedagogy. The term to "hold fast" means to hold down, to hold thoroughly. This is a tremendous spiritual activity of mind, heart, soul and strength. This is a battle against all doubt and temptation, particularly, when we suffer for the cause of the Son of God in the world and it seems that His coming is delayed,

and the full fulfilment of His promises tarry. It may then seem that the Lord is slack. Then it requires much strength of patience to continue in the battle. The foes are strong and numerous; their attacks are fierce and incessant, with a hellish persistence. It is then that we must "confess" our hope, give an account of the hope that is in us. The "hope" here is the blessed return of the Son of God as the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Now this confession we must hold. It is really, centrally, the confession that God will fulfil all His

promises. And these promises are fulfilled in no way by us. We can do nothing toward their realization. God alone fulfils His own promise. Thus did Abraham wait in patience and much longsuffering, and received the promise in hope. And thus we are to wait in patience, without wavering. We must not in our holding on to the confession lean away from it. We must be inflexible in the battle.

And if we are inflexible we will say: God, who has promised the fulfillment of all His covenant words, is faithful

Question Box

About Marriage Regulations For Priests in Leviticus

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

This question comes from a Grand Rapids reader: Dear Editor:

"Recently we were reading at the table from the book of Leviticus; and as we were reading from the 21st chapter, verses 7, 13, and 14, I noticed something that I had never noticed before.

"These verses speak of the laws of marriage for the priests. They may marry a virgin, but not a widow, nor one that is put away from her husband. And then they state the reason why they may not take these particular women to wife, namely, because they (the priests) are holy.

"Why is the reason given, and what does it mean in this context? Is it implied that the other Israelites could marry a divorced woman?

"Yours in the Lord,"

Reply

The passages in question are as follows. In Lev. 21: 7 we find regulations concerning the marriage of the ordinary priests: "They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane (a fallen woman, probably any unmarried woman who has at any time known another man, HCH); neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God." In verses 13 and 14 there are regulations concerning the marriage of the high priest only: "And he shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife." We may notice, therefore, that the regulations for the marriage of the high priest were more stringent than the regulations for the marriage of the ordinary priests. The high priest might only marry a strict virgin; he was not even allowed to marry a widow. The priests would be permitted, under the regulations of verse 7, to marry a

widow; but they might not marry anyone who had violated the seventh commandment. We may also note that with respect to both the priests and the high priest the reason for these regulations lies in their holiness unto the Lord. This is stated with respect to the priests in verse 7. And with respect to the high priest, this is clear from the context. The anointing oil of his God is upon him, vs. 12. And in vs. 15 we read, "Neither shall he profane his seed among his people: for I the Lord do sanctify him."

It is obvious, therefore, that the reason given for these regulations is the holiness of the priests and of the high priest. But the question is: why is this reason given? What does this reason mean in this particular context. In other words, what is the connection between the observance of these regulations concerning priestly marriage and priestly holiness?

In answer to this question, I would point out, in the first place, that there is both a typical-ceremonial aspect and a real-moral aspect involved in these regulations. This is plain, first of all, when you read the regulations stated in these verses in their context. This entire chapter, as well as chapter 22, contains many regulations of a ceremonial-typical nature. Thus, for example, a priest might not defile himself (make himself ceremonially unclean) for the dead among his relatives, with certain exceptions; and the high priest might not defile himself for any dead body, even of his nearest relatives. Thus also, in the last part of chapter 21 there is an entire list of prohibitions as far as priestly personnel are concerned: no one who was deformed or who had even a slight physical blemish might function in the priestly office. And in chapter 22 there are regulations concerning the ceremonial cleanness and uncleanness of the priests, and prohibitions in case of uncleanness against serving in the

sanctuary. Some of these regulations even extended to a priest's daughter under certain circumstances.

In the second place, we may also distinguish between the ceremonial element and the moral element in these regulations for marriage. It is plain, for example, that there is no violation of the seventh commandment as such, and therefore nothing immoral, in the marriage of a widow. The marriage relationship between such a woman and her first husband has been dissolved by the only factor which can dissolve any marriage, death. She is therefore an unmarried woman, eligible, as far as the seventh commandment is concerned, to be married. In such a case, therefore, the regulation was ceremonial, not moral. But when in these verses the priest is prohibited to marry a woman put away from her husband, there is not merely a ceremonial rule involved, but also a moral principle, which, if violated, would involve a violation of the seventh commandment.

The same distinction between that which is ceremonial and that which is moral is made in the book of Leviticus with respect to holiness. There was such a thing as a ceremonial holiness. One can find many regulations, both for the priests and for the common people in Israel, which were purely ceremonial and which did not as such involve any moral principle. Thus, for example, there were laws of clean and unclean animals. There was nothing sinful as such in the eating of pork; but ceremonially the hog was an unclean animal and might not be eaten by the Israelites. So also, there is nothing sinful as such in being a leper. But a leper was ceremonially unclean and excluded from the congregation of Israel. Now the priests, and particularly, the high priest, because of their special typical position were called to be holy both ceremonially and in the moral sense of the word in a special way. That holiness involved, positively, complete consecration to the service of the Lord; and, negatively, it involved separation from all the defilement of sin. And evidently the ceremonial regulations with respect to the marriage of the priests saw in the fact that a certain woman had known another man an element of defilement which was symbolic of the defilement of sin. A priest, therefore, might not marry a woman who had been defiled by knowing another man because ceremonially this would imply that the priest himself would become defiled. And this was so strict in the case of the high priest that he was required to take as a wife only one who was strictly a virgin. Not only might he not take a woman who had been a harlot and who had been defiled thus by another man. Not only might he not take a woman who had at any time known another man outside of the marriage bond. But the high priest might not even for ceremonial reasons take for his wife one who had known another man within the bond of marriage, but whose first husband had died.

As far as any deeper reason is concerned, I would suggest, in the first place, that it may be connected with the peculiar position of the members of the tribe of Levi. They were, you will recall, consecrated to the service of the Lord in Israel in lieu of, or as substitutes for, all the firstborn among Israel. And as such substitutes they must be without defilement and without blemish – even as the proper sacrifice was a lamb without blemish. In the second place, I would point you to the fact that the priests were typical of the High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is described in Hebrews 7:26 as being "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Of the holy and undefiled character of the real High priest the holiness and undefiled character of the Old Testament priesthood was typical.

There is one more question added here: "Is it implied that the other Israelites could marry a divorced woman?" My answer to this question is negative. The text here simply says nothing about this matter. And the mere fact that it states in verse 7 that a priest might not marry a woman put away from her husband certainly does not imply that ordinary Israelites were permitted to do so. This is not a legitimate conclusion. Nor do the Scriptures at any point lend approval to such an action. The remarriage of divorced persons is prohibited in Scripture.

Why Does Not Classis Proclaim Prayer Days?

From Northwest Iowa comes the following question:

"Dear Prof. Hoeksema,

"The Martha Society of the Doon Prot. Ref. Church has a question for the Question Box and would appreciate an answer in the *Standard Bearer*.

"The question is: Doesn't classis ever feel it is necessary according to Article 66 of our Church Order to

hold a special day of prayer in time of great calamities, war, pestilence, etc.? "Yours in Christ,

Martha Society"

Reply

Article 66 of our Church Order reads as follows: "In time of war, pestilence, national calamities, and other great afflictions, the pressure of which is felt throughout the churches, it is fitting that the classis proclaim a day of prayer."

In answer to this question, I would say, in the first place, that *never* is a long time; but as far as I know, in the history of our churches thus far, no classis has ever called such a day of prayer as is referred to in Article 66. In the second place, I suppose we may assume that from a subjective point of view the reason for this is that classis has never felt it necessary to do so. It is another question, of course, whether there have been occasions when it would have been proper to proclaim such a day of prayer. But I would not want to assume that a classis has upon occasion felt it necessary, but then failed to do so.

Although Doon's Martha Society does not inquire about this, I will try to shed a bit of light on the meaning of this article of our Church Order and on its possible place in our ecclesiastical life. It so happens that I was recently asked to speak on this subject; and so I have the fruits of my study at hand.

Without repeating all that I said in that speech, let me call your attention to a few significant elements.

In the first place, this entire matter of special days of prayer (originally: days of fasting and prayer) has had a history. Originally the Reformed churches tended to shy away from such special days of prayer: not, of course, because they saw no good in days of prayer and fasting or because they considered them principally wrong, but partly because of the abuses which had arisen in connection with such special days in the Roman Catholic Church which they had just left. In the early history of the Reformed churches days of fasting and prayer were set aside at first only when the congregation was going to call a minister of the Word. Later, particularly in the unsettled days of the Dutch war for independence from Spanish rule, days which were also times of persecution at the hand of the Spanish Roman Catholic might, such days of fasting and prayer were set aside because of the pressure of war, pestilence, persecution, and national calamities. I think it is rather significant to note, too, that these days of prayer and fasting were not only called at very serious occasions, but that they were celebrated in a very serious manner. They did not simply call a brief prayer service in the evening - such as we have today, for example, on our annual Day of Prayer (Article 67) but they would designate an entire day during the week on which they refrained from food and drink, on which there would be preaching of the Word twice, and along with this prayers of supplication and thanksgiving, and, between the sermons, Scripture readings of one or another appropriate passage from the Old and New Testaments. In other words, the church at such an occasion would literally have an entire day of prayer and fasting. I would also suggest that the manner in which they celebrated such a day also reflects something of the seriousness of the situation which led them to proclaim such days of prayer. There was something spontaneous here. These days of prayer were not simply mechanically proclaimed when some consistory of classis happened to think it would be a nice idea to have a day of prayer. But the proclaiming of such days arose out of the bosom of the churches and out of a sense of real need to find refuge and solace in the fellowship of their God. In the same connection, I would suggest that there is something of a deep spirituality reflected in the fact that the church would assemble for an entire day as described above, — a spirituality that is largely absent in the church today, when it is sometimes difficult to get the congregation together for an hour-anda-half service on the annual day of prayer.

In the second place, I would call your attention to the circumstances spelled out in this article. The article speaks of a time of war, pestilence, national calamities, and other great afflictions. It is rather striking that although this might be covered by the expression, "other great afflictions," the article as we now have it in our Church Order no longer mentions persecution specifically. This was included in the original article as it was adopted by the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19. But I would especially have you note that according to Article 66 the classis must not merely proclaim a day of prayer in time of war, pestilence, etc. This is not the concern of the article. The concern is expressed in the words, "the pressure of which is felt throughout the churches." Hence, the article refers to the great calamities which God in His providence sends and which greatly affect the churches – either directly, as is the case in a time of persecution, or simply by reason of the fact that the church is still in the midst of the world, lives on this earth, in this country, and is therefore automatically affected by whatever calamities God sends upon this country or parts of it. Notice, too, that the article does not refer to some passing crisis, some brief calamity, but to calamities which are of heavy and far-reaching effect and scope: the pressure of them is felt throughout the churches.

There is, therefore, a certain spiritual attitude presupposed in this article, an attitude which is necessary both to proclaim and to conduct such a day of prayer. That attitude is not a carnal, this-worldly attitude, not one in which the lines of demarcation between church and world, between believer and unbeliever, between the spiritual and the carnal, are of no account. But it is an attitude according to which the church and the people of God are spiritually minded, deeply concerned about the church and its welfare and preservation, and in which they see the calamities of this present time as coming from the hand of their Father in heaven. There is, I think, a striking contrast between the spirit evinced in this article and the spirit of much that calls itself church today. There is much concern today among the churches about the world, about the ills of

society and of the nation at large, about social reform, much concern about the church's outreach toward society, etc. But there is very little concern about the church herself and her needs. But this article of our Church Order expresses concern for the *church*. This is the only concern which the church has with respect to the various calamities mentioned: "the pressure of which is felt throughout the churches!" And as an example of this concern, I would point you to the times when these days of prayer originated among our fathers. They were times of war and persecution, when the very existence of the churches and the very life of the people of God were at stake. They were times when entire congregations would be separated from the fellowship of the other churches, or when they would be forced temporarily to disband because of persecution, and even to form refugee churches in other cities and other countries!

In the third place, it should be evident that the purpose of such days of prayer is not that which is so often associated with days of prayer in our times. In some circles it has become a habit to go along with the national proclamation of days of prayer, — days of prayer, for example, for world peace. Our churches do not and should not go along with such ideas because the principle is wrong. Days of prayer are meant for the *church*, the church which alone can pray, not for the nation at large. They are not called for carnal ends, such as world peace. Their purpose is not a petition for mere material relief. The idea is not that when the Lord sends calamity, the church hurries to the throne of grace to importune the Lord kindly to undo the

calamity. But, in the first place, there is a recognition here that these calamities come to us from the governing and loving hand of our Father in heaven, from Him Who loves us for Christ's sake. And it should be the first spiritual instinct of the church and of the people of God in time of stress to turn to their Father in heaven. To whom else should they turn? In the second place, the purpose is that the church and the people of God may confess their dependence upon Him, may express and seek the grace of submission to God's will, and grace to seek the things that are above. - for example, in time of persecution grace to persevere and to remain faithful. In the third place, the church gathers for prayer under such circumstances because her concern is the preservation of God's church and God's saints in the midst of the calamities of this present time. Her need is to cast her burden upon the Lord.

Perhaps it is true that at this state in history Article 66 of our Church Order is somewhat of a dead letter; it is temporarily out of use. Yet I do not feel that we should throw out an article of this kind. Perhaps the day will come in the not too distant future which will be similar to the day when this article was first given a place in our Church Order, a day when in the face of calamities, in persecution, and under the heavy hand of God the churches will again be impelled and spiritually inclined to proclaim, not a service, but an entire day of fasting and prayer, when the church will experience that "the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe."

Contending for the Faith

The Doctrine of Atonement

SECOND PERIOD - 254-730 A. D.

Rev. H. Veldman

In our preceding article we noted that, according to Philip Schaff in his History of the Christian Church, Vol. II, 583 f.f., the apostolic scriptures everywhere bear witness of the salvation wrought through Christ, but that it required time for the profound ideas of a Paul and a John to come up clearly to the view of the church. It is true that the church lived from the first on the atoning sacrifice of Christ, that the cross ruled all Christian thought and conduct and fed the spirit of martyrdom, but the primitive church teachers lived more in the thankful enjoyment of redemption than in logical reflection upon it. Careful definition and sound analysis concerning the cross of Christ and its meaning were lacking in the early days of the New Dispensation. And this is understandable. That the church gave

a clear and concise definition of the truth was always occasioned by winds of heresy. And the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ was not a fundamental issue during those early days.

Philip Schaff remarks, and this is also substantiated by Dr. H. Bavinck, that the negative part of the doctrine of the atonement, the subjection of the devil, the prince of the kingdom of sin and death, was naturally most dwelt on in the patristic period, on account of the existing conflict of Christianity with heathenism, which was regarded as wholly ruled by Satan and demons. According to Hagenbach, in his History of Doctrines, the doctrine of the devil occupied during this period (this second period, 254-730) a prominent place in Soteriology, inasmuch as GREGORY OF NYSSA

and other theologians still maintained the notion previously held, that God defrauded the devil by a dishonest exchange. Of this conception of Georgory of Nyssa, Hagenbach writes as follows (Vol. I, 346):

Gregory of Nyssa. The train of his argument is as follows: Men have become slaves of the devil by sin. Jesus offered himself to the devil as the ransom which should release all others. The crafty devil assented. because he cared more for the one Jesus, so much superior to them, than for all the rest. But, notwithstanding his craft, he was deceived, since he could not retain Jesus in his power. It was, as it were, a deception on the part of God, that Jesus veiled his Divine nature, which the devil would have feared, by means of his humanity, and thus deceived the devil by the appearance of flesh. But Gregory allows such a deception according to the jus talionis (just retaliation - H. V.); the devil had first deceived men, for the purpose of seducing them; but the design of God in deceiving the devil was a good one, viz., to redeem mankind. (Gregory's arguments look very much like the wellknown maxim, "that the end sanctifies the means.") This dramatic representation of the subject includes, however, that other more profound idea, carried out with much ingenuity in many of the wondrous legends of the middle ages, that the devil, notwithstanding his subtility, is at last outwitted by the wisdom of God, and appears in the comparison as a stupid devil.

Of course, this view of Gregory of Nyssa hardly needs any refutation. We understand, of course, that the Lord would not resort to deception to outwit the devil. To save and redeem His own, God did not have to resort to trickery and deception in order to outwit the devil, but the living God must redeem and save His own in a way which would be in complete harmony with His adorable and unchangeable justice and righteousness.

Hagenbach continues and writes that this idea of Gregory of Nyssa and others was opposed by GREGORY OF NAZIANZUM, although it prevailed for some time under different modifications. Of this opposition by Gregory of Nazianzum, this writer has the following (Gregory has the following):

We were under the dominion of the wicked one, inasmuch as we were sold unto sin and exchanged pleasure for vileness. If it now be true that a ransom is always paid who is in the possession of the thing for which it is due, I would ask, to whom was it paid in this case? and for what reason? Perhaps to Satan himself? But it would be a burning shame to think so. For in that case the robber had not only received from God, but God himself (in Christ) as a ransom and an exceedingly great recompence of his tyranny Or is it paid to the Father Himself? But in the first place it might be asked, how could that be, since God did not hold us in bondage? (I assume the meaning is that, whereas the devil reigns over us. spiritually, and we are therefore slaves of the devil, God, in that sense, did not hold us in bondage. We understand, of course, that our bondage in sin is also

in a very real sense of the word a bondage of the Lord, in complete harmony with His justice and right-eousness — H.V.) And again, how can we satisfactorily explain it, that the Father delighted in the blood of the only begotten Son? since He did not even accept the offer of Isaac, but substituted the sacrifice of a ram in the place of a rational being? It is not then evident that the Father received the ransom, not because He demanded or needed it, but on account of the Divine economy, and because man is to be sanctified by the incarnation of God; that having subdued the tyrant, He might deliver and reconcile us to Himself by the intercession of His Son?

However, this Gregory of Nazianzum was, nevertheless, disposed to admit some artifice on the part of Christ in the contest in which He conquered Satan. "It consisted in this, that Christ assumed the form of man, in consequence of which the devil thought that he had only to do with a being like ourselves, while the power and glory of the Godhead dwelt in him."

In the above quotations, Christ's death is identified with a ransom. This is surely proper. We also read that this ransom was not paid out to the devil. And, of course, this, too, is correct. Now the question is asked whether it was paid to the Father, and also whether the Father needed it. And, although Gregory writes that the Father did not need this ransom price of the blood of His Son, yet the Scriptures surely teach us that this ransom was demanded by the justice and righteousness of the Lord.

Although the idea of Gregory of Nyssa, that God defrauded the devil by a dishonest exchange, was opposed in this form by Gregory of Nazianzum, yet it prevailed for some time under different modifications. In support of this Hagenbach has the following:

The doctrine received an essential modification in the statement of Augustine (De Trin. XIII.), that the devil, who had overstepped his power, was conquered in the struggle. He had overstepped his power in this, that he thought he could treat the sinless Jesus as a slave, like the other sons of Adam, which last, in fact, belonged to him as prisoners, according to the rights of war. Now, too, he lost the right to the latter, so far as they belong to Christ. (This, too, according to Gieseler, was the view of Hilary of Poitiers, Leo the Great, and Gregory the Great. Another representation was this - redemption was the result of a conflict in which Jesus conquered the devil. He conquered him so far as this, that the devil could not seduce him to commit the least sin; by this victory he made amends for the defeat suffered in Adam, and thus broke the dominion which the devil had on the ground of this defeat. This view is found in Hilary, Leo the Great, Gregory the Great, and, among the Greeks in Theodoretus).

Also, in this second period of the Church in the New Dispensation, the idea of a penalty endured on the part of God gained the preponderance, after its advocacy by Athanasius, the renowned church father who opposed Arius. According to this idea, God had threat-

ened to punish transgressors with death, and thus could not but fulfill His threatening. But, on the other hand, it was not in accordance with the character of God, that rational beings, to whom He had imported His own Spirit (Logos) should fall from their first state in consequence of an imposition practiced upon them by the devil. This was quite as contrary to the goodness of God as it would have been contrary to His justice and veracity not to punish the transgressor (Here the premises of the later theory of Anselm!). When the Logos perceived that nothing but death could save man from ruin, He assumed a human body, because the Logos Himself, i.e., the immortal Son of God, could not die. He offered his human nature as a sacrifice for all, and fulfilled the law by His death. By it He also destroyed the power of the devil. The reasoning was thus: God threatened death to man as a penalty for disobedience; this threat could not be unfulfilled, if God be true; but, on the other hand, God's love to man forbade the destruction of all men. And so the Lord adopted the expedient of allowing Jesus to die instead of man, so that both His truth and His love might be inviolate. It seems to me that this presentation could easily lead to what was later developed and known as the governmental theory of the death of Christ.

According to Hagenbach, we also find the subjective mode of regarding the death of Christ. This includes not only the ethical (in which the death of Christ is viewed as a pattern for our imitation), but also the typical and symbolical (mystical), reposing upon the idea of an intimate connection of the whole human race with Christ as its head. In support of this, he quotes Gregory of Nazianzum as follows:

He has ascended the cross, and taken me with Him, to nail my sin on it, to triumph over the serpent, to sanctify the tree, to overcome lust, to lead Adam to salvation, and to restore the fallen image of God.... God became man, and died, that we might live: we have died with Him, to be purified; we are raised from the dead with Him, since we have died with Him; we are glorified with Him, because we have risen with Him, from the grave.

In this above quotation of Gregory of Nazianzum we hear and read expressions that we know to be Scriptural and are dear to our hearts. Of course, I refer to the idea of an intimate connection of the human

race with Christ as its head. Christ ascended the cross and has taken me with Him; He nailed my sin to that cross. God became man, and died, that we might live: we have died with Him, to be purified; we are raised from the dead, since we have died with Him; we are glorified with Him, because we have risen with Him from the grave. It is true that the sentiment was also expressed that Christ suffered and died for the entire human race. However, the fathers did not enter into this question in a thorough sense of the word. That would come later. It would come when the enemies of the truth would compel the church of Christ to give a careful analysis and definition of the cross of Calvary. Indeed, when we say that we died, were buried, raised from the dead and glorified when Christ died, was buried, raised from the dead and glorified, we must come to the Scriptural truth that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died only for His own; otherwise these expressions simply do not make any sense. But to this we will call attention in later articles.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mothers' Circle of the Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School of Grand Rapids, Michigan mourns the loss of a faithful member,

MRS. HENRIETTA KALSBEEK

whom the Lord took home on the 21st of October, 1970 and hereby express their heartfelt sympathy to the husband, Mr. John Kalsbeek, and to the children.

May the rich promises of spiritual blessedness found in the Word of God give Christian hope and comfort.

Mrs. Jacob Kuiper, Sr., Pres. Mrs. Gerald Cnossen, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church extends sympathy to its members, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kalsbeek in the recent death of his mother,

MRS. HENRIETTA KALSBEEK,

whom the Lord took home on October 21, 1970.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15).

Fred Hanko, Pres. Mrs. Jon Huisken, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

Rev. M. Schipper presided over the opening devotions, and declared the Classis properly constituted. Noticeably absent from the October meeting were the Revs. Lubber, Kortering, Harbach, and Veldman. The Rev. Lubbers having moved to Jamaica, the Rev.

Kortering to Hull, the Rev. Harbach was also in Jamaica, and the Rev. Veldman was ill. All the churches, however, were represented by two delegates each.

The Rev. G. Van Baren, following the order of rotation, presided, while the Rev. Schipper recorded the

120

minutes.

Elders C. Kuiper and A. Rau served on the Finance Committee, and brother A. Elzinga was appointed to thank the ladies of Southeast Church for their excellent catering.

The Stated Clerk gave his report re correspondence, and the Classical Committee reported on its activities

Requests for classical appointments appeared on the agenda from Classis West for the churches of Randolph, Oak Lawn, and Doon; and from Hope and Southwest in Classis East. Rev. J.A. Heys, Elders T. Engelsma and G. Bouwkamp were appointed to arrange a classical appointment schedule which was later adopted as follows:

SOUTHWEST - Nov. 1 - H. Veldman, Nov. 8 - (morn) R. C. Harbach, Nov. 22 - (morn) H. Veldman, Dec. 13 - (eve) G. Van Baren, Jan. 3 - (morn) R. C. Harbach.

HOPE - Nov. 8 - (eve) R. C. Harbach, Nov. 22 - (eve) H. Veldman, Dec. 13 - (morn) G. Van Baren, Jan. 3 -(eve) R. C. Harbach.

OAK LAWN - Nov. 1 - M. Schipper, Nov. 15 - G. Van Baren, Nov. 22 - J. A. Heys, Dec. 13 - M. Schipper RANDOLPH – Oct. 18 - G. Van Baren, Nov. 1 - J.A. Heys, Nov. 22 - M. Schipper, Dec. 6 - R. C. Harbach, Dec. 20 - J. A. Heys.

DOON – Dec. 27 and Jan. 3 - H. Veldman.

Rev. J. A. Heys was requested to preside while the matter of an appeal was treated in closed session.

A committee of pre-advice was appointed to study the appeal: Revs. M. Schipper, J. A. Heys, Elders H. Kuiper and D. Engelsma, to report to a continued meeting on Nov. 4, 1970.

Rev. H. Veldman was chosen to the Classical Committee to fill the unexpired term of Rev. J. Kortering.

The term of Rev. M. Schipper as Stated Clerk having expired, he requested Classis to be relieved of this duty after fifteen years of service. Classis decided to appoint a committee to advise on whether the Stated Clerk might not be a lay-man and to propose a nomination. The committee to report to the Nov. 4th meeting: committee: Rev. H. Veldman and Elder H. Kuiper.

Classis decided to hold its next regular meeting January 6, 1971, D. V., In Hope Church. Questions of Art. 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered satisfactorily.

On the continued meeting of Nov. 4th the reports of the committees of pre-advice were treated.

Classis voted for a new Stated Clerk, and Mr. Jon Juisken of our Hope Church was chosen. The chairman expressed in the name of Classis appreciation to Rev. M. Schipper for the many years of service as Stated Clerk.

Elder T. Engelsma closed the session with thanks-M. Schipper, S. C. giving. * * * * *

From the bulletin of our church in Holland, Michigan, we learn that the pastor of that congregation, Rev. Heys, received the call from Doon's congregation. And after Rev. Engelsma declined their call, the congregation of Southwest Church made a new trio, consisting of Rev. J. Heys, Rev. R. Moore, and Rev. H. Veldman.

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In glancing over the November church bulletins, one can hardly help but be impressed by the topics of discussion for after-recess-programs in our various societies. We'll pass on a few - "The Peace Symbol," at a Young People's Society; "The Nature of Regeneration," at a Men's Society; "What attitude should we as Christians take towards pollution?" at a Mr. and Mrs. Society; "Should We Accept Medicaid," at a Ladies Society; "May we patronize stores which are open on Sunday", at a different Ladies Society. Interesting as those topics must certainly have been, they are not the prime attraction at society meetings. This point was emphasized by way of the Following October bulletin announcement in Southwest Church: "We would like to urge all of the members of the congregation to attend their respective societies. Remember that the living member of the church must also be nourished in discussion of God's Holy Word. If you are not now a member of one of the societies, we urge you to join now."

Since we're dealing with societies, anyway, we could mention that Rev. Heys spoke at the Mr. and Mrs. League Meeting on October 23 at Grand Rapids Hope Church. He Spoke on the topic, "Training our youth in covenant distinctiveness." The message was, in the opinion of this writer, of exceptional value; so we'd like to give a short report of it, for the benefit of those who could not attend. But, thanks, to the Classis Report in this issue, we'll have to reserve that till next time.

It seems that Rev. Heys is in demand, lately, as a speaker. He was asked to conduct the October 26 "Morning Meditation" program on WHTC.

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The latest pamphlet published by the Sunday School Mission Publishing Society is one entitled, "The Infallibility of Holy Scripture," written by Rev. R. Harbach, pastor of Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church. It makes a worthwhile addition to a pamphlet rack, should your church happen to have one. The address of the above mentioned Society is: P.O. Box 1230, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 49501. D.D.