

# The Standard Bearer

**A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

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**The Mystery of the Last Moment**

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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**Meditation****The Mystery of the Last Moment**

Rev. M. Schipper

*"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

I Corinthians 15:51, 52.

Having made clear the central fact of our salvation, namely, that Christ is raised from the dead, the apostle reveals in the closing verses of this chapter the truth concerning the resurrection-gospel, the mystery of the last moment.

That the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who

died on the cross of Calvary for our sins, is the central fact of salvation, the assurance of our justification, and the surety of our hope of final glory, there can be no doubt. Because He is risen, our faith is not vain, we are no more in our sins, and we are not of all men the most miserable. Christ arose as the firstfruits; there



must be therefore a harvest that follows, that must be gathered in.

In a moment, the central moment of all history, Christ was raised from the dead. Not as a mere individual, but as the Lord and Head of His people, was the Lord raised up. Having conquered death, He left death dead behind Him; and He arose the firstborn out of the dead, and the firstfruits of them that slept. The resurrection, therefore, is begun, and it does not rest until all that are asleep in Him are also risen. The resurrection reaches out unto the last moment, the final moment of all history, when the dead in Christ shall rise again, and those believing and living upon the earth shall be changed.

The mystery of the last moment!

"A mystery is a truth that is related to the kingdom of God, that cannot be ascertained from the things that are seen, that is not discovered from anything in this present world, that transcends all our present experience, that can only be known by revelation through the Spirit of Christ, and apprehended by faith through the same Spirit." Such is the mystery as defined by another before me, and we shall not attempt to improve on this beautiful and comprehensive definition. We wish only to stress and call attention to the specific elements in it.

The mystery, first of all, concerns the truth that is related to the kingdom of God. In this context, the apostle has in mind specifically the bodily resurrection, and the final transition from the earthly to the heavenly, from the temporal to the eternal. Secondly, this truth cannot be ascertained from the things that are seen, or discovered from anything in this present world. Philosophy can never conceive of it, and Evolution cannot attain unto it. The natural mind cannot grasp it, for it transcends all that is of our present experience. Thirdly, this truth can be known only by revelation. And revelation is possible only through the Spirit of Christ, Who not only reveals unto us the truth and leads us into it, but Who also gives unto us the faith whereby the truth is apprehended and appropriated.

The mystery of the last moment!

Time, as we know it, is the succession of moments. Time is a creature, which has a beginning and an end, an alpha and an omega. Time is divisible in seconds, in minutes, in hours, in days, in months, in years, in centuries, in milleniums.

Time and history are simultaneous, and, in a sense, synonymous. All history is bound up in time. With the beginning of time all history begins, and with the end of time all history will have come to its conclusion. Within the brackets of time and history God is realizing the things of His counsel concerning His kingdom. Considered in this light, all history is church history. Everything that transpires in time and history is related somehow to the realization of His church and

covenant. In a succession of moments that kingdom, that church and covenant has an earthly, historical development, and there are first and last moments. When the last moment is reached, then the trumpet may sound that will bring an end to time as we know it, and call all that belongs to the heavenly kingdom into its eternal, and glorious reality.

That transition, that transformation from the earthly to the heavenly, from the temporal into the eternal, from the corruptible to the incorruptible, from the natural to the spiritual, — that is all bound up in the mystery of the last moment.

The mystery of a complete change!

That transformation of the last moment will assume a two-fold form: that of the resurrection of the dead, and that of the sudden change of those yet living.

Concerning the former, the apostle speaks at length throughout this chapter dealing with the resurrection-gospel. Concerning the latter, he speaks specifically in the text. However, in such a way are these two conceived of that they take place simultaneously, in the last moment.

To understand the necessity of this complete change, we must keep in mind the nature and the wonder of the kingdom which God is realizing and which He has promised to us.

That kingdom, that city, that eternal commonwealth, is heavenly, incorruptible, spiritual, eternal, — which we could never enter as we are. As the apostle states it in the verse preceding our text, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Were we to enter that kingdom as we are (which, of course, is utterly impossible), we would see and hear nothing. We could see nothing of its glory with our bodily eyes; and we could hear nothing with our bodily ears of the heavenly paeans of praise sung by the chorus of holy angels, and disembodied spirits of just men made perfect. With our present bodies, standing in the midst of the heavenly kingdom, we would be totally oblivious of our glorious surroundings. The reason being, that as we are now we are adapted only to the earth out of which we were created, and our physical senses are not at all adapted to the heavenly. That is why it is also true, as the apostle Paul expresses it, "that it hath never entered into the heart of man," nor could it, the things which God hath laid away for those that love Him. We must undergo, therefore, a complete change.

We shall not all sleep!

But we shall all be changed!

O, undoubtedly, the majority of the saints shall undergo the experience of sleep. This is Scripture's way of beautifully describing the death of God's children. Evidently the saint is considered here in terms of that which is earthly. Just as at night he lays himself down to rest and sleep, with the hope of rising



in the morning into a new day; so it is when he dies the physical death, he does so in the hope of the resurrection.

Be not deceived! Not here or anywhere else in Scripture does the Word of God teach a certain doctrine of soul-sleep, as some aver. It is safe to say that the soul never sleeps, not even when our bodies go to rest at night. And surely this cannot be the case when our bodies enter into physical death. Even then our souls have a tabernacle of God in which they dwell, and in which they appear consciously in the very presence of Christ.

In the entire context here the apostle is speaking of death and resurrection. But for the Christian, death is described in the earthly term of sleep; only because death for him is not permanent. He enters into death with the assurance that he shall rise again. And, as we said, for the majority of the children of God the order will be death and resurrection, through which they shall experience a complete change.

But not all shall sleep!

There shall be those who are physically alive before the last moment. And they also must be changed. For flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God.

The trumpet shall sound, and we all shall be changed!

The dead, through the wonder of the resurrection!

The living, through the wonder of the last moment!

Glorious change!

Here, in the present, all is corruptible; then, — incorruption. Here all is mortal and subject to death; then, — immortality. Here we are natural, psychical; then, — spiritual. Now we bear the image of the earthly; then, — we shall bear the image of the

heavenly.

In a moment!

Which is described here as the twinkling of an eye, is the last moment of history, and at the same time, the beginning of everlasting glory.

At the last trumpet!

Undoubtedly a figure of speech, reminding us of the silver trumpet which called the people of God to the service in the sanctuary. Here evidently representing the final call which shall convoke all the saints for the everlasting worship in the heavenly tabernacle of God in the New Jerusalem. Telling us in no uncertain terms that there shall be nothing secret about this final and glorious transformation. For the call of the trumpet shall resound into the nether parts of Hades, calling forth the dead into their resurrection bodies, and penetrating the very being of the living saints and effecting their complete change, and precisely in that order, for the living shall not precede the dead into glory.

At the last trumpet!

No more sounds will be necessary when that trumpet shall sound, for then all of God's purpose shall have been realized.

We shall appear before Him as He shall appear in the face of Christ Jesus. And we shall be like Him and see Him as He is. Wholly adapted to dwell with Him as His redeemed and glorified subjects in His everlasting kingdom. That is the final purpose of God, and the end of all things!

May the glory of the last moment, and the thrill of the sound of the last trumpet become a blessed object of hope, that it governs completely both our lives and our death. Amen!

## Editorial

# Developments in the Gereformeerde Kerken

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

### Dr. H. Wiersinga Cleared by Amsterdam Consistory

Previously we have reported to you concerning the case of a Dr. H. Wiersinga, who denied the truth of substitutionary atonement in a doctoral dissertation for which he received a degree from the Free University of Amsterdam. In October, 1971 the Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* published a decision in which they attempted to quiet the fears which have arisen in connection with this flagrant denial of the atonement by apparently reaffirming the teachings of our confessions on this subject and by stating that Dr. Wiersinga's views required careful study before a synodical pronouncement could be made. Thus far we have seen no report concerning the action of Synod in

regard to the several protests registered against Wiersinga's views. As we have suggested earlier, it should not take a Reformed synod — or any assembly, for that matter — much time to deal with such a literal and flagrant denial of the central doctrine of the atonement as this is. This would seem to be a simple case, so simple, in fact, that if the Synod cannot take a clear-cut stand in condemnation of Wiersinga, matters have become altogether hopeless in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.

But by this time we have learned not to expect clear-cut decisions from the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, except for the fact that in clear-cut fashion they open the door wide for doctrinal liberty.



Perhaps we have a sample of the kind of decision the General Synod will take in the decision already taken by the Consistory of Amsterdam, under whose jurisdiction Dr. Wiersinga, a student pastor, resides. A report of the consistorial decision appears in *Friesch Dagblad*, January 20, 1972. In brief, the Consistory of Amsterdam expressed that Dr. Wiersinga is not guilty of unfaithfulness, but that he wants to subject the confessions to the test of Holy Scripture. In a brief introductory paragraph of a long article, *Friesch Dagblad* gives the substance of the consistorial decision, as follows (in translation):

The consistory of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* of Amsterdam (central) has expressed "That the view of the doctrine of atonement set forth in his dissertation by Dr. H. Wiersinga deserves to be taken up as a theological-scientific contribution to the discussion about the atonement, in which he exerts himself to do full justice to all the Scriptural givens. That thereby he comes in conflict with certain expressions which are established in the confessions may, in the present stage of consideration, consequently not be blamed on him as unfaithfulness to the confessions, but deserves to be noted as a legitimate testing of the confession of the church by Holy Scripture. The merits of this testing deserve to be more closely investigated on the scientific level."

The article then goes on to explain, first of all, that Dr. Wiersinga had asked his consistory whether "within our churches there must be room for the study of his discussion without his faithfulness to the confession of the church being made an issue." The Consistory of Amsterdam referred this question to a committee and, following the advice of this committee, answered the question of Dr. Wiersinga affirmatively. According to the report, the Consistory assumed, too, "that Dr. Wiersinga would, within the room requested by him, exercise the pastorally required reserve and self-control." The report goes on to state that the Consistory also decided to alert the congregation to continue to give its trust to Dr. Wiersinga and to conduct the discussion about the very central doctrine of atonement prayerfully.

As we reported earlier, various representatives of the "Verontrusten" had filed a formal protest against Wiersinga's views with the Consistory of Amsterdam. They had requested the Consistory of Amsterdam to take disciplinary measures. To these protestants the Consistory answered that while they could understand their feelings of alarm, nevertheless in the present stage they saw no reason to proceed with disciplinary measures.

Finally, the Consistory also decided to ask the general synod "to stimulate a closer investigation of the doctrine of atonement on a scientific-theological level," and only after a rather complete scientific consideration to weigh the consequences involved.

According to this same report of *Friesch Dagblad*,

the Consistory of Amsterdam took several factors into consideration in reaching this decision. Rather than translate all of this material literally, we will rather freely give the gist of these points, as follows:

1. The freedom to test the confession of the church by Holy Scripture as the only rule of faith must especially be guaranteed when it concerns the central points of doctrine (Cf. Art. 7 of the Belgic Confession). [The particular part of Article 7, which speaks of "the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to be the only rule of faith," to which the Consistory refers is not mentioned. But I would guess that the reference is especially to the following: "Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore, we reject with all our hearts, whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, Try the spirits whether they are of God. Likewise, if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house." Imagine! Justifying and protecting a vicious denial of and attack upon this most central truth of the gospel in our confessions in the name of the confessions themselves! What hypocrisy!]

2. For this testing it is essential that there be room for scientific-theological study and discussion proceeding out of the unity of faith with the confession of the fathers.

3. Especially with respect to the doctrine of atonement, it must continually be kept in view that not only theological discussion, but also the speech of the confessions, and even the testimony of Scripture in human words, figures, and presentations brings us into contact with a dealing of God unto our salvation in which man is indeed extremely concerned, but which bears the character of a divine mystery which by man can be only proximately investigated and worshipfully experienced (Cf. Rom. 11:33, ff; I Cor. 2:9; I Tim. 3:16).

4. a. In view of his connection with and the particular character of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands, it may be expected of Dr. Wiersinga that in his official actions and speech he will take into consideration the reserve which is proper with respect to views which are still in the sphere of theological-scientific research.

b. Because of this same bond of unity it may be asked of the churches that they do not equate faithfulness to Holy Scripture and faithfulness to the confession and that they will evince understanding of the provisional character of scientific expressions, also when these expressions are brought in public.



5. Only when the scientific study of the views of Dr. Wiersinga has reached a certain rounding off will it be possible to weigh the consequences which the results of this research will have for the confession of the church, her preaching, and her catechizing. This weighing ought to take place in ecclesiastical assemblies. Finally, according to this report, the consistory expressed its joy at the declaration of Dr. Wiersinga that he agreed fully with the content of the synodical pronouncement of October 7, 1971 with respect to the atonement.

Thus far the report of *Friesch Dagblad* on this matter.

### Comment

We may notice, in the first place, that the subterfuge by which Wiersinga's heresy is defended and protected ecclesiastically is the calling of the church to test the confessions by the test of Holy Scripture. But, you ask, is this not correct? Is it not true that we may not put our confessions on a level with Scripture, but must test them by Scripture? The answer to this question is, in the first place, that it is indeed true that Scripture is our only infallible rule of faith and that our confessions are subordinate standards. This does not mean, however, that we live in the church with continual questionmarks behind our confessions. On the contrary, we subscribe to our confessions as being the expression of the truth of Scripture. And we maintain that subscription until the opposite appears, i.e., until it has been made plain, and that too, ecclesiastically, that Scripture teaches differently. And, in the second place, the *method* for every member of the church — and especially for officebearers — is the method of *gravamen*, not the method of publicly proposing contrary views. This is plainly set forth by the Formula of Subscription, by which Dr. Wiersinga was also bound at the time when his doctoral thesis was published. By now, of course, the Dutch churches have set aside the Formula of Subscription and have decided to substitute a meaningless vow which will officially allow full doctrinal liberty.

We recall that this subterfuge is the same as that of the Arminians at the time of the Synod of Dordrecht. And is it not ironic that this should happen at the very time when the present general synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* is also called the Synod of Dordrecht? And is it not ironic, too, that this pronouncement should come from the Consistory of Amsterdam, the very city where Arminius was a pastor and where he met his first opposition from Plancius, his fellow pastor? The Arminians, too, denied the vicarious satisfaction of Christ. And the Arminians, too, did not want to be tried by the Synod of Dordrecht as heretics, but wanted to test and revise the confessions — so they alleged — by Holy Scripture.

How is the gold become dim!

In the second place, the ground for this decision to

shield Wiersinga's heresy is that of academic freedom, specifically the freedom to practice the science of theology. Again, this sounds good. We must certainly have academic freedom. How otherwise can the dogmatician practice his science? How can he theologize? How can there ever be any development and enrichment of the truth? What is forgotten, however, is the fact, first of all, that there is a vast difference between liberty and license. The theologian may and must exercise the science of theology, by all means. But he may and must do so as a member of the church with which he is united, and therefore within the limits of the creeds to which he has voluntarily subscribed as being the true expression of Scripture in all points of doctrine, and therefore, too, in harmony with the provisions — in case of disagreement — of the Formula of Subscription. When the libertarian becomes a libertine, and when liberty is subverted into licentiousness, then true academic freedom has been destroyed!

But it has long been the slogan in the Dutch churches that there must be academic freedom, that there must be the proper climate for the development of theology. It is under this same banner that all the representatives of the new theology are shielded. The Free University — but not it only — has been a hotbed of this kind of theological ferment and revolution. Meanwhile, heresy is allowed to gnaw like cancer at the very vitals of the church and of the faith.

Nor should we have any illusions about the provisional character of views such as those of Wiersinga. Just how provisional, I ask, are views which have been so carefully studied and so well set forth and documented that in the judgment of the "experts" — the theological faculty of the Free University — they merit the degree of Doctor of Theology? Nor should we have illusions about the "pastorally required reserve" of these heretics. For one thing, can you imagine that if Dr. Wiersinga is convinced of the truth of his position, he is going to keep silence about it? This is morally impossible, and in the nature of the case improbable. And remember: Dr. Wiersinga is a pastor for students — the most impressionable as well as the most inclined to be radical and revolutionary! And secondly, I have seen no evidence in others of this reserve. On the contrary, the Netherlands has been swamped by the propaganda of men like Kuitert, Augustijn, Baarda, and others, in speech and in writing. They always propagandize the churches long enough that finally *their* positions are adopted and become the official positions of the churches. And the churches have tolerated this propaganda. In fact, when anyone tries to cry, "Stop!" there arise from the theologians cries of a simulated holy horror about spoiling the climate for theological discussion and debate.

In the third place, the decision of the Consistory of Amsterdam is quite in line with the kind of decisions



the Synod has been making in the cases of Kuitert, Baarda, and others. Either the members of the committee in this case had learned their lesson well or they received advice from the Amsterdam theologians. Or possibly some of these influential theologians are in the consistory of Amsterdam. I know not. But the decision is so smoothly and piously worded and so much in the spirit of the preliminary synodical pronouncement of October that I could well imagine that the Synod could almost take over the consistorial decision verbatim. Time will tell.

Meanwhile, we repeat what we stated in an earlier

editorial: this doctrine of the atonement is so important, and its denial is so serious, that if Wiersinga's heresy is approved, or even tolerated, it must be said without reservation that the *Gereformeerde Kerken* are become the manifestation of the false church. Think of what Scripture says of those who "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:6), and of those who have "trodden under foot the Son of God, and (have) counted the blood of the covenant . . . an unholy thing" (Heb. 10:29), and of those who deny the Lord that bought them (II Peter 2:1, ff.).

## Studies in Election

# Its Exhibition

*Rev. Robert C. Harbach*

In the last three installments of this series we have endeavored to present that view of the decree of election which is not only the most acceptable, but which is the correct view, the one most in harmony with Scripture. We showed that divine election is that act of God according to which He chose to everlasting life, not a group of individuals, merely, but a whole church. Also we must maintain that all the members of this elect church without exception, from the beginning to the end of the world, God regards as His own children. That, of course, means that there are yet many unconverted elect, who, nevertheless, from all eternity are His dear people. Such a wonderful truth finds no place in modern man-centered theology. For according to *it*, we are not children of God from eternity, but that God only foresees that certain will believe in Christ, accept Him by faith and so become regenerated and converted children of His family. But Scripture does not make the work of God contingent upon the act of man. Scripture does not make regeneration the effect of faith; it sees the plant of faith growing out of the root of regeneration. Also it presents the Lord as having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons (Eph. 1:5). That is why and how the Lord could regard the people of Israel as His own chosen possession *before* they were redeemed out of the land of Egypt, before the passover lamb was slain, and even while they were, as far as they themselves were concerned, hopelessly involved in idolatry (Ezek. 20:5-10)! Even then the Lord referred to them as "My people" (Ex. 3:7; 5:1). For in the midst of idolatrous Israel, like the grain in the thick of the chaff (Amos 9:9, 10), was the divinely ordained Israel of God, the spiritual seed, the remnant according to the election of

grace.

Admitted it is that all the elect are "by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3). But there is something wonderful said about them that has priority over the fact of what they are said to be by nature and by the fall, and that is, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Surely God sees His people in His covenant and counsel first of all as glorified sons of God. How they get to glory comes next, in His mind, namely, through the way of sin and redemption, so that He loved them as His own before He quickened them. It is His everlasting love which seeks them, finds them and quickens them. (Recall the lost son, Zacchaeus and the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda.) Therefore, adoption or sonship, in Scripture, does not stand on man's act of faith as its basis, but on election. They were His adopted children before they believed. For "He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:52). They were His children before the Son gathered them. They were His people before they were redeemed from Egypt. They were His people before they were willing to be His people. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Ps. 110:3). It is no strange thing that God has unconverted elect, whom He deems His people even before the gospel is preached to them and they become converted. This is plain in Scripture. "I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I *have* much people in this city" (Acts 18:10). They are His elect sheep long before brought into the fold. "Other sheep I *have*, which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring" (John 10:16). These other sheep are the elect Gentiles. These Gentiles the Lord called "the Tabernacle of



David" while still involved in the Fall of Adam. "God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets. . . 'after this I will return, and will build again the Tabernacle of David, which is fallen down'" (Acts 15:14-16), then, is one which identifies the elect of God, though involved in the Fall, as a congregation set up again, not in the first Adam, but in the last Adam, not in the first man, but in the second Man, who is the true David.

Election is exhibited in God's people being clearly identified. "In this was manifested the love of God toward *us*, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (I John 4:9). The love of God has exclusively very particular objects as marked by the pronoun "*us*." This designation appears in the Word of God to indicate the elect. "God commendeth His own love toward *us*, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for *us*" (Rom. 5:8, ASV). This is the distinguishing term the apostles used to specify the election of God, thereby including themselves, the saints and all believers in it. Further on you read, "the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for *us*," not for all men. "If God for *us*, who against *us*! . . . He . . . spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for *us* all . . . Christ . . . also maketh intercession for *us*" (8:26, 31, 32, 34. See 35, 39), but "not for the world" (John 17:9). Then, "God . . . hath blessed *us* with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ: according as He hath chosen *us* in Him before the foundation of the world . . . In love having predestinated *us* unto the adoption of children . . . He hath made *us* accepted in the Beloved" One (Eph. 1:3-6). This repeated *us* reveals the particular character of grace, predestination, election, atonement and intercession. So particular, and limited-to-the-elect, is this "*us*" that it excludes all others, and can neither truly nor properly be applied to any but God's chosen in Christ. Election is definitely exhibited in the love of God being manifested "toward *us*" (I John 4:9). Nor is it possible that this very particular "*us*" may be stretched to include all men in the world, for it is quite carefully qualified in the words, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world" (John 17:6).

God's election is also involved in Effectual Calling. This divine calling is distinguished in different ways. First, there is fiat calling, according to which God calls the things not being as being (Rom. 4:17). Another instance of fiat calling you have in Psalm 33:9, "For He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast." Also, He said, "'Let be light!' and light was." Second, there is the efficacious creative calling of all men, which brings them to their ordained place and labor within the stream of history. According to His counsel God calls forth the rulers of the nations to their destiny. Cyrus is a case in point. "For Jacob My

servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have called thee by thy name. I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me" (Isa. 45:1-4). Third, there is a providential calling directed to all men, including the reprobate, which calls them to serve and glorify the Creator in a life of thanksgiving. This calling comes to men through the natural creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge" (Ps. 19:1, 2). This is a powerful witness which, like a titanic, wrap-around, three-dimensional television screen with the volume turned up full, clearly reveals the invisible things of God by the things which are made. This calling leaves the reprobate without excuse (Rom 1:19, 20). Fourth, there is the external calling through the Word. This is a somewhat general calling, although it does not come to all men, but only to all who in the good pleasure of God come under the sound of gospel. In general, this call comes through the gospel not only to the elect, but also to the reprobate. However, that call is refused by both. "Unto you, O men, I call, and My voice is to the sons of man . . . I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded" (Prov. 8:4; 1:24). But the significance of this call is *not* that it is grace to all who hear it. For the gospel is a savor of life to "*us*" who are being saved, while it is a savor of death to them that are perishing. Its significance is rather that the responsibility of man is maintained and increased over the providential calling. Fifth, there is the saving, efficacious calling of the people of God. This call comes to the elect alone. The ones God calls are the elect, the sheep. "He calls His own sheep by name . . . and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice" (Jn. 10:3, 4). They did not become sheep when they were called or converted. They were sheep from eternity.

This effectual calling is not an offer to all men, the efficacy of which depends on man's acceptance of it. There is no suggestion, either in Scripture or the Confessions, that the dead sinner has any ability to respond to the call. That is the thinking or the word (teaching) of Arminius, or the word of Pelagius, but not the word of the Cross (I Cor. 1:18, ASV). Nor is this calling a mere invitation; it is a translation out of darkness into light. This is what the calling, of necessity, must be; for it is the necessary effect of eternal election. Calling is a sure demonstration of election and its effect, as in the call to Lazarus (and are we not all Lazaruses?), "Come forth!" as in the call to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth thy hand!" as in the divine imperative to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!" and as in the efficacious command, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." For through the effectual calling, we, as born of the Spirit, are made to pass out of death into life, are given faith to believe, therefore, do believe



through grace, and receive ears to hear, eyes to see and quickened members to yield to the Lord as instruments of righteousness.

We are called to peace. "God hath called us to peace" (I Cor. 7:15). He has done so because peace was ordained for us (Isa. 26:12). Peter, in addressing God's people as *Elect* determines the originating *cause* of every saving good to them. (I Pet. 1:2). At the same time Peter shows that "peace" is part of that saving good which flows to us from the fountain of election,

an invariable effect following that cause. As the calling is particular so also the peace unto which we are called. For "there is no peace to the wicked." They from of old have been ordained to condemnation (Jude 4). But God's people are blessed with peace (Eph. 1:2, 3), a peace which passes all understanding, which the world can neither give, take away nor have, and which arises from the blood and righteousness of Christ.

*(To be continued)*

## *Contending For The Faith*

# The Doctrine of Atonement

*Rev. H. Veldman*

In our last article we were calling attention to Article V of the Second Head of the Canons, dealing with Christ's sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary. This article reads as follows:

Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel.

We concluded our last article by calling attention to the fact that this article teaches that also the preaching of the gospel follows the course as determined by the good pleasure of the Lord. God does not only determine who are saved. But He also determines who shall hear the gospel. This is surely the meaning of the expression that the gospel ought to be declared and published to all nations and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel. This means that God wills that the gospel be preached to some but that He also wills that it not be preached to others. Now we know that this article of our Canons has been quoted by those who would proclaim the gospel as an offer of salvation. They believe that the Lord would save all men and that, in the gospel, He offers this salvation to all those who hear it. How strange, is it not, that the Lord, loving all men and desiring their salvation, should deliberately withhold from them the gospel, should have willed that they come not into contact with His desire and plan to save them through the Christ of the cross! This, we understand, does not make sense. Calvin voices this same objection to the Arminian presentation of God's universal will to save all men when he, in Calvin's Calvinism, page 103,

declares: "For if God willed, or wished, that His truth should be known unto *all men*, how was it that He did not proclaim and make known His law to the *Gentiles* also?" Calvin writes this in connection with his comments on 1 Tim. 2:4.

Secondly, this fifth article teaches that this gospel must be proclaimed to all nations and all persons promiscuously and without distinction, that is the gospel as including the command to repent and believe. Mind you, the fathers here speak of the *preaching* of the gospel. This preaching must be general. Of course, as we have already noted, also this preaching is limited. It must follow the course as determined by the good pleasure of the Lord. Understanding this, however, it must be proclaimed not only to the elect but also to the reprobate. Fact is, the Arminian accused the Reformed man of being really unable to preach the gospel. If the work of salvation is wholly divine and sovereign, a gift of God from the beginning even unto the end, why should it be necessary to command the elect to believe and repent? He will repent and believe anyway. Besides, if God loves only some and if Christ died only for the elect, how is it possible to command others to repent and believe? So, the Arminian contended that the reformed view of the particular love of God and of the atonement of Christ upon the cross made it impossible for him to preach the gospel. We must bear in mind that it is exactly this objection of the Arminian that is answered here by the fathers in this fifth article. The article declares that the gospel must be preached promiscuously and without distinction. And it also declares that it must be preached with the command to believe and repent. Notice, please, the gospel must be preached with the command to believe and repent. A command is surely not an offer. The difference between the two is obvious. A command is never to be confused with a



condition. An offer is something that may be refused. A command is something that may not be refused. It must be obeyed. From this viewpoint, the sinner has no choice in the matter. For him to refuse to believe and repent is gross disobedience. He has no right to sin and to refuse to believe in the Christ of the cross. But, does this refusal of the sinner to believe in the gospel not imply that the gospel must therefore be proclaimed as an offer of salvation? Not at all! But, to this we will call attention presently. We now set forth the fact that our fathers certainly believed in a general preaching of the gospel. And this is surely also believed by our Protestant Reformed Churches.

In the third place, however, this fifth article also teaches that the content of the gospel is never general, but exclusively particular. It is true that we believe in a general preaching of the gospel, but it must ever be borne in mind that we believe in a general preaching of a particular gospel. The Lord does not promise eternal life to all, but only to those who believe. The article expresses it this way: "Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Does this mean that this promise is conditional, that every hearer of the gospel can will to believe, and that this promise of the gospel is therefore general and conditional, general because God would have all men be saved and conditional because its fulfillment is dependent upon the will of the sinner? No Arminian, we understand, would say that the Lord promises every hearer of the gospel everlasting life. He would certainly not maintain that God promises everyone eternal life, whether he believes or not. He does declare that God promises all who hear the gospel everlasting life if they believe.

This position of the Arminian is impossible and absurd. We must notice, in the first place, that this fifth article speaks of believing in Christ crucified. Now the fathers certainly would not say that there is salvation for all. If God is to offer salvation to all, well-meaningly, then there certainly must be salvation for all. God would surely not offer something He does not possess. But, this universal conception of the cross is exactly what characterized the Arminian. And it is exactly this universal conception of the crucified Christ that was rejected by the fathers of Dordt. In this Second Head of the Canons they emphasize the particular character of the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. To believe in the crucified Christ already emphasizes the particular character of the promise of the gospel.

However, this is not all. When we read that "the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life, then we understand that this promise is therefore limited to those who believe. Of course, this promise of everlasting life refers to everlasting life in the blessed

hereafter. Now, that this promise is limited to those who believe also emphasizes the particular character of the promise. The believer is the elect. Faith is strictly a gift of God. The fathers call attention to this in the articles that follow, Articles VI and VII. The Lord willing, we will call attention to this in due time. What does it mean to believe in the crucified Christ? We are reminded of that wonderful passage in Holy Writ, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The word "that" in the expression: "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," means two things: purpose and result. This was certainly the purpose of God's sending of His Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. But, this is also the result of God's love of the world. Because God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, therefore the possibility now exists for man to be saved through believing in that Son. I would assume that with this last statement every Arminian would agree. But, what is faith? We will have opportunity to call the attention of our readers to the significance of faith in our discussion of the two articles that follow. Nevertheless, we may and must say something about faith now. Is faith a condition for God's work of salvation? Must a sinner believe before God can save him? Is the sinner able to will to believe? Does his salvation in any sense depend upon his believing, accepting or embracing of the Christ? What do we mean when we say that because God so loved the world by sending His Son into the world the possibility now exists for man to be saved through believing in that Son? O, we do not mean to say that now the possibility exists for man to save himself by believing, but that it is now possible for God to save the sinner through faith. Faith is not man's hand reaching out to God but God's gift to His elect sinner. Indeed, that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son does not mean that He realized for all men the possibility of salvation, if only they believe on Him. In the first place, faith is never a substitute for the atonement of the cross, so that all the sinner need do is to believe, and his sins therefore need not be paid. And, in the second place, to believe is humanly impossible; if salvation, therefore, depends upon a sinner's believing, no sinner will ever be saved, and the love of God as revealed in the sending of His Son into the world will remain forever fruitless. Indeed, to believe is humanly impossible. To believe means that we must acknowledge that we are hopelessly lost sinners, that we can never contribute a single thing to our salvation, that salvation is possible only by God Himself, as the Triune Jehovah, in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Faith is God's way of salvation, made possible by God through the amazing love of God in the



sending of His only begotten Son. Now we can be saved; now it is possible for us to receive salvation, everlasting life from God. Now we need do nothing, absolutely nothing. Now we can receive it, by grace, as a free gift, in harmony with the unchangeable righteousness of God. All salvation is in Christ, and now we can and do obtain it, by faith, by faith in Christ Jesus, because God so loved the world that He gave His Son to be a propitiation for all our sins. Now the way is open for the elect, and God's world, which He loved, can be translated into heavenly glory and immortality by implanting His people into that Christ. God Himself has opened the way to bestow salvation upon His people by the Divinely sovereignly free gift of faith.

Now we also understand why this gospel must also be preached to the reprobate. To save them? Is the

preaching of the gospel a divine offer of salvation to all who hear it? This is impossible. In the first place, Christ did not die for all men. This means that there is no salvation to be offered to all men. And, in the second place, then no man would be saved. No man can believe or will to believe. If salvation were merely offered to him, then salvation would remain forever out of his reach. But the gospel is preached also to the reprobate in order that his sin may be revealed; his wicked unbelief must be revealed in order that God may be revealed as just when He judges. And the gospel is to him a divinely willed savor of death, even as it is written, II Cor. 2:15, 16: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of life unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

## Feature

# The Matter of School Tuition

*Rev. C. Hanko*

Among the greatest gifts God has given us as parents and as church members is the gift of covenant children. The greatest privilege He bestows on us is the duty of raising these children to His glory. In this respect, as in every other, our Christian privilege is also our obligation, and our obligation as Christians is at the same time our privilege. Educating our children according to our obligation before God raises difficulties often unpleasant to face. School boards have their problems in setting up their budgets, so that the needs of the school may be properly met, and at the same time figured so closely that the parents will not be unduly burdened. Parents who have one or more children in school, particularly some in high school and some in the lower grades, feel the financial pressure very keenly. Even the deacons and elders in the church become involved either directly or indirectly with this problem. The question has been raised: "What is the responsibility of the church toward those who cannot pay school tuition; how far should the diaconate become involved, and when does it become a matter for the elders?"\*

Viewing the problem of school tuition from that aspect, immediately various principles come to mind. These principles may not be overlooked in our discussion. But there is particularly one principle that stands out among them and should be strongly emphasized. This is the principle of Christian stewardship or of Christian giving. With that in mind, I would like to discuss this basic principle first. Then we

can take a look at the various problems involved in regard to school tuition. And finally, we may be able to reach a definite conclusion, even though we may not be able to come to a solution of all the problems involved.

Although the emphasis falls on the one principle already mentioned, that of Christian stewardship, there are obviously many other principles involved, which cannot be entirely ignored.

First of all, there is the principle of *Christian instruction*.

We are insistent, and correctly so, that it is the duty of every parent to bring up his children in the fear of the Lord, and that not only in the home, and in the church, but also in the school. The school we say, is an extension of the home. The teachers represent the parents, assisting them to prepare their children for their life calling as men and women of God in the midst of this present evil world. Therefore the Christian home requires a Christian school. In fact, a home where Protestant Reformed convictions are maintained requires a Protestant Reformed school. There must be perfect harmony between the church, the home, and the school, not only to avoid confusing the child in that most important realm of his spiritual training; but also to fit him properly for his own calling before the face of our God. This is a part of the vow that we make when we present our children for

\*This is in essence the contents of a paper delivered at an officebearers conference in classis east.



# THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

... OF THE ...  
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

April, 1972

Dear Brethren and Sisters in the Lord:

It is our purpose in this brief letter to share with you a few items of news from the Seminary.

There have been a few breaks in the Seminary schedule this semester. In the latter part of February the school recessed for one day to meet with the ministers in the Grand Rapids area and with Rev. Sang Chan Lee, a minister in the Hapdong Presbyterian Church of Korea.

In the first part of March, school was dismissed for two days to enable the students and faculty to take part in the Ministers' Conference held in Pella, Iowa. The ministers of Classis East and the Theological School were invited by the ministers of Classis West. The general topic of the conference was "Pastoral Counseling." The papers delivered at this conference and a summary of the discussion will appear in the next issue of The Theological Journal. This conference proved to be both refreshing and instructive.

Spring vacation is now over in the Seminary. And so the school enters into the final weeks of this semester. For four of our students these weeks will be the last in school. They will be examined by the Synod in June, the Lord willing, and look forward to receiving of the Lord a place in our churches.

In connection with the news concerning the work which is being done towards a pre-seminary course which appeared in our Standard Bearer, the faculty received a very encouraging letter from Prof. Robert Rudolph, professor of systematic theology and ethics in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Episcopal Church. We have received permission from him to share parts of it with you.

"I was reading in the 'Standard Bearer' your remarks about your Seminary. In seeking to establish this school you are following the only course which can perpetuate the emphasis of your denomination. Our Seminary became a fact because ten years after we were founded in 1873--in 1886 one good woman realized its need and provided the building and a modest endowment.

"Our Church (a sister church in the same actual denominational structure) in England, founded somewhat later, never did secure a school and are finding the going exceedingly difficult when their men come from many schools....

"I write to share with you brethren in Christ the fact that we have found it exceedingly important to emphasize Seminary FIRST. Our men then go to the colleges, which often are not altogether friendly with our Reformed position, and are less influenced.



"We came to realize, a generation ago, that if our men were sent to colleges first and received there the first impression which, if the college were truly of a liberal arts nature would include, even in a very Reformed place, exposure to the rationalism and liberalism of the classical writers, they would be getting their first impressions from those not particularly influenced by God's Word, the Bible. As this happened generation after generation and these somewhat 'secularized' men became teachers of the next generation, there would be a general secularization of the Church....

"We, at Reformed Episcopal, will be praying that you may be enabled to establish your needed institution."

We found this unsolicited support and encouragement of our churches' pre-seminary plans from another seminary professor to be rather interesting. Our method, of course, is different. We do not purpose to have seminary first, followed by college work at other institutions. But we purpose to furnish our future ministers with all their higher education, both pre-seminary and seminary, as much as possible, and to have our students receive "outside" education only in those subjects in which we are not at present able to train them. To a certain extent, our Seminary did this already in the early years of our history. And in the late 1940's our churches purposed to begin to add pre-seminary courses to our curriculum. Now we are at last beginning to achieve this goal. And it is high time, too. For the need is greater today than ever before.

We close this letter with an announcement of interest to pre-seminary and potential pre-seminary students. On Friday, May 5, D.V., at 1:00 P.M., there will be a meeting at school of representatives of the Theological School Committee and the Faculty and as many of our future pre-seminary students as can possibly make it. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss plans for the beginning of our pre-sem course. Students should come prepared with complete and accurate information as to their high school credits, especially, for example, in foreign languages. And those who have already taken some pre-sem work should be able to furnish full information about this. This is a rather important meeting. We urge you to attend if at all possible. And if you are interested but cannot attend, you should correspond with us and furnish information in writing.

We commend the Seminary and its labors to your prayers.

With greetings in the Lord,

The Faculty

P.S. There is still time, if you hurry, to get your name on the mailing list of our Journal. Perhaps some of our elders will be especially interested in the next issue, which will contain the conference papers. We will gladly add your name, either to our permanent list or to our list for the coming issue only. Please write to Prof. Hanko if you are interested.



baptism.

We are insistent that these schools must be *parental schools*. It is not the calling of the State to instruct the child, but of the parent! We do not send our children to Moab or to Philistia to be trained for their Christian life and walk in the world, but we train them in the home, and thus in its extension, the Christian school. Nor is it the calling of the church to teach the child the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, with all that this involves. The church instructs the child in sound doctrine, which the parents must apply in instructing their children, according to the calling of our God. Since this duty rests entirely upon the parents, and since particularly in this complicated age in which we live it is impossible for the parents alone to carry out this responsibility, we have our schools where parents together instruct their children through the teachers they hire. The parent sends his child to school with strict orders: You listen to the teacher even as you listen to me. You obey the teacher as obeying me. You diligently learn everything the teacher requires of you, even as you would for me. And you accept all that the teacher teaches you, even as you must accept it from me, *and that for God's sake*.

Therefore, since the school is an extension of the home, it follows that it is the duty of each and every parent to support the school and pay for the instruction of his children. A parent of one child assumes the responsibility for that child completely. He feeds and clothes that child, cares for it in all its needs, even paying the doctor and hospital bills when the child is sick. He assumes all the responsibilities involved in bringing up the child, also its spiritual training in the church and its Christian education in the school. The best instruction is not too good, even as he has vowed to train this child in the fear of the Lord to the utmost of his power. If the Lord has entrusted five or more children to him, he also readily assumes that responsibility in the confidence that He is doing his duty before God. And this duty is the privilege the Lord has committed to him.

So far we have not met any realm upon which there can be any disagreement.

Now we come to another principle that involves God's church and covenant.

We have already established that church and school are two separate entities. Yet it cannot be denied that they are nevertheless, closely related. The same individuals that send their children to the school are also members of the church. The children that are trained in the school are instructed in the catechism. As members of the church, even of the body of Christ, we are, therefore, intimately related to one another by the common bond of faith and love. In that sense it can even be said that these children are not the sole possession of the individual parents, but they are *our* children. The Psalmist of Psalm 78 speaks of "our

fathers' children." The children of believing parents are included in the covenant seed which God gathers in the line of continued generations of believers throughout history. Therefore, when these children are presented for baptism, not only the parents, but we all confess that these children are "conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His church ought to be baptized." In that respect we all have a responsibility toward those children, and are deeply concerned about their welfare.

This means that both parents and children fall under the jurisdiction of the church, or of Christ as He ministers to their needs through the church. These children, along with their parents, are under the preaching of the Word. They are fed with the Bread of life, strengthened in their faith by the power of Christ operating through the Word. These parents and children, along with the rest of us, are under the jurisdiction of the elders. They are Christ's sheep, which must be fed, guarded, protected. They must be instructed, admonished, warned, and cared for according to every spiritual need. These parents and children also experience the mercies of Christ in the office of the deacons. In as far as they are able, they themselves give liberally to the deacons to express the mercies of Christ as they experience them in their own hearts and lives. If the need requires, they do not hesitate to appeal to the mercies of Christ for financial aid and spiritual comfort. Where better can they go than to the bountiful hand of Christ through the church and the deacons? So daily they receive all things from Him as from God's merciful Fatherhand. Blessed it is to give, but blessed it is also to receive.

These are some of the basic principles which we must have before us as they pertain to the subject of school tuition.

This brings us to another important principle, which actually must receive all the emphasis, namely, the principle of *Christian stewardship*.

When we speak of church or of Christian schools we cannot avoid the term *covenant*, because God's covenant is so intimately related to both. Our covenant relationship to God is actually basic for our place in God's church and for the very existence of our schools. In God's covenant we are His friend-servants, even as He is our sovereign Friend. The very name "Christian" implies that we are partakers of Christ's anointing, and therefore by the Spirit of Christ are called to serve our God in the office of believers. We are prophets, priests, and kings, to know Him, love Him, and devote ourselves to Him in love with our whole being, our entire life, including our family. That is our Christian stewardship, in which we confess: "All that I am I owe to Thee." Of this stewardship we must also give account in the great day of days, as those who must



give account of all that is done in the body, whether good or evil. We will be judged as to our eternal place in glory accordingly.

Now the very idea of friend-servant means that we have a calling, a duty, or obligation to love the Lord our God with our whole being and in all that we do. This duty, as has already been suggested, is also our privilege. We must, but we also can, we also will, and we also MAY. Our duty and our privilege are always intertwined in all that we say and do. There is a Dutch Psalm that says, *"Thy service of love has never yet wearied me."* We serve God willingly, because we love Him with all our hearts.

That is where our Christian giving comes in. Love must express itself. The Psalmist asks in Psalm 116: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" To which his heart answers: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." To put it slightly differently: "I will express my thanks by acknowledging all that the Lord has done for my soul. But I shall also extend to Him eager hands in asking for more and continued blessings." Love expresses itself in asking freely, confidently, for we are assured of receiving all that we ask, and even far above all that we can ask or think. Love also expresses itself in giving. If there should happen to be any question in our minds about the fact that love expresses itself in giving, we need only be reminded that God gave His Son, and that the Son gave His life as a ransom for our sins. Greater love has no man than that, that he gives His all, gives himself, gives his very life. The love of God finds its reflection in us. Paul speaks of that in II Corinthians 8:5. Let me explain a moment, that Paul is speaking of the churches of Macedonia which were gathering offerings to help the afflicted and impoverished churches in Judea. The apostle tells us that these Macedonian churches were themselves in difficult financial straits, yet they gave according to their ability, even beyond their ability. He says that they gave beyond anything that he had hoped. For, he adds, "They gave themselves." Yes, they gave themselves to the LORD. Now that is real giving. We must first give ourselves, and we must give ourselves to the Lord. That is what Scripture means when it speaks to us as sons, saying, My son, give me thine heart." As sons and daughters of God we confess that we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ with body and soul and with all that we possess. In our giving we confess that we are the Lord's in life, in death, and in eternity. We are simply expressing our love to God in saying, "All that I have in Thine, even as I am Thine." That means that we can even give with a certain holy abandon. Scripture warns that we should not give grudgingly, but willingly, for God loves the cheerful giver. Then it is actually no concern of ours how much we give. We even prefer that our left hand does not look over our shoulder to spy on what our

right hand is giving. That is none of its business. Regarding the matter of school tuition, this means that we count it a privilege to have our own schools and to be able to instruct our children in the truth of the Scriptures according to the convictions of our hearts in a God-centered instruction. We are daily thankful for those schools. We would not want to lose them for anything in the world. Since the spiritual welfare of our children is our chief concern, school tuition has priority on the list of financial obligations. We pay that first, even along with our obligation to the church, because that fills our greatest need, as far as our children are concerned. No sacrifice is too great to give our children covenant training according to the truth of God's Word, that they may grow up to be men and women of God in His church and kingdom.

I assume that this is exactly where the shoe pinches.

There are parents who are financially burdened because of a large family. Our high standard of living has boosted the cost of living to staggering heights. The income is often hardly sufficient to meet all the expenses involved in raising a family. With so many other obligations, the church budget and the school tuition become an even greater drain on resources. Tuition especially is high, because the cost of educating our children keeps climbing along with everything else. If one can keep up with this monthly tuition the matter is not so serious, but if one gets behind the burden begins to weigh so heavily that it becomes unbearable.

Then there are those who realize that they have an obligation to the school, but feel that there are others, who probably have no children of school age, who could well share this heavy burden with them. I can also sympathize with them. There are people in the church with a good income and a small family. They do not realize what it is to struggle under a heavy burden of financial obligations. There are also older people whose children are grown up, and who do not have the problem of tuition any more. Maybe they feel that they have done their duty when they had school-age children, and now the younger generation had better carry the load. Those who object that we older people, or single persons, should also share the burden with them do have a point. We often content ourselves by saying that we went through the depression. We had to pay for our children's education in much harder times than these. We had to take our tuition from the food of our tables and from the clothing on our backs. Many in those days would take their small weekly income, first take out for church and school, and then ask themselves how much was left for household needs. They felt keenly that by all means church and school must be kept going.

Now that may all be true, but let us not hide behind that as an excuse not to help where there is a real need. We certainly have to carry out our stewardship in this



world even today. Our boast of what good stewards we were in the past does not make us good stewards today. The children of the covenant, the spiritual seed of the church, are OUR children. If we take as our yardstick for our giving the Old Testament law of tithing, I think most of us would fall far short of giving a tenth of our gross income. There are possibilities of giving in the church collections, in the various drives, or even with outright donations for the school. How wonderful it would be if each one who could afford it would assume the responsibility of one student, either in high school or in the grades.

Yet, on the other hand, this may never be an excuse for those who must pay tuition. As I said before, the obligation to support the children God has given to us rests first and primarily on the parents. Besides, for all of us applies the command of Jesus, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these (other) things shall be added unto you." When Elijah came to the widow of Zarephath, he required of her, "Make me a little cake *first*, and bring it to me, and after make for thee and for thy son." There we have the same principle of seeking first the kingdom of God. The amazing thing is, that this widow had received the faith to do just that. She made a cake for the prophet of God first. Then I am inclined to say: "I have not found so great faith, no, not even among us."

Finally, there are those who entirely ignore the principle of seeking the kingdom of heaven first. These are the ones with whom the school boards, the deacons, and the elders are most concerned. There are those who put the church and the school last on their list of obligations, maybe because these creditors are liable to pressure them the least. It is an evil that we can so readily fall into, if we are not constantly on the alert. Our sinful inclinations are to become poor stewards who lose from sight the privilege of being friend-servants of God. Or maybe we have never learned it. Young people marry, buy a new home, modern furniture, a car, and other necessities, and find themselves burdened with mortgages, loans, and what not. The child they had not reckoned with in their budget comes along sooner than they had intended. Unforeseen doctor bills pile up, and soon the wolf stands howling at the door. How easy it is to put off paying the school tuition just for once, in the hope that somehow that also will be paid in the future. If the school board could present a budget to the society that would anticipate such contingencies, there still probably would be no problem. But school boards must figure down to the penny in order to keep their annual running expenses down to a minimum. So when the money does not come in someone is bound to suffer. That is what raises the question: How far is the church responsible in this matter?

Maybe the first thing that I should offer as a possible solution to the entire problem is, that the

pulpit should lay more stress on the calling and privilege of our Christian stewardship. I know that our Protestant Reformed Churches have always been reluctant to discuss money matters from the pulpit, especially to beg for money. We proceeded from the principle that Jesus is no beggar, but loves a cheerful giver. If a person gives grudgingly, he may better not give. But I blush with shame when I think of how I personally have failed in my duty to instruct in Christian giving. The Word of God must give direction also in these matters. In the meantime all sorts of devious means have been invented to raise money. While the deacons in the churches complain that there are no poor today, so that they can hardly fulfill their calling, the members of the church have all sorts of drives, socials, suppers, sales, and what not. It has occurred to me that someone some day might write a book on "One Thousand And One Ways To Raise Money For The School." I do not criticize the zeal and devotion of particularly those women who devote so much time and effort toward raising money for these worthy causes, nor would I suggest that you cease to support these efforts. But it does appear that there is something sadly wrong here. People will go to the State for State Aid, and do so without pangs of conscience, but they will absolutely refuse to "humiliate" themselves to go to Christ to receive aid from Him through the deacons. Many seem to give freely to all kinds of efforts to raise money, but they drop a quarter or a dime in the collection plate for the benevolent fund. Maybe we have not learned that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Maybe we have not learned that it is, nevertheless, also blessed to receive, when we receive from the hand of Christ through the church, which eagerly expresses its love to God in its giving. Maybe our whole system of benevolence needs a thorough investigation.

In the second place, it must certainly be stressed that it is the calling of the church, and particularly of the deacons, to administer the mercies of Christ. Where there is a real need the deacons must gladly help. It is no disgrace to be poor. Christ was poor, lived from donations all His life, yet He never complained about it. Are we better than He? It is certainly no disgrace if the deacons call on us to ask us whether we need their aid. And deacons are not going beyond their privilege when they do this. But neither must we be ashamed to go to them when the need is there. Much less must we be concerned about what gossiping tongues might say. More than likely the deacons would advise you to pay your obligation to the school and church first, as good stewards of God, according to the principles laid down in the Scriptures. They would also inquire about your income and expenses; which is their duty. A free and open discussion with the deacons concerning all your financial problems can only prove spiritually stimulating and also beneficial as far as your needs are



concerned. You will notice that I do not suggest that the deacons pay the school tuition. This is not wise, since the problem lies much deeper than that. But I do suggest that the church budget and the school tuition be considered a part of our entire financial privilege which God has given to us, a means whereby we may carry out our Christian stewardship before His face.

Finally, there are those who present the real problem. They do not pay their school tuition, because, as they say, they cannot afford it. They refuse to go to the deacons for aid. They do not want anyone prying into their personal affairs, even though they are confident that the deacons keep these things in strictest confidence. The preaching of the Word evidently does not reach them. They become objects of discipline, mind you, not because they fail to pay their tuition for their children, but because they are poor stewards before God. I do believe that the elders should work long and with much patience with these individuals, careful to instruct them in their God-given calling. Even elders must consider that only he who is without sin has the right to cast the first stone. But the elder does not come in his own name, or on his authority. Let him deeply realize in all humility that he comes in the name of Christ. He does not present his own ideas, but he comes with the Word of God,

showing that this is the will of God that we live as those who must give account of our stewardship in the great day of days. Let them not fail to point out that it is indeed a privilege to train our children in the truth of Scripture. Let them be the first to admit that we are all sinners and unfaithful in our calling, but that this is the more reason that we spur each other on, in order that we may be a help as good examples to one another. If after long and patient labor and admonition, the individual shows only scorn for that high calling, he must be placed under censure, not for some debt that he may owe or some particular obligation which he failed to fulfill, but for despising the office of mercy in the church or failing to fulfill his own calling as steward in God's house. Even that censure our fathers called "a last remedy." It is never applied to destroy, but to save.

How dependent we all are on the grace of God, which is always abundantly rich in supplying all our needs. How necessary it is for all of us to be constant in prayer for ourselves and for one another, that God's church may prosper, and that our schools may also prosper. They mean so much to us, even though we often take them for granted. Let us never forget that educating our children is a great privilege as well as an awesome responsibility.

## *Education Feature*

# **The Concern of the Reformation for Christian Education (10)**

*Rev. David Engelsma*

We conclude our evaluation of the Reformation's concern for Christian education with the observation that the Reformation did not adequately guard against the subversion of Christian education by humanism. This leaven eventually leavened the whole lump of Christian education in Germany and ruined it. This has significance for us who have the zeal of Luther and Calvin (and Paul and Moses and Abraham) for the Christian instruction of covenant children. For humanism is a persistent threat to the Christian school and is, at present, in the process of destroying much of Christian education.

Humanism, as the word itself indicates, is the evil of making man, rather than God, the end of all things. It is a sin of man's spirit, or heart; humanism is a spiritual power. The humanist is man-centered in all his thinking, willing, and doing. His ultimate goal is man's good and glory. Humanism, therefore, is nothing else

than the basic sin of man from the beginning, pride. The essence of this pride is man's will to be god, in God's stead. In the sphere of education, humanism fulfills its lust to deify man by making man the center of the whole educational enterprise, by directing all of the education towards the goal of man's glory, and by subjecting all of the education to the authority of man's will and wisdom. This last piece of arrogance is an unmistakable mark of humanism. Although a sin of the spirit, humanism always manifests itself by refusing to subject all of education to the Word of God, sacred Scripture. It denies, or removes, or smothers God's Word and replaces it with a word of man, whether that be the word of Plato, or Darwin, or Mao, or the latest sage in educational philosophy.

Luther clearly saw that this was a basic evil in the schools before the Reformation. In his trumpet-blast of 1520, "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of



the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate," in proof of his claim that "the universities also need a good, thorough reformation," he wrote: "What else are the universities . . . than as the book of Maccabees says, 'Places for training youth in Greek glory,' in which loose living prevails, the Holy Scriptures and the Christian faith are little taught, and the blind, heathen master Aristotle rules alone even more than Christ." Luther was enraged because of the dominance of the philosophy of Aristotle over all of the education of that day. He railed against Aristotle, and, by implication, against every form of humanistic education: "It grieves me to the heart that this damned, conceited, rascally heathen has with his false words deluded and made fools of so many of the best Christians. God has sent him as a plague upon us for our sins." All of Luther's writings on education breathe his zeal for God's glory, as the one great goal of Christian education. Because this goal is attainable only if the Scriptures rule in the schools, he demanded schools in which the Word of God alone would reign.

Nevertheless, humanism soon intruded itself into the Christian schools established by the Reformation. There were several reasons for this. First, humanism was a powerful force in the world at the time of the Reformation. It was developing and asserting itself in that great movement known as the Renaissance, which arose and spread alongside the Reformation. Secondly, some of the humanists allied themselves with the Reformation, at least for a time, and thus exercised some influence upon it. Such were Erasmus and Hutton. Thirdly, not all of the Reformers remained untainted by humanism. It was the delusion of some then, and remains the delusion of some today, that humanism and the Christian faith are compatible, even allies. The chief culprit was Melancthon, who never completely cast off the humanism with which he was infected. But it was Melancthon to whom was entrusted the task of establishing Christian schools in Germany. It was he who gave concrete form to Luther's ideas concerning Christian education. Fourthly, the Reformation handed the Christian schools over to the civil government, from the very beginning. This, by itself, guaranteed that the schools would soon lose their Christian character.

Looking back, we are sad that the flame of Christian education, rekindled to burn so brightly at the Reformation, was soon snuffed out by an enemy of light not sufficiently guarded against. We recognize in this lamentable fact the truth of the warning of Luther that the Devil is the great foe of the Godly education of the children of the covenant. Here also, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

This same evil, humanism, sorely afflicts Christian education today. Its presence and power are apparent

from its unmistakable marks. There is little, if any, zeal in the schools for God. God is rarely, if ever, mentioned. If He is mentioned, He serves only to further man's purposes. Man is at the center of things. Whether the professors and students will say so openly or not, "divine man" is the end of education. One important aspect of this idolatry in education is the uncritical acceptance and adoration of the wisdom and beauty of the world. There is a glorying in the culture of the natural man. So far, then, from rearing the children of the covenant to be citizens of the City of God, these schools actually push the youth towards this or that city of this world. They are, as Luther bitterly remarked of the schools of his day, "Places for training youth in Greek glory." This characteristic of humanistic education, its sin of the spirit, although plain enough to those who have eyes to see, is difficult to pin down. It permeates all of the education, but it does so subtly. When the humanistic professor, or the administration that connives with him, is called to account, he can shift and evade and piously call on God and John Calvin. This is impossible, however, with the other basic mark of humanism, its denial of Holy Scripture. Humanism in education refuses to have the Holy Scriptures as supreme, unchallenged authority. The humanist will not bow before the Scriptures with an unquestioning, child-like, humble, total acceptance of them as the very Word of God. Humanism cannot have Scripture as the only authority, because Scripture proclaims the glory of God as the end of all things. The humanist will not submit to the Word of God, because he is a proud man, who insists on the authority of the word of man. By this objective standard, we are to judge the schools. In education also, one tries the spirits by the touchstone of the Word of God.

The denial of Holy Scripture in the schools is a raging plague today. One fundamental form of this denial is the attack upon the Scriptural account of the creation of the world by God in six days, as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. The Word of God is subdued by the words of Charles Darwin, that all things originated by evolution. Denial of the account of creation is necessarily accompanied by a denial of the historicity (truthfulness) of the account of Adam's fall in Genesis 3. This, in turn, leads to the denial of the entrance of death into the good world by the sin of Adam, Paul to the contrary in Romans 5 and I Corinthians 15 notwithstanding.

This assault on the Word of God in the realm of Christian education and the tremendous implications it has for all of education, indeed, for all of life, are clearly evident in Jan Lever's little book, *Where Are We Headed?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970). Lever is professor of zoology at the Free University of Amsterdam, the university established by Abraham Kuyper to be an institution of Christian and Reformed



learning. Lever's book is the publication of "nine short talks on the general subject of the Bible and science." In this work, Lever teaches that the earth is about five billion years old, having come into existence "through some astronomical event in the solar system" (p. 43); that man is about two million years old; that life evolved by the sun's rays striking upon the soup-like oceans; that all of the forms of life now existent evolved from the simplest life-form over billions of years; and that man gradually evolved from the animals, specifically, from a certain kind of ape. Although, like most "theistic evolutionists," Lever presumably would hold that God may have the credit of having created the original matter, he does not even expressly state this. Lever summarizes his teaching this way:

In order to see clearly the position of man one must, as it were get a bird's eye view of the entire development we have sketched. In a process that took billions of years, we see how the initially uninhabited earth gradually became populated. Step by step the ladder was climbed to the ever higher possibilities that lay hidden in creation. First, organic matter, then very simple forms of life, then plants; after that animals that could observe with their senses, then the successively higher structured types of vertebrate animals, with brains which became bigger and bigger, and more and more complex, and with behavior patterns that became ever richer and more varied. Then, at the end of this long evolution, within creation, from a branch of the primates, there emerges man, a creature who lives on an entirely new level (p. 45).

This view of the origin of the world has far-reaching implications, which Lever is not afraid to make explicit. Sin and death did not enter the world at a certain time because of the disobedience of Adam, but they are simply part of the nature of the creation from the very beginning. Lever ascribes man's violent, murderous nature to man's origin from the animals, as a carnivore (p. 56). The effect of these notions is to absolve men of their guilt, apart from the blood of Jesus Christ. In asserting the evolution of the world, Lever disparages the idea that "God in the course of the creation week reached down from above, as it were, several times in order to add completely new things out of 'nothing.'" In fact, he flatly asserts: "The Creator does not intervene locally or temporally." This is, at one stroke, to deny all of the miracles of the Bible, including the Incarnation and the Virgin Birth. One aspect of the gradual evolution of man is the development also of religion, from within man himself. At first, man was polytheistic, and "A caste of priests also arose, whose task it was to channel and to give form to the expression of religious emotions" (p. 49). In other words, the worship of God and the knowledge of God were not a matter of God's own self-revelation, but a matter of the gradually

developing religious consciousness of the humanized apes. In keeping with this pagan notion, man has made his own laws governing his conduct: "On the basis of his experience he forms rules for his conduct, which in turn become norms within the context of freedom" (p. 46).

This is a science lesson that does not remain in the science classroom, but goes out radically to revise every subject in the curriculum. It aims at the creation of a whole new world-and-life-view on the part of the students and, thus, the restyling of the Christian's entire life in the world.

Basic to this teaching is Lever's denial of the authority of Scripture and his replacement of God's Word with another authority. Lever rejects Genesis 1 and 2 (as well as Psalm 33, Proverbs 8, Hebrew 11:3, and innumerable other passages) as the true, authoritative revelation of the Holy Spirit concerning the origin of the world. He prefers the two-fold authority of man's mind and the latest speculations of scientists, which he calls "modern science." He rejects Genesis 1 and 2, because "anyone who reads the Bible with common sense can reach the conclusion that a literal reading of the Genesis account is wrong" (p. 27). "Common sense" is the criterion. This same "common sense" rejects a birth from a virgin, the resurrection of dead bodies, the swimming of axe-heads, and every other miracle. Having grown fat and lusty by devouring the wonderful works of God, it will proceed to deny the wonderworking, Triune God Himself. Common sense is another name for the mind of natural man, which is spiritually ignorant and foolish. The other constituent element of Lever's authority is "modern science." When he asks about the origin of life, he at once turns to "the view of present-day scientific thought concerning the origin of this earthly reality" (p. 31). When he leads us in a search for the origin of man, he advises us that "we do well first to examine what kind of scientific data are available to us concerning the origin of man" (p. 37). He does not first examine the Word of God, Who should be able to tell us about our origin, but "scientific data," for Scripture is not his authority. This denial of Scripture is the objective, perfectly plain mark of humanism lording it over education.

The other characteristic of humanism is also obvious in Lever's thought, namely, the crowning of man as god. At the conclusion, when Lever must explain Christianity's significance in this evolved world, he declares that Christ and the gospel "can really assist us in our search for solutions to the great problems of today and tomorrow. For Christ teaches us the universal equality of all men without distinction of race or color. Christ teaches us social concern, love of neighbor, peaceableness and personal responsibility. Following him therefore means the arresting of aggression in all its forms, and the realization that



brute force should be replaced by a real solidarity, each of us being prepared to make sacrifices to his fellow man" (p. 58). Earthly progress, earthly peace, earthly comforts, that is, Man, are the goal of all things. God, Jesus, and the gospel are able to advance Man's cause. This is their place.

Lever has the name of a Christian man. He calls himself Reformed. He teaches in a Reformed university. He is by no means unique, but he is a particularly clear example of the threat to Christian education today by humanism. Not only the science courses, but all of the subjects in the schools are cut loose from the authority of Scripture and are, in this instance, enslaved to the lordship of Charles Darwin, who was a "damned, conceited, rascally heathen."

The fruits of such an education are dreadful, far worse than the consequences of illiteracy. Calvin warned us long ago, in his commentary on I Corinthians 3:19:

The liberal arts and all the sciences . . . must be looked upon as empty and worthless, until they have become entirely subject to the word and Spirit of God. If, on the other hand, they set themselves in opposition to Christ, they must be looked upon as dangerous pests, and, if they strive to accomplish anything of themselves, as the worst of all hindrances, and are much to be dreaded."

Humanistic education produces a proud, carnal, skeptical, but capable breed of young people, capable, that is, to implement their pride, carnality, and skepticism in every sphere of life. It tolerates and even promotes immoral behavior, so that the schools are, as Luther complained, places "in which loose living prevails." Lever's own explanation of humanistic education makes plain that the answer to the question which is the title of the book, "Where are we headed?" is, in simple, sober truth: The Kingdom of Antichrist.

What, in the light of all this, must we do, who have inherited the Reformation's concern for Christian education and who desire that our children not head where man-centered education will drive them? We must establish and maintain sound, faithful Christian schools, to the utmost of our power. We must insist on education that is God-centered and God-glorifying and that is, for that reason, absolutely, but joyfully, subject to the authority of Holy Scripture, God's Word. This is not the suppression of truth, not in science, not in history, not in music, not in any facet

of God's creation, but it is the liberation of truth.

To have this education, we must constantly take heed to ourselves as churches. There is a vital relationship between the school and the church. In this relationship, the school, in its way, helps the church. But the main relationship is the dependence of the Christian school upon the church. This is not to say that the Christian school is a church-school, or that it is to be dominated by the clergy. But it is to say that the school will not be and cannot be stronger than the church to which belong the parents, the children, the teachers, and the Board that make up the school. It is no accident that the establishment of truly Christian schools arose in history out of the reformation of the *Church*. Show me schools that are free from humanism, and I will show you churches that burn with the love of God and zeal for His glory. Show me schools that magnify man, challenge the Scriptures, and tolerate wicked behavior, and I will show you churches that have departed from Christ. This is why the labor and sorrow of conservative Christians expended over their schools are an exercise in futility. Reform the Church, and the reform of the schools will follow.

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Education in the world today is overwhelmingly in subjection to lord Man. China educates its millions in total subjection to lord Mao; Russia, to lords Marx and Lenin; America, to lords Plato, Darwin, and Dewey; dead heathens, all of them. It seems good to us, and right, to instruct our children under the sovereign Lordship of Jesus Christ, the only living Lord, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist . . . that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."

(The Board of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School has printed, in quantity, a brief pamphlet entitled, "The Christian School: Why?". If anyone desires to have a copy, or a number of copies, he can obtain them, without charge, by writing the Board at 705 E. 57th St., Loveland, Colo. 80537)

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## News From Jamaica

Rev. G. Lubbers

*"Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account."  
Philippians 4:17*

The text which I wrote above this little news article from Jamaica came to my mind when I saw the eight crates of clothing which the Hudsonville diaconate had packed, crated and sent to my address here on this Caribbean island. There stood those crates in the Montego Bay Freeport. They were bulging at the seams. These were love-gifts which had been placed upon the altar of consecration to the Lord.

However, they were not yet in my possession. That takes time. There are many steps in the process. First, one must go and see the representative of the ship-line TRANSCONNEX-JAMAICA, INC. for the original-bill of lading. Then one must go and see where he can obtain a broker who will transact this business for him, since the churches here are not yet incorporated, and recognized by the government. One must deal with a broker because the value of the merchandise must be declared with Customs. The Wharfinger needs his fee for having stored the goods at the warehouse. After the goods have been freed and customs-duty has been paid one must obtain a truck to bring the 3200 lbs of clothing here to Coral Gardens where we live.

This all occupied about a week!

The enthusiastic deacons over-evaluated the clothing sent, so I needed a new Form B 23 sent from Grand Rapids and Florida with a lower evaluation, lest the customs-duty would be almost like rapacious banditry. We got by with paying \$59.00 customs-duty for the clothing. Had these churches been recognized there would have been no need of a broker nor would there have been customs-duty.

Finally the Saturday came when the truck brought the clothing to our house. Three Jamaicans came. They had no device with wheels to unload these boxes which ranged from 375 to 450 pounds in weight. And these crates were placed in our "maid's room," all but two. I feared that the door frame would be taken off the house! But all went well. I did not need to repair the door, or apologize to the landlord. And now these ponderous giants had to be unpacked, sorted and delivered to the various churches on the island. Although our motto was "hurry slowly," it soon became evident that Mrs. Lubbers has her own way of keeping that motto. Methodically and with dispatch she went at this task, and our home at times looked like a clothing store. I reminded myself that this was the Mission Center of the island, and dutifully put the cardboard boxes in the Ford Cortina and brought the clothing to the various churches.

It is a blessed task to bring this clothing to the

people here. And at the same time it is necessary to bring them with firmness and good instruction and with directives from the Word of God.

Time and again the words came to my mind "not that I desire a gift. . . ." At each occasion we spoke a few words from the Scriptures impressing upon the hearts of the saints that these were gifts which represented the love and mercies of Christ through the sanctified hands of the saints in the States. If this bringing of clothing was on Sunday, we would try to have a special meeting in which we presented these clothes. You must know that we have now brought the clothing to all but two of the churches here. In the smaller churches Mrs. Lubbers would have the clothing selected and would give these to the people personally.

Yesterday we were to the Belmont congregation. It was a good day. We might teach Catechism-Sunday School on Article 13, First Head of Doctrine. The entire class had learned this by heart. We might teach for fifty minutes, employing our blackboard for illustrations. Later we preached on Ephesians 5:15-20. In the afternoon at 3:30 we presented the clothing and spoke for thirty minutes on the passage from Philippians 4. It was possible to make many appropriate applications of this passage. I could point out that perhaps they were like Paul, not so much desiring the "gift" as that they saw in it, the "fruit which abounds to the account" of the many who made this clothing-drive a success, by the grace of God. At least that is what should be the reward which every donor should be seeking and looking for. They should be looking toward the day when Christ shall say: I was naked and ye clothed me, hungry and ye fed me, imprisoned and ye visited me. We should know that inasmuch as we have done this to the least of Christ's children, we have done it unto Him.

And this all had wide implication and application for those who receive these gifts. They in turn were to receive them with thanksgiving, that there might be a double harvest of grace. They should say not that we desire the gift. They should learn to say with Paul: for I have learned to be content in whatsoever state I am, both to abound and to suffer want.

Yes, this "talk" started out a talk but soon it captivated the audience and it became a sermon of teaching and admonition. And the Word was received well with spiritual minds.

The elder at Belmont responded that they received this clothing as the special care of Christ for them His sheep, and that they were indeed thankful to God for being remembered. They saw in this clothing the



evidence of the love of Christ through His people, the evidence of a living faith.

This clothing was over-estimated in its value by the Hudsonville deacons. They simply have no value at all in a commercial way. The Jamaica Government plays the part of the mendicant when it requires Custom-duty from us. It says in effect: you may give gifts to the poor of our land provided you pay the duty. The Customs Officers really blush when I tell them this and they hold the customs down to a token. But they do not thwart our purpose. For the real value of this clothing is that it helps the poor, and expresses our love to these churches who are by our United States standards: poor, poorer and poorest. And in the midst

of it all we hear Paul say: Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!

It is a great lesson in thankfulness and gratitude that we are given by the apostle Paul in prison. He did not write these words from an ivory tower. He wrote as the prisoner of Jesus Christ. From this example of the great apostle to the Gentiles we take heart. Often the way is trying, as a servant of Jesus Christ.

When we see this expression of the love of Christ in these tangible gifts, in the many letters which we receive, we say with Paul: But I rejoice in the Lord greatly. . . .!

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.

## News Feature

# Officebearers' Conference--Pella

*Rev. D. H. Kuiper*



On February 29, forty elders, ministers, professors and seminary students participated in a full day of discussions in the Pella, Iowa Protestant Reformed Church; Classis West met in Pella the next day. The general subject of the conference was pastoral counseling. The morning session commenced with the reading of the paper "*Competent to Counsel — A Critique*" by Prof. Herman Hanko of our seminary. It is not necessary to offer an analysis of the critique here. Let it be sufficient to say that Dr. J. Adams of Westminster Theological School, the author of *Competent to Counsel* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Nutley, N.J., \$4.50), agrees with the points of criticism raised by Prof. Hanko. On the whole his paper constitutes an endorsement of the basic positions of the book.

After the conferees enjoyed dining in a local restaurant and strolling about in seventy-four degree weather (in all honesty, it snowed the next day), a paper by Rev. C. Hanko of Hudsonville was read. Rev.

Hanko, who could not be present due to family illness, gave us a paper of a highly practical nature; he expounded Scripture, gave warnings, demonstrated points with examples drawn from a long ministry. As was the case with the first presentation, this paper was permeated with Biblical references so that in all the discussions there was very little basic disagreement. During the discussions which lasted until the supper hour, the younger ministers, especially, benefited by hearing the experienced pastors speak of various approaches and insights.

The evening meal was served in the banquet room of another local restaurant, after which we returned to the church building for a brief business meeting and an informal speech by Prof. Homer Hoeksema on various contacts the Committee for Correspondence with Foreign Churches has recently made. The fact that we are being approached by believers in such distant places as Australia, England, Korea, and New Zealand, was presented, questioned, and digested. When the



long day was over, the participants left with enthusiastic hearts, knowing that however God would use us in future years, He would continue faithfully to gather His Church!

The subject of the pastor and the care of the soul as it was discussed, along with the communion of fellow saints and officebearers, was extremely worthwhile. Those who function in a counseling or guidance

capacity are urged to obtain Dr. Adams' book, and also to write for copies of these papers. They will be available from the seminary in the next issue of the Theological Journal.

We look forward to the next meetings being planned by the conference committee, Rev. Decker and Rev. Engelsma.

### CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

#### *Seminary and Pre-seminary Students*

All young men desiring to begin their studies this fall in either the pre-sem seminary or seminary department of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches are requested to appear before the Theological School Committee at its meeting which is to be held D.V. on Friday May 5, 1972 at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The qualifications requisite to enrolling in the seminary course are:

1. You must present a letter from your consistory certifying that you are upright in walk and pure in doctrine.
2. You must present a certificate of health, signed by a reputable physician.
3. You must be a graduate from high school and be able to show you have completed the required subjects listed in the Bulletin on The Pre-seminary course. This Bulletin can be obtained from the Secretary of the Theological School Committee.

The qualifications to enter the pre-seminary department are the same as the above except "3" should read, "a graduate from high school."

In event you cannot be present at this meeting, please notify the undersigned secretary of your intentions, prior to the meeting.

R. H. Teitsma, Secretary  
1659 Shangrai La Dr., S.E.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49508

### ANNOUNCEMENT

*(Of Interest To Those Who Can Read Dutch)*

Two Brochures by Dr. Ph. J. Huyser

HET VERWORDINGSproces in de  
GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN

I. De Regerende Klasse, Price, \$1.00

II. De Invloed van de Tijdgeest, Price, \$1.00

As a courtesy to those interested in developments in the Netherlands, we are offering the above booklets. Write to our Business Office:

The Standard Bearer  
P.O. Box 6064  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society and the Men's Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere sympathy to the family of

GILBERT VAN BAREN,

who went to live with his Lord on March 21, 1972.

May our covenant God comfort the bereaved by His Word and Spirit. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:8).

Rev. Robert Decker, Pres.

Mrs. John Busker, Sec'y.

Mr. Mike Van Baren, Sec'y.

# SCHOLARSHIPS

● **Applicable to College Tuition**

● **Prospective P.R. Ministers  
& Teachers may apply**

● **Apply before May 1st**

● **Obtain blanks from your  
Y.P. Society secretary  
...or your Pastor**

**Sponsored by the Protestant  
Reformed Scholarship Fund  
and the Federation Board**



## News From Our Churches

From Southeast's bulletin we learn that Rev. Schipper, the pastor of that congregation, has declined the call extended to him from our church in Redlands, California.

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For the news column in this issue, we have a couple of contributions which we are certain will be of general interest.

One comes to us through the courtesy of Mr. H. Vander Wal, who has been, periodically, providing bits of information concerning the extent and effectiveness of our witness by means of the printed page. Perhaps you recall his reference, in the January 1 issue, to a Canadian subscriber who requested a one year's gift subscription to be sent to a person in the Netherlands. In that issue of the *Standard Bearer*, Mr. Vander Wal invited the subscriber from Canada to offer "an explanation as to how this came about." Well, to keep a short story from getting any longer, the explanation from Canada was forth-coming. Here it is:

"I noticed the reference in the *Standard Bearer* to my having sent a subscription to a man living in a town in the Netherlands. I appreciate your interest, and can understand that you wonder how I would know anyone living there.

"As you know, a good many people from the Netherlands have come to Canada to live since the end of World War II, and this is the case in our province too. Mr. M... and family settled in the county of Pictou, twelve miles from here. Less than a year before returning to Holland, the Jehovah's Witnesses called upon them. While he was trying to convince them of the error of their religion, one of them said to him, 'You talk like Mr. . . .'. Thus we were 'introduced.' Mr. M... looked us up, and from then on until he returned to Holland, he attended the regular Sunday worship services at our home here without missing a single service, — and that was during a very cold, stormy winter and typical raw spring weather.

"Besides the personal contacts and interest, I think the work of the *Standard Bearer*, through the witness of the Rev. Herman Hoeksema, the Rev. George Ophoff, and others in exposing the radical error of Common Grace, is invaluable. And I wanted Mr. M... to have the opportunity of reading this material. Hence the order I sent in to you."

Interesting, we think. And, to cap it all, the explanatory letter included a request for material to be sent to Australia, no less, and, in addition, a suggestion for another name to be added to the list of subscribers to the *Standard Bearer*.

The reaction of the Business Manager, in one short and simple, yet somehow exceedingly fitting statement — "Isn't that something!"

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The second contribution concerns the celebration of Hope Protestant Reformed School's 25th anniversary. Most of you are probably aware of that celebration, since bulletin announcements concerning it have appeared in many, if not all, of the bulletins of our various churches. The publicity committee has decided, though, that a little more extensive information would be appropriate. We agree, and are happy to pass on the following:

"Being presently in the 25th (1971-72) school year, the school board thought it appropriate to acknowledge God's goodness to us. They named a steering committee of non-board members of the school society to plan events fitting for the occasion. Collectively and through its various subcommittees, this steering committee has chosen as a unifying theme, 'God's Covenant Faithfulness.' Under this theme a program will be presented, a commemorative booklet printed, and the school building opened for inspection.

"The program is planned for the evening of Friday, May 12, 1972, in the Grandville, Mich. Junior High School gymnasium. (Parking is being provided on a lot east of the gym.) The evening's main speaker will be Rev. David Engelsma, an alumnus of Hope School, and presently pastor of our Loveland, Colorado, congregation. Miss Agatha Lubbers, a former principal, will provide a brief school history, and Mr. John Buiter, present principal, will give a resume of the present curriculum. Special numbers will be presented by the Hope School and Covenant Christian High School choirs.

"The commemorative booklet will, in both word and picture, relate the school's covenant blessings received of God, and present those who were privileged to be instructed therein. The nominal charge to be made for possession of a booklet will be negligible, considering its contents.

"The 'open house' following the program will allow an inspection of the complete school plant now existing. A showing of slides of highlights of the history of the school will be in continuous operation. Refreshments will be served while acquaintances of alumni and friends are renewed.

"Who is invited to attend these festivities? All past, present and future alumni and all parents, families, and friends of truly Christian education, possible only because of God's Covenant Faithfulness."

D.D.