

# The Standard Bearer

**A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## Meditation

## Christian Laborers Exhorted

Rev. M. Schipper

*"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."*

I Peter 2:18-20.

You must be reminded that the apostle in this section of his epistle is still speaking of our honest conversation among the Gentiles. That is, we are expected to walk as children of God in the midst of

the world, and never to compromise our Christian identity for material, carnal reasons. This we are to do even when that corrupt world wrongfully accuses us, and cruelly abuses us.



Not only are we to do this with respect to our relation to the government which the Lord providentially places over us, but now the apostle also exhorts us to do this in the sphere of labor.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear!

The servant, who is addressed here, is literally a domestic, a servant who lives in the same house with his master. He is not one who works on the far end of his master's estate, where his master hardly ever sees him, but he is one who is constantly under the eye and surveillance of his master.

Masters, on the other hand, as the term suggests, are the lords who rule over the servants. A transliteration of the term which the apostle uses here is our word *despot*. However, since this word has come to have a bad meaning among us, referring to one who is ruthless, tyrannical, we must point out that it does not necessarily have this bad sense. Rather, the term emphasizes the absoluteness of his dominion. One, therefore, who was a master in the sense in which the apostle uses the term, was one who had absolute authority over his house-servant. Such a master, the apostle says, could be either good and gentle, or he could be forward, that is, cruel and perverse.

That there are masters who are good and gentle, does not mean that they are necessarily good in the ethical sense, in the spiritual sense of the word. This would be true, of course, if the master was a child of God. But there are masters who are good and gentle who are not children of God. They are that, not because they are the recipients of a certain "common grace," as some aver; so that they are enabled to do good even acts of civic righteousness. Rather, the apostle refers to those who are kindly disposed to their servants, and who treat them well. There may be many reasons for this, but grace is not one of them. Most of them know, of course, that it will not pay for them to treat their servants unkindly. The servant will work more faithfully and energetically when he is good to him, rather than when he is treated perversely. His goodness toward his servants is not motivated by grace at all, but out of selfish, carnal, material gain. But the apostle does not have these good masters especially in mind. It stands to reason that it is not difficult to be subject to good masters. But it is a different matter when the master is perverse, and he treats you harshly and unjustly. And this becomes all the more difficult when you consider that the apostle insists that we be in subjection to such masters in all fear. This does not signify especially a fear of fright and of punishment, but rather, a fear of respect. It means that without exception the attitude of these servants is to be motivated by the proper fear of respect, principled by the fear of God.

To be noticed here is the fact that the Word of God never seeks to change the system of society, nor does it attempt to alter the relation of masters and servants.

Nor does Scripture anywhere ever say to the masters that they must free their slaves; or, that the slaves should rebel against their cruel masters and seek to free themselves. Noticeably Scripture always leaves the masters as masters, and the servants as servants.

Now, of course, we in our modern society and economy are no longer accustomed to the master-slave relation. Fact of the matter is that in our ears such terms are repulsive. Under our modern system workers are free, free to work if they please and free to leave their jobs if they so desire. Under our system management no longer owns the laborer, nor can he do with him as he pleases. Yet the principle set forth by the apostle in our text still obtains. It must still be maintained that in the shop or whatever the nature of employment may be, the employer must have authority over his employee for the time that the employee works for him. And that authority must be respected. On the other hand, the employee must be in subjection to the authority of his employer in fear — not the slavish fear of eye-service or crawling fright, but the fear of respect, in the fear of God. So that even under our system, though the masters do not own their laborers and the laborer is free to leave his employ, the laborer is expected to be in subjection, and the master is expected to apply his authority in the fear of God.

However, in the master-servant, or employer-employee relation, whichever you prefer to call it, there is always the temptation not to be spiritual. You see, the elect strangers, whether they be masters or servants, are still in the flesh. Were this not the case, there would be no need for the admonition of our text. But the truth is that we are still in the flesh, we still have our old nature; and that nature, unless it is brought into subjection, will be carnal, materialistic, seek the things below.

Consequently masters may be good and gentle, or froward and perverse. As we have pointed out before, for purely selfish reasons masters may be good to their servants or employers to their employees. But for the same reason they may also be perverse. It is well known in our day, as it was in earlier times, how management often seeks to extract the last ounce of strength from their employees, how they have made sweat-shops out of their factories, how they have dismissed men grown old in their employ without any consideration of their well-being. On the other hand, it is also true that there are servants, laborers, who respond favorably to their good masters, employers, not only to reciprocate, but for material reasons. Eye-pleasers they are, who seek the praises of men, or better jobs, or more pay. And when their employers are cruel and abuse them, they will rebel, and even organize to strike against them. Or, in some cases, and with wrong motives will submit to their abuse. Perhaps one is the father of a large family and cannot afford to quit his job. It may be also that jobs are scarce, so that



he will not dare to go elsewhere to find work. Or, he may be naturally a man who can absorb a lot of abuse. Not with this kind of patience, and surely not for these reasons, would the apostle exhort us to be patient. Nor would he appraise such conduct as being thankworthy.

Literally, the apostle says: "For this is grace, if on account of conscience of God, someone bears grief, suffering unjustly."

The motivation, therefore, for being in subjection with all fear, and especially to masters who treat you wrongfully, is conscience of God, i.e., conscience toward God. What does that mean? Conscience, you know, means literally: to know together with. Here it means to know together with God. And this implies that you stand before the face of God, knowing Him and His will. Because we fear God, and always stand consciously before His face, and desire to be pleasing to Him, therefore, we bear the wrong patiently. This is thankworthy, literally, this is grace. And grace means that which is beautiful, beautiful in God's sight. This is beautiful to God, when He beholds us in the sphere of labor in subjection to our masters, even patiently bearing their abuse, because we are motivated by His fear.

But, you may ask, why is this so that God looks down in favor upon one who suffers wrongfully? Perhaps you are also one who asks: Should not one be commended who stands up for his rights, who tells the boss where to get off, who perhaps helps to organize a union that will strike in order to bring management in line, or to bring an end to the mistreatment? If the thoughts expressed in this question reveal your manner of thinking, as it is the manner of thinking of many today, and you think that even as Christian men you can organize to strike if necessary to get your rights, then the apostle tells you, negatively, this is not well-pleasing to God. But it is pleasing to Him when we bear our suffering patiently with a conscience toward Him. But why is this so?

The answer to this question we will see more in detail next time, the Lord willing, but we can say this now: the answer is to be found in the suffering of Christ. Not only did He suffer because He bore the sins of His people, but He also suffered wrongfully at the hands of the wicked world. He did not fight back. He did not use power to defend Himself. He did not open His mouth in self-defence. But he had a conscience toward God, and therefore bore patiently the evil that was heaped upon Him. And by this conduct the world

of wicked men was condemned. And so it is still. The sufferings of Christ are filled up in His people. To be sure, Christ suffered because He bore the wrath of God over against our sin. That suffering His people cannot bear, nor need they. But there is also a suffering of Christ which He gives unto His people to bear, the suffering of reproach and shame. Christ suffered in this sense because He had a conscience toward God. We will experience this suffering when by the grace of God we emulate Him.

We must bear in mind that the apostle is speaking only of suffering wrongfully. This, and only this, is praiseworthy before God. It stands to reason that if the laborer does not do his work, if he idles away his time, if he does some other misdemeanor for which he is reprimanded, perhaps for which he is even buffeted, or loses his job, there is nothing praiseworthy in that. The apostle says "For what praise is it if sinning and being buffeted, you are patient?" If a man is unfaithful in his work, or, if he cannot do what is required of him, he must expect that he will be treated accordingly. And to suffer for these reasons, does not bring down the favor of God, but His displeasure.

Rather, the apostle is speaking here of suffering that is wrongfully imposed. And that means that the servant does his work faithfully. It means that he labors as before the face of God, not men. It means that the servant is mistreated and suffers because he is a child of God, and a disciple of Jesus. Such suffering evokes the favor of God, and is at the same time a manifestation of the grace of God in that servant. So God rejoices in His suffering people when He beholds His own work of grace in them. This is the significance of the text.

Thus also the Christian laborer will also put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. By doing their duty as before the face of God, they will silence evil speakers and evil doers. More importantly, their good conduct will register in their own consciences that they are the objects of the favor of God.

By nature the Christian is no different than the man of the world, who, when he is mistreated also in the sphere of labor, will fight back, rebel, organize force to withstand oppression. By nature he is also impatient. Against that old nature he is required constantly to fight. But having received grace, let him reveal that grace in that sphere of labor; and so will he experience the favor and blessing of God.

*The Standard Bearer* bears the flag of the truth: follow it!



## Editorials

# An Urgent Request To Questioners

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Three times in recent weeks I have received letters for *Question Box* without a signature.

First of all, let me restate our policy. That policy is that all communications for *Question Box* MUST BE SIGNED. When the questions are published, however, neither names nor initials will be used. But for various good reasons, I cannot accept unsigned questions.

Fact is that it is rather dangerous to send any unsigned communications to me. My personal rule is always to look at the end of a letter for the signature first; and if there is no such signature, I throw letters in

my wastebasket — unread! This almost happened to these three questions; in the nick of time, as I was looking for the signatures, I noticed that they were letters intended for *Question Box*, and therefore saved them.

Secondly, therefore, if the readers involved will inform me of their identity in the near future, I will try to answer their questions. I repeat: when your question is published, I will not make known your identity — unless, of course, you specifically request it.

Please!

## Developments In New Zealand (4)

As might almost be expected, in the light of history, the ecclesiastical developments in New Zealand included not only the doctrinal Appeal by the brethren Koppe and van Herk — an Appeal which was the climax of the battle for doctrinal purity and doctrinal discipline waged by the Reformed and Presbyterian Fellowship of Australasia. Said developments also included personal appeals directed to the Synod of 1971 by three brethren who played a leading part in the struggle in New Zealand and whose names are connected with the publication of the *Reformed Guardian*. These three brethren are W. van Rij, who at the time when the struggle began was elder in the Session (consistory) of Christchurch, and J. Koppe and B. van Herk, officebearers at Silverstream-Wainuiomata. I wrote: as might almost be *expected*, there were *personal* cases involved. Why? Because history shows that almost without exception when there is doctrinal controversy, those involved become *personally*, on one side or the other, the object of attack. And frequently, as has also been the case in our Protestant Reformed history, it is those who stand on the side of the truth of our confessions who become the object of a perverted discipline, a discipline which therefore amounts to persecution. This was the case also in New Zealand, as we shall see.

About this perversion of discipline in the above-mentioned instances I want to report and comment.

My reasons are several. In the first place, I want to call attention to the issue of this discipline as such because Christian discipline is one of the marks of the church; and along with the doctrinal corruption in the

Reformed Churches of New Zealand there has been corruption of discipline. This is serious! To put it in the language of Article 29 of our Netherland Confession, the Sessions of Christchurch and of Silverstream-Wainuiomata, and also the Synod, have exhibited one of the marks of the false church, which “persecutes those who live holily according to the Word of God, and rebuke her for her errors. . . .” In the second place, I want to encourage the brethren involved: not only by assuring them that we believe they have been unjustly treated, but also by reminding them that this very persecution, though bitter and painful, is nevertheless a good sign. It is an indication that they are on the right side and that they are in good company. They may “rejoice and be exceeding glad: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.”

In the third place, I want to call attention to this perversion of discipline because it underscores the truth of my earlier evaluation of the doctrinal decisions of Synod. I wrote earlier that some of the decisions of the Synod seem at first glance to be rather sound decisions and that, in fact, they almost seem to declare what the brethren of the Fellowship have been fighting for. Nevertheless, we have demonstrated that this was not the case. And now I call attention to the fact that this very perversion of discipline and persecution of the brethren van Rij, Koppe, and van Herk is *proof* that our evaluation of Synod’s doctrinal decisions is correct. For, certainly, if Synod had at all intended to express agreement with the petitions of the Doctrinal Appeal, they would have hastened to advise the Sessions concerned that they must by all



means undo and apologize for the discipline imposed on these three brethren; and both Synod and the Sessions — in fact, all the churches — would instead have thanked these brethren for sounding the alarm against these serious doctrinal deviations. Nothing of the kind was done, however. Synod itself did not actually treat their cases. The Sessions involved have not retracted and apologized for their discipline. In fact, in one instance, at least, they have continued to insist that the brother involved must still apologize. This is rather clear evidence, therefore, that in spite of some good appearances and some apparently sound or conservative decisions, the Synod nevertheless did not justify the brethren in their doctrinal stand and their battle against the deviations for which Dr. Runia was largely responsible.

I am writing this not only for the sake of our American readers. But I hope that this may come to the attention of not a few in New Zealand, so that when they see this evaluation from an “outsider,” who is able to judge objectively, their eyes may be opened to the injustice done in the Reformed Churches and to the dangers which are threatening “down under.”

Moreover, I will base all that I write on the documents and decisions which the brethren involved have sent me.

### What Was The Issue?

Very simply put, the issue which led to the imposition of discipline in these cases was the publishing and distribution of the *Reformed Guardian*, in which the alarm was sounded concerning the doctrinal deviations of Dr. K. Runia.

This was the issue, first of all, in the case of Mr. Wm. van Rij, who, at the time when all this began, was elder in Christchurch's Session. Here is the documentation, taken from the letter of separation sent by Mr. and Mrs. van Rij to the Session of Christchurch under date of October 18, 1971:

1) Dr. Runia himself wrote to the Session on January 2, 1970. In this letter he deals with van Rij's article in the *Reformed Guardian* on “The Crisis in the Reformed Churches.” And Runia wrote, in part: “The accusations show a complete lack of theological knowledge and yet these brethren present themselves as the defenders of the Reformed Faith. All this means that harm is done not only to my good name, but to the cause of our churches and of the Reformed faith in New Zealand and Australia. I cannot see it otherwise than that these brethren have grievously sinned against the ninth commandment (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 43).”

2) The Session of Invercargill wrote in a similar vein: “It (van Rij's article) betrays a mentality which is definitely contrary to the spirit of the ninth commandment, and which will serve to evoke extremism in the minds of those who are susceptible to

it and its inevitable end: schism. The session considers that br. van Rij has failed — and has acted contrary to his duty as an elder of our churches. It trusts that your Session — while seeking the guidance of God's Word and Spirit, and in loving concern — finds its way to deal with the brother in a manner which will promote the wellbeing of our churches to the glory of the Name of the Lord of the Church.”

3) Rev. N. Hart, minister of the Reformed Church of Avondale, wrote on January 2, 1970 his reaction to the first issue of the *Reformed Guardian*: “While I realize that the editorial does not bear Mr. W. van Rij's name, his appeal for ‘... assistance to continue to send forth this Newssheet, each month’ is nothing short to raising ‘mutiny in the Church’: his name is associated with this appeal. Even if Mr. van Rij did not make that statement personally, it is my desire that Mr. van Rij be led to send a public apology to the Session of the Reformed Church of Avondale, by such action as your Session sees fit. At present we could not accept Mr. van Rij in full communion, until he publicly repents of this incitement to mutiny, (see Psalter Hymnal, 1959, Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper; p. 93).”

4) The Session of the Reformed Church of Geelong wrote under date of February 20, 1970: “After carefully studying the letter Mr. W. van Rij sent round to the sessions and taking note of the answer of the Board of Directors of the College this session would very urgently plead with you to ask Mr. van Rij to withdraw at least the personal accusations against Dr. K. Runia.”

The Session itself also took action, as we shall see; but it refused to adjudicate the above charges against Mr. van Rij, serious charges of sin against the ninth commandment in connection with the publication of the *Reformed Guardian*.

At Silverstream-Wainuiomata it was no different. After the *Reformed Guardian* made its first appearance, the Session adopted and placed in the bulletin the following: “Session deplores the action taken by Elder J. Koppe in distributing copies of the *Reformed Guardian*, Vol. I, No. 1, among members of our Congregation before Session could formulate its answer to the questions under discussion.” And as early as February of 1971 the Session began to take disciplinary action. The following decision was made: “That Elders van Herk and Koppe be suspended from office, as they do not adhere to their ordination vow, in which they promised to submit to the government of this church, in all things pertaining to their office. This suspension to be lifted as soon as these Elders refrain and disassociate from participating in publishing of the *Reformed Guardian*, and give evidence of their willingness to the Church court.” (Quoted from letter by J. Koppe) And this was also published in the Church bulletin even before a



neighboring consistory was consulted, so that it was made known to the congregation that "after lengthy discussion Session decided not to tolerate Elders participating in publishing the Reformed Guardian anymore and to inform the Wellington Session of this decision." As is stated in the Appeal of these two brethren, "The Church of Silverstream/Wainuiomata has *PUBLICLY STATED* the fact, that they decided to have us removed from this holy office in the church of Jesus Christ, both in the Silverstream/Wainuiomata bulletins of 21-2-'71 and 11-4-'71, and in PUBLIC in the Congregational meeting at Silverstream, on 19-7-'71."

Again, all of this was due to the publication of the *Reformed Guardian*. These brethren were on this account publicly held up to their congregation as being guilty of some gross sin which made them worthy of removal from office, though no specific sin on their part was ever proven.

Now before we proceed with this history, three facts should be emphasized:

1) While serious *charges* of gross sin were made, none of these charges was ever substantiated and proven. It is, of course, one thing to *make* such charges; it is quite another thing to produce *evidence* that these charges are true.

2) The publication of the *Reformed Guardian* as such was no sin. In publishing this paper and in writing about the doctrinal deviations, the brethren were not only writing about matters which were in their very nature *public*; but they were also doing the very same thing that Dr. Runia was doing. It is indeed strange that Dr. Runia might publish his views in magazine and book; yet the brethren might not publish their disagreement with and opposition to those views — even though *Trowel and Sword* would be closed to them and even though these matters had not as yet been adjudicated by any Synod.

3) At no time — and this must be emphatically stated — did the brethren cast any personal aspersions or slanders on the person of Dr. Runia or anyone else in these public writings. Indeed, they accused Runia of false doctrine; but there never was any *personal* note in anything written. Never, for example, did they accuse Runia of being an *unbeliever*, as they were accused of doing.

Yet, mind you, neither the Sessions involved nor the Synod of 1971 have to this day done anything to remove the serious charges laid against these brethren!

What was done by these bodies we shall see next time.

D.V.

## Feature

# Crisis In The Southern Presbyterian Church (2)

Dr. John Richard de Witt

In my first article I gave a brief summary of the situation with which evangelicals are confronted today in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., the Southern Presbyterian Church. I should like now to attempt an assessment of the present state of affairs, especially of certain factors which complicate it, and to say something of my own reaction to the direction events appear to be taking. The character of the PCUS is so very mixed and the spectrum of theological opinion so broad that it is difficult to be both concise and accurate. Readers will take what I say as representative of my thinking as an individual. I am, of course, very much on the side of the Reformed party, if it may be called that; but I also have some quite serious doubts and criticisms at the same time.

To begin with, those of us who are concerned with the doctrinal soundness of the PCUS and continuing the historic testimony of the denomination have had to face the question of schism, or at least of separation. The charge is being levelled against us from many sides that we are seeking to rend the body of

Christ. Indeed, one of the most painful attacks found place in *The Banner* of the Christian Reformed Church (issue of Oct. 8, 1971) in which the editor plainly accuses the steering Committee of this very thing, and then goes on to state that though conservatives in the PCUS complain of laxity in discipline, "it is obvious that were it otherwise, prime candidates for disciplinary action would be members of the steering committee." We recognize that schism is sinful and that no separation even may be undertaken unless the case is perfectly clear and there is no alternative.

But upon long and diligent reflection we have come to the conclusion that schism is not an issue in our present ecclesiastical context, nor, for that matter, is separation as such. The whole point may be summed up thus: Are we in the Southern Church who are committed to the historic confessional and constitutional position of the denomination (and of the Reformed Churches generally) obliged to enter into a union with the essentially confessionless UPUSA? We do not wish to leave the present



denominational structure. Instead, we pray daily for the grace of God to be displayed amongst us afresh. But we feel bound in conscience to continue on as a Reformed Church when the merger with the UPUSA has been determined upon and consummated. That is the true state of affairs with us.

There has been some careless talk about a "new denomination," to be formed after merger. It may be that from one point of view, in that the constituency of the continuing church will not be identical with that of the PCUS as presently existing. But we are insistent upon the fact — and I write as a mere minister, and as having no official relationship to the Steering Committee or any other agency — that we intend to continue, not to separate. And we assert that the real separationists will be those who forsake the Reformed confessional and constitutional position of the Presbyterian Church to enter into union with a body (the UPUSA) that has long since given up any binding relationship to the Westminster Confession, or any other, has adopted position after position in which the moral and doctrinal posture of the Church of Christ has been corrupted, openly tolerates error of the most grievous sort, and no longer requires its ministers or its members to adhere to the evangelical faith of the Word of God. Dr. De Koster's charges are both unjust and untrue, but one prefers to think of him as poorly informed on these matters.

Furthermore, the liability of the members of the Steering Committee and others to discipline in a tighter and better ordered ecclesiastical system, according to Dr. De Koster, is an assertion so full of strange presuppositions and so replete with misconceptions that it is difficult to comprehend how it could be made at all. For the editor of the official publication of the Christian Reformed Church — a church born in separation at best, and professedly orthodox — to come down on that side is a very strange thing indeed. The Steering Committee and others — I among them — are working toward a continuing church and denouncing the present laxity of the PCUS because it is now possible — our constitution notwithstanding — to hold almost any aberration imaginable of a doctrinal or moral order (for example, the lawfulness of abortion for "economic" reasons) and yet to remain in good standing in the denomination. While admittedly in a sounder situation it would not be tolerated for a group to raise itself against the courts of the church and openly to protest and work against their decisions, in the present case it is a question of heresy and grave moral and spiritual error. And we believe that while the peace of the church is of great importance, there can be no true peace when the truth is not honored and adhered to. What the Steering Committee is doing is to insist that the church is duty bound to respect its own constitutional position and its own

confession, and to declare that though the majority may be prepared to commit ecclesiastical suicide and to surrender their doctrinal identity, all are not so willing; some will continue to hold to the gospel of Christ. It is easy for those who have forsaken the faith — and I refer here not to any Christian Reformed editor, but to those who hurl the charge of schism within our own denomination — to cry up peace and to cry down disturbers and troublers in Israel. But with whom does the fault lie? Who are the liars and thieves, the destroyers of the souls of men?

The most prominent defector from the conservative movements in the PCUS after the announcement of the formation of the Steering Committee was Dr. L. Nelson Bell, former medical missionary to China, prominent evangelical leader, father-in-law to Billy Graham, and board member and associate editor of *The Presbyterian Journal*. The same *Banner* editorial which spoke out against efforts to lay the ground work for a continuing Presbyterian Church in the South made much use of his words in resigning from the *Journal* in protest against the plan of action adopted by his erstwhile colleagues. Dr. Bell feels that "the battle must be on a higher level than that of an organizational issue and that a division in the Church will not solve the problems caused by liberalism." He thinks moreover "that there are evidences of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit working across America and within the bounds of our Church, which should cause us to look up and thank God." And he holds also that "The *Journal* board's involvement in what will certainly prove to be a separatist movement is not justified by the present situation in the Church." Dr. Bell is no doubt an admirable Christian and a notable evangelical leader. We all respect him for what he has done in the past, and for his courage and forthrightness in the present. But we think him wrong. And we grieve at the harm which his withdrawal may have done, not to us, but to the cause of Christ. I, for my part, believe that he has seriously misjudged the situation. His own words indicate that this is the case. Our battle is not one having to do with an organizational issue only. It is basically a theological one. The gospel is at stake. Furthermore, no Presbyterian with any understanding of history or of the New Testament can hold that organization is an incidental matter, and that what really counts in the end is the intangible spirit of the thing. Structure pertains to the very nature of the church. Why otherwise are we Presbyterians? Is not our form of church government based squarely upon the teaching of the Word of God? Even there, though that might not justify separation — indeed, I believe it would not — we cannot be indifferent. But the issue is still more fundamental, as I sought to show in the first of these two articles. Though we respect a man like Dr. Bell, therefore, we cannot follow him; and we lament the



decision which he has felt compelled to make.

Second, another complicating factor in assessing our situation is the very mixed character of the denomination, even of the evangelical party within the denomination, which I referred to at the beginning. As a relative newcomer to the PCUS I am still insufficiently familiar with the details of the history of the denomination to be able to put my finger on the source of the trouble. Perhaps one ought to say "sources" of the trouble, since there is seldom a single point of origin in denominational deterioration and decay. It does seem certain to me, however, that even the conservatives in the church are in large measure so unclear in their adherence to the Reformed position and the Westminster Confession as to make quite difficult any attempt at co-operation under the present circumstances, and even more so later on in the projected continuing church. Many men call themselves Calvinistic and Reformed when they are in fact very far from that. Ministers — and I speak here of evangelicals — appear able to sign the Confession in good conscience, intending nothing like the mental reservations of the liberals, and then to go on in the practice of their ministries behaving much more like Arminians. It is well known that Mrs. Billy Graham is a member of the PCUS, and Leighton Ford, Graham's associate evangelist and brother-in-law, is a minister in our denomination. Such instances may be taken as typical of many others. We have many amongst us who are broadly evangelical, but not distinctively Reformed. In current usage one employs the word "evangelical" as distinct from Reformed: one who is Reformed is certainly an evangelical in that he holds to the great doctrines of the gospel; but, alas, not all evangelicals are Reformed. Many are Arminian. Evangelistic practice among these evangelicals involves the employment of all the techniques of modern mass evangelism, decisionism, preaching in which the glorious truths of the Word of God on election, the nature of man, the bondage of the will, dependence upon the Holy Spirit for regeneration, are either obscured or not mentioned at all, preaching which is quite indistinguishable from that in churches making no claim to the name of Presbyterian or Reformed. It has been astonishing to me that there can be so open a claim to the historic position of the denomination and at the same time so little awareness in some quarters of what that means in terms of the actual work of evangelism and the ministry as a whole. I rather think that only a minority among the conservative ministers could give a creditable explanation of the five points of Calvinism, though these are abundantly evident in the Westminster Confession of Faith; certainly relatively few of them would make any effort to put them to work in their preaching and teaching. It is my impression also that a great part of the orthodox constituency of the church are in ignorance on the

very basic significance of the Reformed faith.

No doubt this is to be traced in large measure to the theological seminaries and to the preaching and teaching of the past. As so often has been the case, decline did not come all at once, but the seeds of it were being sown long before the fruit they were to produce became apparent. There was a movement from the high Reformed convictions of men like Thornwell and Dabney to a lower, vaguer form of Calvinism, and from thence to the situation as we find it today. What a heavy burden of guilt for the apostasy among the majority in the leadership of the PCUS must be borne by the seminaries is self-evident. But reaching a bit further back, the finger of blame must also be pointed in their direction for the indefinite, untaught evangelicalism of the conservative part of the church as well. Because instruction in the theological faculties grew careless and became caught up in a diluted theology, this was passed on to the actual preaching within the congregations themselves, so that thousands of church members have, I believe, never so much as heard a truly Reformed sermon. Even with evangelicals in many places fifteen to twenty minute essays on religion, topical treatments of some biblical subject, have been the rule rather than the exception. There is little taste for exposition, little love for preaching, though there is a residual conservatism that balks at the perversion of the gospel which is currently being handed down from above.

I do not know what percentage of the conservative ministers are truly Reformed. There are some, of course. And there are many others who mean to be such. That in itself is a hopeful sign. Where there is adherence to the Scriptures and a determination and intent to be faithful to the confessional stance of the church, there is always a point of contact of which advantage may be taken and which in the mercy of God may yet be the means of strengthening the Reformed witness in our part of the country. But one may easily understand how uncertain the future must be said to be when strong Calvinists, weak Calvinists, evangelicals, even distinctly Arminian evangelicals, will be constrained to co-operate with one another and to rebuild the fabric of the church with one another in the event of a continuing PCUS. As I have made clear enough by this time, I am very much on the side of those who are prepared to resist to the end any merger with the UPUSA. But I also have doubts as I reflect upon our circumstances whether there are enough men of a Reformed character to ensure the continuation of a truly Reformed and Presbyterian Church, "a Presbyterian Church loyal to Scripture and the Reformed faith."

A third complicating factor is formed by the whole question of church property, pension funds, that kind of thing, and also the tendency of men, even of good men, to go along with the majority, the establishment,



no matter if that does violence to their professed principles. In the study draft of the plan of union which is presently before us there is an important provision called the "escape clause." This clause, as it stands, will permit those congregations which conscientiously find themselves unable to participate in the union to remain outside the new denomination to be formed by a merger of the PCUS and the UPUSA and to continue on as a Reformed and Presbyterian Church, taking their property along with them. The Steering Committee is adopting the approach that it is legitimate for conservatives opposing the union — unwilling to enter into it — to support the plan of union with the end in view of securing possession of their buildings and properties; and indeed it does seem that the plan of union invites this kind of support. I for one, however, am perplexed here, and unable to understand how I can be asked to vote for something which in the very nature of it I find reprehensible. Others are also facing the same ethical problem, and will be unable to have any part in such an undertaking. I hope that the "escape clause" is never removed. It may be. Voices are being heard to cry out loudly against it as "un-Presbyterian!" It is said that the clause proceeds upon Congregationalist rather than upon Presbyterian assumptions, that it opens the way to schism and independency, etc. As though it were Presbyterian for apostates to deprive the faithful of that which they have bought and paid for with their own contributions, which they resent seeing used for unscriptural worship, and which they will in consequence not willingly hand over to the enemies of souls. I hope the clause will not be removed, and I believe we must fight to see it retained as no more than just. But this does not mean that we are also to vote for a plan of union, which union we oppose, because some temporal good may accrue to us.

Though unlikely at the moment, that clause may be taken away in the end. And if that happens I fear, human nature being what it is, that a good many ministers and congregations will go the way of their buildings and their pension funds, rather than the way of their consciences. This sort of thing has happened in the past, and it will happen again. I do not say that these people will consciously violate their consciences. Human nature is far more subtle than that, and more devious. What will take place is that these men will gradually evolve in their own minds a rationale that can enable them somehow to square their refusal to continue in a truly Reformed and Presbyterian Church without doing violence to what they have then come to view as their convictions. One sees this process already at work in men who are permitting themselves to become convinced that those who have given themselves to laying the groundwork for a continuing denomination are schismatic, separatist, ill-advised, precipitate, etc. Some are even now beginning to back

away from the consequences of the principles they have held through many years because they see where these otherwise will lead them.

I could go on and on. An excessive sanguineness about the future, based upon no realistic assessment of the prospects, is also coming to the fore. The better showing of conservatives at the last meeting of the General Assembly than has been the case in years is deceiving some into thinking that we shall now be going on from strength to strength, when what last year's meeting really proved was that doing our utmost was not enough and that unless something else intervenes from the outside, unless God revives his church, the liberal hegemony is firmly in the saddle. This, too, has had its ill effects.

It means something to be a Presbyterian in this country, to have the name of Presbyterian, to belong to one of the great Presbyterian denominations with their heritage, their traditional strength of character, their entrenched social position, their Bank of England solidity and dependability. And it costs a good deal to turn one's back on all that, to say nothing of the heartache involved in contemplating the dissolution of the church which has been one's spiritual mother, in which one grew to adulthood, and in which one heard the gospel of God's grace in Christ. I can understand the mixture of feelings and thoughts and questions and perplexities in a man who stands face to face with an extremely difficult decision, one he has not courted and which he does not want to make. Many, unable to muster up the necessary resolve, will simply go along, though in much distress and with great distaste. And that, too, will affect the cause and add to the complications in this whole matter.

But however many the factors are which complicate our situation, I believe with all my heart that our struggle is an urgent one, and that we have no choice but to press on. We are in a time of crisis. This is so negatively, in that we shall have to decide not to enter into a merger with a largely apostate church, and have to do so very soon. It is also the case positively, in that we live in a time of exciting and exhilarating opportunity and challenge. All about us is a society seeking for answers, seeking in all the wrong places, unwilling to listen, but needing to hear the answers which only the Reformed faith is able to supply. Some of us are called to labor in relatively uncomplicated ecclesiastical situations. Others stand in a much more complex and involved situation, confronting a much less unambiguous moral and spiritual set of circumstances. We do not perhaps see the issues alike, because our background, opportunity, and training are quite different. But we are basically one in the faith, one in the Lord. And in these times of hardship and trouble we cannot do more for the truth than to remember and pray for and help each other. That help has frequently to be little more than an indication of



interest and sympathy — and for that reason I am glad for the invitation to contribute these articles. Sometimes it has also to take the form of brotherly admonition and even rebuke. The road ahead is still far from clear. We do not know where it will lead us because we cannot yet see the way. But we know that

God is the Lord of history, and that therefore the sunlight of his holy truth will dissipate the mist, and that at last he will show us where our footsteps are to go.

Brethren, love us and pray for us.

## All Around Us

# More on Government and the Schools Genetic Timetable

Prof. H. Hanko

### MORE ON GOVERNMENT AND THE SCHOOLS

The issue of the relation between the government and private and parochial schools continues to be a vexing one. One of the problems involves the law which requires compulsory education until age 16. This problem is really limited for the most part to the Amish who, generally, refuse to send their children to school beyond the eighth grade. The question is coming up for decision sometime next year before the Supreme Court of the United States.

In a recent issue of *Christianity Today*, the magazine editorialized as follows:

Among cases being heard by the U. S. Supreme Court in its current term are three involving the Amish. The court is being asked to decide whether Amish parents can be required to send their children to schools beyond the eighth grade and the age of fourteen. Representatives of the Old Order Amish in Wisconsin contend that to do so violates their religious convictions.

There is a great deal of sympathy for granting exemptions for the Amish. They are generally regarded as a quaint, harmless people who deserve to be left alone. It is difficult to see why modern sophistication should be imposed upon them.

But it is even harder to see what *fundamental* freedom of the parents is being violated. Religious convictions are not per se inviolable. Would parents have the right to keep their children illiterate? Indeed, one wonders if the individual child's right to secondary education is not being automatically denied by the parents. True, the opportunities for Amish teenagers to leave their heritage will be greater if they begin attending public high schools. But the free choice will still be theirs.

No Christian parent approves *all* that is taught in public schools, but they are a necessary accommodation to our times. If compulsory education is constitutional, then there should be no exceptions on religious grounds. Those who do object to public education at this level on religious grounds still have

the option of creating parochial schools and thus fulfill the constitutional requirements for their children.

This is a very difficult question which has no easy answers. The argument of the Amish is clear enough. They argue, on the one hand, that education beyond the eighth grade or beyond the age of fourteen is against their religious beliefs. Whether these religious beliefs are correct and in harmony with Scripture or not is not the question. They appeal to the Constitution of the United States which guarantees them freedom of religion. We must therefore take their assertion at face value and believe of them that they are sincere. Under these circumstances, is it possible and in keeping with the Constitution to insist that the Amish violate their own religious convictions? Does not this do violence to the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion?

But, on the other hand, the government insists that a child must be educated until he is sixteen years old. Beyond that age education is a matter of choice. Whether this law is Constitutional or not will have to be decided by the Supreme Court in its present term. But, supposing that the law is Constitutional, the argument of the government could very well be formulated in this way. Responsible citizenship in this democratic commonwealth requires an educated citizenry. A high school education is the very minimum to enable a person to function responsibly. If the government should permit parents themselves to decide whether or not to send their children to high school, the government will have to grant parents the freedom to educate their children or not to educate them in grade school as well. But an uneducated citizenry is a detriment to a democratic society. Indeed, such a society cannot hope to continue if the citizens are not educated. The very safety and future of the state requires compulsory education.

So the demands of an educated citizenry run head-on into the guarantees of religious freedom. What must



then be done?

We find some of the arguments of the editorial quoted above to be wrong. The editorial seems to suggest that no *fundamental* freedom of the Amish is being violated. But this is precisely the point. The Amish would surely demur. The editorial speaks of the equal rights of children to an education. But children are the God-given charges of their parents and have no rights apart from the fundamental relationship. The editorial suggests that the Amish could very well send their children to the public schools because, though, *all* taught there is not to be approved by Christian parents, these schools are a necessary accommodation to our times. This is, of course, an assumption. Whether they are a necessary accommodation to our times remains to be proved. And it seems as if the only grounds on which this can be proved is that of compulsory education. And so one argues in a circle. But the fact is, nevertheless, that the basic and underlying philosophy of the public schools is not neutral but anti-God and anti-Christ. Can any Christian parent, concerned about bringing up his children in the fear of the Lord, permit such instruction to be given his child? This would be a gross act of irresponsibility. The editorial suggests that, in the event the Amish are dissatisfied with the public schools, they should erect parochial schools. But this is contrary to their religious convictions, they tell us.

Their religious convictions may be wrong (and, indeed, they are), but does the principle of freedom of worship have to be curtailed because of this law that the government has passed? If it is a matter of religious belief with the Amish, and if the government foists on them compulsory education, we are back again to the days when religion is forced on people "at the point of the sword." And history has proved in countless ways that this does not only lead to failure, but it also is a damnable practice.

The whole question finally comes down to the role which a government may legitimately play in the education of children. And here is precisely where the government in this country has gone wrong. The question of compulsory education is inseparably related to the question of whether the government may engage in education at all. Our answer is that it may not. The responsibility of educating children is a parental responsibility. And no government may usurp that role. If parents fail in this calling, they may be admonished and urged to perform their God-given task; but they may not be relieved of the calling by any organization.

Does this imply that a government may not establish the principle of compulsory education? In my opinion it does. Parents must have freedom to educate their children according to their own convictions. And this implies freedom not to educate them as well. This is a solution which runs counter to everything heard in our day; but it is a principle of the truth of which I am

becoming more and more convinced. The end of compulsory education is inevitably education as the government determines. And as B. B. Warfield once observed, education by the government in a public school system becomes the mightiest engine for the propagation of atheism this world has ever seen.

But the problem with the Amish also reminds us that in a world of sin, where principles are abandoned, problems are created to which there are no solutions.

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We have reported in these columns recently that the United States Supreme Court has struck down various types of parochial aid. But this has not ended the battle and various organizations and states are attempting to find other ways to bring government aid to parochial and private schools without breaking the rulings of the Court. The latest of these attempts is the plan Pennsylvania is trying according to which the state pays parents \$75.00 for every grade school child and \$150.00 for every high school child when parents present vouchers at the end of the school year showing the amount of tuition they have paid. This plan, too, is on the way to the courts to be tested for its Constitutionality. If such a plan as this is also struck down by the Supreme Court, that would seem to be the end of attempts to gain aid for private and parochial schools from public funds.

## GENETIC TIMETABLE

The following article came into my possession recently which should be of some interest to our readers.

(This timetable is an updated version of the predictions made two years ago in the RAND Corporation/Douglas Aircraft studies and includes some ideas from G. R. Taylor's *The Biological Time Bomb*. The dates are those of technological achievement and not widespread implementation. Implementation will, of course, depend on social and economic considerations.)

### PHASE ONE: By 1980.

Effective screening of most major genetic defects in order to advise parents against conception or to recommend abortion of a genetically flawed fetus.

Human egg fertilized successfully in test tube.

Artificial in ovulation of test tube embryo into womb of a nongenetic mother (One not related to the offspring).

Choice of sex of offspring.

Storage bank of genetically superior eggs and sperm.

Synthetic life created in the form of artificial viruses that will be used to cure some forms of genetic disease.

First cloned animals.

### PHASE TWO: by 2000.

Frozen embryos will be stored as insurance against nuclear holocaust and also for interplanetary colonization.



Artificial placentas and mechanical baby factory.  
Effective control of most human defects through genetic manipulation.

Extensive transplantation of limbs and organs.  
Single-celled life created from chemicals on the shelf.

Intelligent animals produced to do menial work.  
First cloned people.

#### PHASE THREE: By 2050.

Organ and limb regeneration in the same way that some lizards grow new tails.

Man-animal hybrid chirheras for specialized astronomical purposes.

Complex living organisms created from chemicals on the shelf.

Widespread cloning of people with highly desirable characteristics.

Genetically enhanced human intelligence.

Disembodied brains, organic computers, brain computer links.

Postponement of death by at least 50 years.

What is particularly disturbing in all this is not so much *what* man's claims are for the future in this matter of genetic manipulation. After all, these are loud and raucous boasts of ungodly men who claim the power to do all things. Whether they will be able to accomplish all these arrogant claims remains to be seen. God is in heaven and Christ is Ruler over all;

nothing will happen without His will. The disturbing thing is that man *wants* to do these things. There is a philosophy behind all this which is unbelievably evil. Based on the premise of evolution (that man is nothing more than a highly developed animal who has reached the present rung in the evolutionary ladder by merest chance) he now envisions the possibility of getting his hands on the "evolutionary processes" and manipulating them at will to produce a superman, a "God-Man." And his assumption is that anything which science *can* do, it *may* do. If he has the technology to do something, it is *therefore* perfectly legitimate to go ahead and do it. That is, if science becomes capable of altering the mind of man, science has, by this capability, received the license to do it. And do not forget that the phrase: "the ability of science to do it" really means, when translated: "the right of a small group of men in positions of power to do to their fellowmen what they want." It is the claimed right of a few to decide the life and destiny of all; to decide what is good for "the masses"; to decide what every other man ought to do. It is a godless thing, fraught with danger, a hot breath of hell from the mouth of Antichrist.

But grace is greater than all in the lives of God's people. Nothing can destroy their salvation.

## Studies in Election

# Its Supralapsarian Character

(Continued)

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

We we discuss the character of predestination, election and reprobation, we are really discussing the character of scripture, for predestination is the very heart of scripture and of the gospel. Therefore, to ask, What is the character of predestination (or election)? is to ask, What is the character of scripture? If the answer to the former be that it is supralapsarian in character, then the answer to the latter must be that scripture itself is of a supralapsarian nature. If this be so, then the following inferences will be true, as that, first, the supra-infra question is not unimportant. It has a very fundamental importance. For the supra view is concerned with the planning, realization and consummation of God's purpose. Second, it cannot be true that there is no real difference between the two views, as though both are practically the same. In the supra scheme, nothing is *afterthought*, or "after the fact." There is no later introduced resource to affect an eva-

sion of something. Supra proceeds in the direct line of train, track and terminal, or perhaps the order would be better expressed as terminal, train and track. Scripture will bear this out. We have already suggested that Romans Nine is not infra- but supralapsarian.

There Paul wrote, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." Why did God give preference to Jacob? It must be evident that He did so simply because it was His purpose to do so, for He chose Jacob independently of any merit in him, in fact, His choice was before the children were born, before they could do any good or evil. Since it is true that "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the ages" (Acts 15:18), that is, that He does in time only what He has decreed in His secret, eternal counsel, then it must have been in the divine



mind from all eternity to put enmity between the seed of the serpent, Esau, and the seed of the woman, Jacob. It is a plain scriptural fact that divine election and reprobation, God's choosing some and rejecting others, were independent of any foreseen "good or evil" in the creature, and so irrespective of any merit or demerit (the fall) of man. It may also be noted that the language "the purpose of God according to election" furnishes evidence for the Calvinistic doctrine of double predestination, that there are two parts of the divine decree, that there must also be the purpose of God according to His sovereign reprobation. Romans 9:22 surely bears this out. "What if God willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction!"

Also the supralapsarian view is more in harmony with Romans 9:21 than is the infra-view. For God, who has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass (Acts 4:27-28), in His eternal purpose contemplated His people first, not as sinful, fallen creatures, but, as noted in Romans 8:29-30, as glorified saints, as eternally predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. With that in mind, consider this: "Hath not the Potter power (authority) over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor?" Now that lump of clay to begin with is an unformed lump. But is it also to be regarded as a fallen mass or an unfallen lump? The latter, certainly; for if the whole mass of mankind were considered in the mind of Paul infra-wise, as fallen, he would not have spoken of some vessels destined to be unto honor and some to dishonor, for under that scheme of predestination the whole mass of clay was already in the state of corruption and dishonor. Then the decree would be, for some, to leave them in and consign them to that dishonor, while for the others, to extricate them from dishonor and elevate them to honor. For this mass of unformed clay is the mass of creatureship not yet made and not yet considered as corrupted and fallen. But rather out of that unformed mass God fitted some to destruction and others He beforehand prepared to glory. This view alone extols the certainty and sovereignty of God's decree as no other does.

This is also true in Ephesians 1. There, too, we find the distinction made between the end God had in mind and the means He ordained to realize that end. For from verses 3 to 6 we have God's first and highest purposes of His decree expressed. Then in verses 7 to 9 we have the decree of the means in which He foreappointed the accomplishment of that purpose. Then we will understand what is meant by "being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (v. 11). What things are these which God works? First, the things He has ordained to be the glorious end of His people, and second, the things He has ordained to be the wonderful

means He will use to the accomplishment of His own end. These things chiefly have people in view, contemplated first in an unfallen and glorified state (vv. 3-6) and then in a fallen and redeemed state (7-9).

This is what God worked in His counsel. He did it in eternity past. "He hath blessed us," "He hath chosen us" (v. 4), "having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons" (v. 5), "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" One (v. 6). The means employed to accomplish this already determined counsel produce a present blessing and its enjoyment. "In whom we have redemption through His blood" (v. 7). That first and highest purpose of God revealed in vv. 3-6 is there declared full and complete without any dependence upon a foreview of the fall. Those "all things," which God works according to the counsel of His will, follow from the elect being eternally blessed in Christ, and those blessed ones being chosen in Him. These spiritual blessings with which He has blessed us, He has given us on much higher ground than that of His being our Redeemer. He gave them to us from all eternity on the ground of Christ's being the Image of God! He chose us in Christ, not as picked out of a fallen humanity, but with the end determined that we should be holy. God's election saw us first not as unholy, but as holy. This is not the imperfect holiness of this life, but the perfect and unchangeable holiness that neither unfallen Adam nor the unfallen angels had by nature. There in His decree He viewed us as holy, as having predestinated us to the adoption of sons (v. 5). That is, we were from the beginning of His decree considered as the sons of God in perfect communion and friendship with Him.

Now since the Lord has blessed us according to His purpose of election with all spiritual blessings, then there are not only those blessings just enumerated which belong peculiarly to the end He has in mind for us, but there are also those blessings which belong peculiarly to the means to secure that end. The latter blessings, however, were ordained through and on consideration of the fall, and for us, regarded not as holy in perfection, but as sinners to be redeemed and so brought to holiness in perfection and glory.

These blessings of God's eternal purpose, then, were first in His intention. So they are said to be "before the foundation of the world" (v. 4), i.e., they were ordained to us logically and spiritually in Christ before consideration of laying the foundation of the universe. That which was first in His intention He designed to be realized at the end of the world. Thus the adoption to which we were predestinated we yet await (Rom. 8:23). Then the blessings of God's ordained means were next in His intention, and are given us in this life, for in this present we have "the forgiveness of sins" through His blood. Those blessings first in His main purpose stand on the ground of Christ's person, as we have it, "blessed . . . in Christ . . . chosen in Him . . .



accepted in the Beloved.” But the blessings ordained as means stand on the ground of Christ’s work. These latter blessings God uses in a reconciling way to bridge the gap that because of sin separates us from the ultimate blessings, which were always first in His intention.

So there are blessings which we receive “in Christ” (vv. 3, 4) as glorified, holy sons of God, and there are blessings which we receive “through Christ” (v. 7) as sinners with sins forgiven. The former blessings are ours in Christ as Head. The latter are ours in Christ as Savior. This is the divine order. “Christ is the Head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body” of Christ (5:23). “In the volume (the head) of the Book (of Election) it is written of Me, ‘Lo, I come (as Saviour!) to do Thy will, O God!’ ”

God chose Christ and foreordained Him (I Pet. 1:19) to be the sovereign end of His eternal purpose. Christ is the end of our election. He is God’s Elect, God’s Delight (Isa. 42:1). We are God’s elect and Christ’s delight (Pro. 8:31). Therefore our election is

prior to any consideration of the fall of man, for we were viewed in Christ before we were viewed in Adam. The elect angels were never regarded as in a fallen mass when they were chosen, for they never fell. So with elect men; they were regarded in the same unfallen lump of humanity when He chose them. Christ as God manifest in the flesh was chosen, but neither He nor His perfect humanity ever fell in Adam. Consequently, the people chosen in Him must be considered at that point in the decree, at least, as unfallen. Eve was given to Adam before sin entered. So the church was given to Christ as bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, not as fallen, but as from the very first, glorified! God’s purpose for His elect has a double reference. First, He ordained them to glory, and then with regard to the fall, to salvation. So His ordination of the reprobate has a double reference. He ordained them to destruction as creatures, and to condemnation as sinners.

*(To be continued)*

## *From Holy Writ*

# Exposition of Hebrews

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

### THE SUBJECT IS STILL “FAITH” (Hebrews 11:17-19)

It must be kept in mind that faith is here not merely defined in a rather scholastic definition, but is here described to us in its living operation and manifestation in the lives of the saints. We see faith here as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It is the faith by which the elders obtained a good report. Yes, we saw this in Abel, Noah, Enoch, and now in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yes, even in Sarah, the mother of kings and nations.

In the case of Abraham it is constantly the obedience of faith that clings to God’s Word and His promises which is displayed before our eyes. He obeyed in leaving the land of his birth; he obeyed in dwelling as a sojourner in the land; he obeyed in waiting for the promised son, Isaac. In all this, faith shines forth in glorious beauty and splendor. We see here the like-precious faith of all the saints which is to be found unto the praise and honor of God in the day of Jesus Christ. (I Peter 1:7) However, in all of this, faith is not yet perfected. This perfection of faith was exemplified and demonstrated in Abraham offering Isaac his son upon the altar for a burnt offering, a thank offering wholly consumed in the service of the Lord! Here we see a faith which is not sterile and dead and useless, but here is living faith which is not only the means of

justification of the godless sinner, but it shows this godless sinner as he is transformed by faith into a man which has learned the obedience of godliness. Yes, Abraham’s faith had not merely the form of godliness which denied the power of it, but here is the power of godliness manifested in a living faith!

Here is faith which takes God at His word. If it must be a human sacrifice and the breaking of God’s own ordinance, the fundamental law of God governing the sacrifices (Gen. 9:6) then Abraham will do so. If it means that God will destroy his own promised mercies to which Abraham clings with all his being, then let it be so. It is the blotting out in one stroke of all the promises which Abraham has greeted and received with so much longing and desire and joy (“*Anadexamenos*”) then he rests his cause with the LORD Himself. Here is not the dictum: I see and therefore I believe, but here we have the “*credimus ut intelligemus*,” that is, we believe that we may understand! Here is the triumphant cry of faith: *Jehovah-jireh*, the Lord will provide!

**ABRAHAM’S FAITH IS TRIED** (Genesis 22:1-3; Hebrews 11:17)

The writer simply tells us the facts in Genesis. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob pays the patriarch a



visit. He calls to him: Abraham! He calls him by the significant name: a father of many nations have I made thee. It was a rather crowning point in Abraham's life. It was a word of promise which Abraham so gladly received, in hope against hope. He would be the heir of the world. (Romans 4:16-21) But now Abraham is "tempted." Yes, Satan would tempt him here to sin, to fall back into disobedience and perdition. Abraham must not continue to look for the city which has foundations, for the better country which is heavenly; he must falter in the battle and be overcome with frustration and despair. But God has better thoughts, thoughts of peace for Him. He will lead him through this humanly impossible way, and Abraham will say: God cannot lie, He cannot deny Himself, He cannot not fulfill His promises to me which culminated in the one point, when I sent away Ishmael: *in Isaac shall there be a seed to thee!*

For what does it mean that God *tries* (tempts) Abraham? Does it mean that God desired Abraham to fall? Not at all. But it does mean that God makes the way humanly impossible for Abraham. That there is absolutely no victory over this temptation; there is no solution to this hopeless contradiction except in faith. Faith as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen! This is faith's great moment. It will be the test of faith in its ultimacy in Abraham.

Like staccato blows the message comes to Abraham: "take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (Gen. 22:2) And Hebrews 11:17 says that Abraham did exactly as the LORD had commanded him to do. He offered his son Isaac! He completed the task of offering his son. Such is the implication of the perfect tense of the verb in Greek. He did more than merely contemplate the act. He walked for three days to the mountain. He deliberately left the servants and the ass behind. He walked up that mountain with the wood, the fire, the knife and Isaac. And when the latter inquired concerning the sacrifice, Abraham did not flinch, but pressed on in faith, waiting for what the LORD had in store for them. He built the altar, tied Isaac as the sacrificial victim on the altar and will consummate the act by putting the knife into Isaac's jugular vein so that the blood may flow, in which the life is. Oh, awfully sublime moment of faith! Abraham finished the act in faith. That is the sublime reality here in Moriah. His faith is tried and it is not found wanting. It was not a dead faith. He was justified by faith which revealed itself in the work of love for God! (James 2:22-26)

It was not Abraham who stopped Isaac from being slain on the altar. It was the LORD Himself who intervened. He calls: "Abraham, Abraham . . . lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him:

for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me!" (Gen. 22:11, 12) Yes, Abraham was interrupted while in the process of offering his son as a burnt offering. We see it as a moving picture in the Greek imperfect tense of the verb. Some have translated it "while he prepared to offer up his son." This is too weak. The thought is that he was actually offering the son when God intervened!

### THE DEEP WAYS OF GOD'S TRIAL IS RESOLVED BY FAITH'S REASONING (Hebrews 11:18, 19)

Had God not said to Abraham: in Isaac shall thy seed be called? And had that not been at the occasion of the weaning of Isaac when Ishmael mocked the little Isaac? Had Sarah then not insisted in getting rid of Hagar the Egyptian handmaid and her son, saying, "the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son." And God had agreed with Sarah and He had instructed Abraham to send Ishmael away. Oh, it had grieved Abraham greatly. He had overcome that fatherly sorrow in faith, and now all his hope for becoming a great people and nation is pinned upon Isaac, the son of the free woman. And God cannot lie. He had said: in Isaac and in no one else shall the Seed be called! In Isaac Abraham is Abraham and Sarah is Sarah! Thus was the former word of God. And not one of these shall fall to the ground. The Word of God cannot fall out!

The text in Hebrews tells us that Abraham had so joyfully claimed these promises for himself. He was living in this pure joy that now at last he would be the heir, that he would finally obtain the promise. (Hebrews 6:11, 12) Now in one word the LORD will dash all his hopes to pieces. It seems that the LORD will destroy His own work, and that the Lord is changeable, that he is as a man who promises but does not bring to pass. Yes, it almost has the semblance of the sadist who raises the hopes high, and then laughs when he dashes these hopes to smithereens, and then lets the poor victim pick of the bits of his perished hopes and fond expectations! That was the temptation with which Satan tempted Abraham. For that was the natural conclusion. God is not just, He is changeable. He can lie, nay, He does lie!

For not so for the ratiocination of faith!

Faith believes that God is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek him. Faith believes that God is not in the abstract, but in the midst of the battle. Nothing shall separate me from the love of God, life, death, things high or low, future or present or past. All things work together for good to those who love God. That is what *faith* says!! And such was Abraham's faith. Yes, there was here perhaps a syllogism of faith. It ran something as follows:

1. God is Almighty, God is able, NOTHING IS TOO WONDERFUL FOR GOD.



2. Isaac will be dead, nothing but ashes, cremated on the altar of God. Yet, it will be consecrated ashes, and not some heathenistic cremation of those who belittle the meaning of the body and the resurrection of the body in the last day.
3. But if God will have him ashes dedicated on the altar in his service as a burnt offering, a thank-offering from me, then I commit him to the hands of the Almighty God, who cannot lie. He will surely fulfil His Word of promise. Isaac will be raised from the dead. Hallelujah! The Lord will prepare the sacrifice!

In this faith Abraham is triumphant! Faith is the victory which overcomes the world. It says all is God's! Be it Abraham, Isaac and his ashes from the altar, all are God's Life, death, things present, things future, all belong to the Lord.

Thus is this matter resolved by faith's reasoning. And this reasoning was resolute. Such was the position of Abraham's faith as he progressed from the tent to the mountain-top! Here is anticipated the prayer of Christ: Father, into thy hands I commend my son, Isaac!

**ABRAHAM'S FAITH AWARDED** (Hebrews 11:19 b)

Abraham is not put to shame. God's word of promise stands. Not one word will fall to the ground till all are fulfilled. For Abraham received his son from the dead. He received in thus in a figure. As far as Abraham's faith was concerned he really received Isaac back to himself from the Lord — from the dead. Perhaps there is here the expanded thought that Abraham saw that the only way in which Isaac could be the one in whom the Seed would be called would be through death.

Howbeit, Abraham receives another reward. He receives this time a fuller and more condescending assurance that the Promise surely be realized. That we have an anchor with God in the holy place is affirmed by God's oath. God could swear by none greater, so He swore by Himself. He came, as it were, between Abraham and the promise with His word of oath. Thus Abraham now has two immutable things to assure him. He goes down the mountain with greater and gladder assurance that in Isaac the Seed would be called. He came back with the lad from the mountain-top and now he can really look for the redemption of Israel to come forth from the loins of Isaac, and he sees a great and mighty people, a great nation in him.

## *Contending for the Faith*

# **The Doctrine of Atonement**

*THE REFORMATION PERIOD  
THE SYNOD OF DORDT*

*Rev. H. Veldman*

Before we call attention to the doctrine of atonement as set forth by our fathers at the Great Synod of Dordt, it is well to quote once more the second article of the Remonstrants, setting forth the Arminian presentation of this doctrine of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary:

That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that He has obtained for them all, by His death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John 3:16: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And in the First Epistle of John 2:2: "And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

When calling attention to this doctrine of the atonement as set forth by the Synod of Dordt, it is well to be reminded of the great significance of this

teaching of Holy Writ. Fact is, this doctrine constitutes one of the fundamental doctrines of Calvinism, one of the Five Points of Calvinism. And it is also a fact that the fathers devoted an entire head of doctrine to this teaching in the Canons. It is true, of course, that these Five Heads of the Canons are the answer of the fathers to the Five Points of the Remonstrants. Nevertheless, this doctrine constitutes the content of an entire Head of the Canons, the Second Head.

Secondly, when discussing this doctrine, it is also well to bear in mind that these Five Points of Calvinism are inseparably connected. They all stand or fall together. To maintain the one, it is necessary to maintain all the others. And, of course, the fundamental heresy of the Arminians or Remonstrants is their denial of the absolute sovereignty of the living God in His counsel of predestination. This is the first point of the Arminians and it also is the first point of the Five Points of Calvinism. This connection between these several doctrines cannot be denied.



Point I of the Remonstrants is a denial of the sovereign and unconditional character of Divine election. Divine election is either sovereign and therefore unconditional or it is conditional and based on foreseen faith. The love of God is either particular, determined solely by the Lord or it is general and dependent upon the free will of the sinner. The Remonstrants advocated a universal love of God and conditional predestination. The doctrine of a universal love of God is Arminianism. This doctrine of a conditional predestination must lead to universal atonement. The history of the Christian Reformed Church since 1924 is a clear corroboration of this. In 1924, at the time of the adoption of the Three Points there was very little talk of a universal atonement. But those points do speak of a general love of God, expressing itself in a general offer of salvation in the preaching of the gospel. Today that church has upheld Prof. H. Dekker, retained him as a professor in its seminary, and this in spite of the fact that he has publicly declared himself in favor of the heresy that Christ died for all men, head for head. This is inevitable. How can God love all men and offer salvation to all men unless there be a salvation for all men. The Lord cannot offer something that does not exist. If He offer salvation to all, there must be salvation for all. And this means that this salvation must have been made possible through a general suffering and passion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first point of the Arminians must lead to their second point: universal atonement. The one simply does not make sense without the other. This is very serious. How careful we must always be with respect to our teaching of the love of God, whether it be general or particular! Thirdly, the doctrine of a general love of God and a universal atonement must lead to a denial of complete and absolute depravity. The Three Points of 1924 are also a clear corroboration of this. And this is also plainly evident in the Five Points of the Remonstrants. And this, too, is inevitable. The teaching of a general love of God, expressed in a general offer of salvation, must lead to the teaching that the sinner is able to accept this offer of salvation. How can anyone be sincere when offering something to someone unless that person be able to accept it? To offer salvation to all men, and this means that the sinner's acceptance of that salvation is dependent upon that sinner's free will, certainly must mean that that sinner be also able to accept it. And this is a denial of the sinner's absolute and utter depravity. If the sinner be dead in his sins and miseries, then it must follow that the Lord must begin His work of salvation in that sinner, and this must mean that that work of the Lord is strictly unconditional. If the Lord must begin the work of salvation in the heart of a sinner who is dead in sins and in miseries, then it follows, must follow, that He begins that work where He pleases and according to

His sovereign good pleasure. Fourthly, Arminianism must lead to the denial of the truth that the grace of God is irresistible. This, too, is expressed in the fourth point of the Remonstrants, and we quote its conclusion: "But as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, inasmuch as it is written concerning many, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost, Acts 7, and elsewhere in many places." According to the Remonstrants, salvation depends upon the will of the sinner. This means that, according to them, the sinner can accept salvation, will to be saved, but he can also resist this grace of God, refuse to be saved. We must understand this. It is, of course, true that the sinner rejects the gospel, tramples the grace of God under foot. Because of the obduracy of his heart, he wants nothing to do with the blessedness of salvation. Viewed subjectively, from the viewpoint of the sinner, he chooses the things of sin and of the world and despises whatever is connected with the grace of the Lord. However, this must not be confused with the teaching that the grace of God is resistible. That the grace of God is resistible means that the living God can be resisted in His desire to save. It means that the Holy Spirit can be thwarted in His desire and efforts to save the sinner. It means that God does not have His own way, that He is frustrated in His intention and effort to save. And this is certainly refuted by what we read in John 6:44: "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." This text teaches us two things. First, if the Father draw not, no man can come to the Saviour. This coming to Jesus is, therefore, absolutely dependent upon the almighty drawing power of the Father. And, in the second place, this passage of Holy Writ also teaches that when the Father draws man must come unto the Lord. This, too, is taught in this particular Word of God. And the teaching that the grace of God is resistible means exactly that the sinner can thwart the living God in His work of salvation. Fifthly, and finally, Arminianism leads and must lead to the denial of the certain perseverance of the saints. This denial is expressed in the fifth point of the Remonstrants. Of course! If the grace of God be dependent upon the will of the sinner, one can never be sure of the perseverance of the saints. A chain is never stronger than its weakest link. The sinner, once saved (we speak, of course, the language of the Arminian), can then fall away from grace and fail to persevere unto the end.

Is this Arminian doctrine serious? Is it true that, if only we are saved, it really makes no difference what we believe? This sentiment is often expressed. The salvation of the sinner is the all-important thing. These points of doctrine are really very irrelevant. We should not be so distinctive in our preaching and teaching. Is this true? Emphatically not! First of all, from the viewpoint of the salvation of a sinner, does it really



make no difference how a sinner is saved? Does it make no difference whether one has the assurance of salvation or whether a sinner never enjoys this assurance? Does it make no difference whether a saved sinner can take the songs of the redeemed people of the Lord upon his lips or whether doubts and fears accompany him all the days of his life? Do we not read in 2 Pet. 1:10-11: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This does not mean that we must make sure of our election as such, as if our election were dependent upon us, but it does mean that we must put forth all diligence to be sure of it ourselves, put forth every effort to stand in the assurance of our election, and to make our calling and election sure means that we make our election sure in the way of walking in the way of our calling. Is this serious? When we must give diligence, put forth every effort to attain unto this assurance? Indeed, our salvation and pure doctrine are inseparably connected.

This, however, is not all. Is this Arminian doctrine serious? Of course it is! And not merely from the viewpoint of our salvation. There is something more important than a sinner's salvation. Or, let us put it this way: a sinner's salvation does not merely consist in *his* being saved, in his being transported into heavenly life and glory. Man is and never can be the important thing in a sinner's salvation. Man is not saved primarily for his sake but for God's sake. And the truth is so

tremendously important because the glory of the living God is at stake. God's glory is *the* issue. Should a saved sinner not be concerned with the way in which the truth of the Scriptures is presented? Should it not be a matter of vital concern to a saved sinner whether God is presented as a beggar who is desirous to save all men but must be satisfied when only a handful come to Him to be saved? Does it speak of the power and glory of the Lord when He offers His salvation to all and then must stand idly by, waiting for the sinner to respond to His plea and consent to the Lord to begin His work of salvation in him? The answer is plain.

Before we call attention to the doctrine of the atonement as set forth by our fathers in the Canons of Dordt, the Second Head, we note that the late Rev. H. Hoeksema, introducing his remarks upon this section of the Canons, writes as follows:

Atonement through satisfaction, — this is the Scriptural and Reformed doctrine which was opposed and twisted by the Remonstrants and which is expounded by our fathers in this chapter. He who denies election must also sacrifice this doctrine of atonement and reconciliation through satisfaction ultimately. If Christ has not satisfied for a definite number of men, then His death has not atoning significance; and then, too, there is in Christ no payment, or ransom, for our guilt.

How true this is! The Lord willing, we will have opportunity to call attention to this as we call attention to what our fathers have to say in connection with the Scriptural truth of the atonement of the cross and of Calvary.

## In His Fear

# The Pilgrim Life

Rev. D. H. Kuiper

## 2. THE PILGRIM AND THE BIBLE

"I dreamed, and behold, I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back."

With these words did John Bunyon begin his enduring work, *Pilgrim's Progress* (written in Bedford Jail, England, in 1675). He saw a man on a journey, a pilgrim, with a great weight of sin upon him, and a book in his hand. That book was the Bible. Bunyon accurately portrayed the Christian as a stranger in the midst of a dark, danger-filled world, a world that would mislead, entangle, and destroy the Christian. And so as Pilgrim makes his way; he has the Bible open

in his hand, right in front of him at all times, so that he does not lose his way. He needs that. He needs a lamp unto his feet and a light upon his pathway. He needs signposts that will, without fail, direct him to his destination. These signposts must point in the direction of the land where he has his citizenship, the heavenly country where God is not ashamed to be called his God. They must point out his specific calling as he wends his way through a sin-darkened, God-hating world. They must point out the dangers he will confront: the swamps of sin to be avoided, lest he become spotted with the mud of the world; the entangling alliances that would paralyze him if entered into; the pseudo-gospels that deny his God the glory



and rob him of needed comfort. Clearly, these signposts must not *err*! What a terrible predicament for the pilgrim if the signposts, or the guidebook, misleads and proves to be untrustworthy!

It is our position that God has provided His children with an inerrant Guide, with infallible Signposts, with true Light, so that throughout his pilgrimage the Christian pilgrim may know assuredly all that is needful to know this side of the grave. He may know God as the Creator of the Universe, as the Sustainer and Governor of all things, as the Father of Jesus Christ. He may know Jesus as the Lamb of God slain from before the foundations of the world, and may know the fellowship of His death and resurrection. He may be convinced of the reality of the kingdom of heaven, as it is now being established in the hearts of the elect and as it will be perfected when Christ returns for those elect with power and glory. He may know what God requires of him while he remains on earth. What Father would have him avoid, and what pleases Him. How to view the world round about, how to estimate its goals and activities, how to live in respect to the neighbor. This inerrant Guide is the *Bible*, in which the Christian pilgrim discovers who he is, where he came from, where he is going, and how he is to behave while he is going there.

The Devil does not miss the importance of all this. As he rages on this earth in the short time that he has been given, he repeatedly makes attacks on the authenticity and reliability of the Scriptures. The success of these attacks may be gauged by the concessions the church on earth makes in this area. The word apostasy (to fall away from a firm, established position, hence, to fall away from the truth of the Scriptures) may be applied to much of what the church decides nowadays. Cardinal truths of the Word of God are questioned, superficially studied, confidently denied. The doctrine of Scripture itself is a favorite target on which Satan and his apostates "zero in." Their strategy is: if the foundations are undermined, can the house of Truth long stand?

Saddest of all is the response of the church in this devilish attack. In one denomination after another the reaction can only be described as a caving in, a buckling under, a compromising. Oh, it can appear so very innocent. A church will decide to appoint a committee to study the nature and extent of the authority of Scripture, or something like that. But does that need study? *May* that be studied and questioned in the year of our Lord 1971? Does it not belong to the very foundation of the church of Christ that the Word of God is absolute authority and completely reliable for all the areas on which it chooses to speak? That has been established at Carthage and Hippo under Augustine in the fourth century. Luther and Calvin asserted the same, necessarily, at the time of the Great Reformation. If the church forever chooses to wonder

about this point, it can only serve the advantage of the enemy. We wish in this article to demonstrate that the Word of God is unassailable by making some explanatory and applicatory remarks concerning II Peter 1:20-21: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Peter and the other apostles faced the same apostasy, the same attack on the Scriptures, that the church faces today. In their speech and writings, they were accused of following cunning devised fables. In response Peter states: one, we were eyewitnesses of those things concerning which we wrote; and, two, no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.

### **That the Bible is the Word of God**

It is necessary, first of all, to show that when Peter speaks of "prophecy of the Scriptures" he is referring to the Old and New Testament, the complete Bible as we know it today. It is true that at the time he wrote these words there existed only the Old Testament writings; all of the New Testament books had not yet been written, nor had they been gathered into the canon and received by the church as such. When his audience read and heard these words, therefore, they undoubtedly thought of Moses and the prophets. However, the New Testament is also prophecy and must also be included in the consideration of this text. It speaks of the fulfillment of all the types and promises in Jesus Christ, and it looks forward to the final realization of those promises in the great day of Christ. All Scripture is one; it is all prophecy. Therefore, Peter refers here to the whole Bible, from its opening "In the beginning. . ." to the final "Amen."

It is of the utmost importance that the pilgrim know that no prophecy of any Scripture is of private interpretation. That phrase has given commentators considerable trouble; the majority of them seem to think it refers to the fact that you cannot interpret Scripture privately, that is, you cannot explain the Bible by yourself, in your own understanding. In itself that is true. Unless the Spirit guide us in our study we can never understand the deep things of God. Spiritual things can never be spiritually discerned except in the light of the Spirit of Truth. Yet, this is not the idea of the text. If we keep verse 21 in mind here ("For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man.") we find that Peter is teaching a fundamental and far-reaching truth concerning the *origin* of Holy Writ. Thus, what we have in the Bible is not the private interpretation or personal opinions of a man, a writer, or a prophet! Let us understand this! When Moses wrote the book of Genesis long, long after the flood, and when he wrote that beautiful first chapter on creation, he did not give us *his thoughts* on how the universe came into being. He did not record a private,



human interpretation of those days, and what happened on those days, or what was the folk-lore of various tribes and peoples concerning the beginning of the world. But God gave him to understand the fact of creation, and gave him the interpretation of that grand event. What Moses wrote, therefore, is *God's Word* concerning His work of creation. Or, when Peter, James, and John wrote concerning the transfiguration on the holy mount, they did not record their private interpretation of that event, nor did they manufacture cunningly devised fables, but God revealed to them what had transpired! Christ was given the power and glory that would be His in endless measure at His great and second coming. Or, finally, when the Scriptures tell us that as children of God we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, with heavenly life, heavenly citizenship, and a heavenly calling, then it is not so that we have but a human estimation of the situation. But *God* is saying we are pilgrims, *God* is saying that we have a glorious destination, and *God* is telling us what our behavior must be as His people. There is nothing private or human about *any* of the Scriptures. They contain no personal opinions or pet theories. They give us God's own word!

Because this is so, man may not give to the Scriptures his private interpretations either. Man may not explain the Word of God to suit his fancy, ignoring those passages which humble him or limit him or offend his human sense of fairness. We may not ignore those passages which tell us we are dead in trespasses in sin, nor those that teach that God has chosen us unconditionally unto glory, and damned others unconditionally to perdition. We may not so explain

grace that it turns out works, may not change the hatred of God for the wicked into love for them, may not make the atoning, satisfying death of Christ for His sheep some kind of making available of salvation to anyone that believes. Because no Scripture is of any private interpretation, we must hear, and accept, and love all of Scripture. The full counsel of God must be sounded forth and embraced. And then if we run into questions, a simple rule will see us through. The rule is: *Scripture interprets Scripture*. Man may never say what the Bible means, but the Bible itself tells us what the Bible means. Then God Himself is our Interpreter. In His light we see light!

And if men rise in the church who would do otherwise, if men stand up and begin to misinterpret the Word and give to it their private opinions, if men would confuse the pilgrim and lead him astray, then the church may not be *tolerant* of them! Because we deal here with the very Word of the living God, tolerance is a terribly sinful thing. It is deadly. The creature man is not allowed to believe what he wants concerning the Being of God, the eternal decrees, the death of Christ, the pilgrim calling, or any other matter touched on by divine revelation. If a man perverts that Word, he must be called into account and brought to repentance; and if repentance is not forthcoming, he must be cast out of the church lest the unrighteous leaven of the word of man begin to permeate the church. The Bible is the Word of God which cannot be broken. And you may be sure that it cannot be improved upon. What God has revealed is sufficient, in order that He have all the glory, and that the church is surely saved!

## Reply

# A Word of Warning To Dr. James Daane

While proofreading the copy of an article that will appear in the *Standard Bearer*, the question does occasionally arise, "How widespread will the reading of this particular article be?"

From the pages of other magazines we often find evidence that our *Standard Bearer* is eagerly received outside the circle of our churches, that its articles are deeply appreciated, and that from a geographical point of view the magazine certainly gets around for a paper with such a relatively short subscription list, covering our country from north to south and from east to west, spanning the wide oceans, and then continuing inland to eager hands and eyes, hearts and minds.

At times there are also indications that the articles are read, reread and then carefully (though not necessarily faithfully and with the right kind of care) copied over in another article wherein the author

wishes to reveal his opposition to the position taken in one of the *Standard Bearer's* articles. And, indeed, often to ridicule the truth an article is written as a response to what appeared upon the pages of the *Standard Bearer*.

Thus in the December, 1971 issue of the *Reformed Journal* under the title, "Universalism: Two Versions," above the signature of James Daane there appears an attack on our article in the October 15, 1971 *Standard Bearer* that bore the title, "The Perfect Beginning." In this article Daane is bold to state that the position of our churches is worse than heretical in that it is demonic! And it is to this wholly unfair and incorrect charge of his that we would address ourselves at this time. An extended siege with the "flu" bug delayed our answer till this time.

We would, first of all, give Dr. Daane a very serious



and brotherly warning by calling his attention to the fact that the despicable, self-righteous Pharisees who did not believe the truth Jesus preached ascribed His works to demonic power. And on several occasions they declared that He was under demonic influence and power. Unwittingly, and yet very really, Daane put us in some very wonderful company and himself in a class that is not to be envied. But let him understand two important truths while he does this:

(1) All the charging that Jesus did His works by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, did not make it so. Talk is cheap, and all Daane's calling white black is not going to make it black. What is more, each time the Pharisees said that Jesus had a devil they only revealed how fully they themselves were under the influence and power of the devil. It is quite easy to call another's doctrine demonic when one has not the truth oneself. And Daane may be sure that calling devilish the truth, which we presented, and which is taught throughout Holy Writ and the Reformed Confessions, does not come from the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

(2) It is exactly in the connection with this evil charge of the Pharisees that Jesus warns about a sin that cannot and will not be forgiven. See Matthew 12:22-32. And a man who ridicules the truth of God's sovereign, eternal, good counsel and who calls demonic the doctrine which teaches that he has perfect control over all His creation to realize His eternal good pleasure in Christ is skating on some very thin ice!

Would to God that the truth of Scripture and the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day XLIII — which calls his works of falsifying our words and of publicly slandering us the "proper works of the devil" — would bring Daane up short, even as the statement of Ellwood did, so that he would repent of this evil and make the apology which he owes us.

We need not defend our article, for Daane does not even make a suggestion of trying to prove from Scripture that our position is incorrect. He perverts our writing, as we shall show. But he gives no exegesis of Ephesians 1:9, 10, Colossians 1:15 and Revelation 13:8, which we used and presented as shedding light upon Genesis 1:1. Daane preferred ridicule to exegesis. And when one has before one a jig saw puzzle with over a hundred pieces, and then selects a few of the pieces, some of which that one will cut in half, and others which that one will reshape so that a new picture can be formed, the artist who painted the full picture need not defend his work. But he has a right to be indignant at the one who corrupted his work and passed off the composite of changed pieces as an example of the artist's lack of knowledge of perspective and proportion. That is what Daane did with our article.

Daane writes of our article, "In it we are told that God made a perfect Adam because He made Adam fallible. Adam was 'very good' because 'the first Adam

must fall . . . (Here Daane deliberately cuts off half of one of the pieces because it does not fit the picture he wants to make from our article) . . . lose his righteousness so that through the cross of the Last Adam God might display His perfect righteousness.' "

Now we did not write, and Daane cannot find it in our article, that God made Adam perfect *because* He made him fallible. Had Daane wished to paraphrase our words, it would have been fairer and more correct to write, "God made a perfect Adam *when* He made him fallible." And his "because" should have been the phrase he deliberately left out, namely, "so that the grace of God in Christ may shine forth." He should have informed his readers that when we were writing of God calling all things good, including a man who could fall into sin, we wrote, "What can that mean but that after each act of creating God saw that what He had called into being would serve perfectly the realization of that glorious kingdom of Christ?" And again that we wrote, "A creature is good only when that creature is able to serve the purpose for which it is made and intended. God saw that all was exactly as it had to be in order to serve the purpose of bringing in ultimately the fulfillment of that mystery (the one of which Ephesians 1:9, 10 speaks)". If Daane does not want that truth and wants to ridicule the sovereign, eternal good counsel of God, he had better not only get off that thin ice at once, but also throw his skates away!

Daane continues, "So, 'the beginning was perfect.' But not only the beginning: 'so is every step of the way from that moment of the beginning onward through all time.' Not only creation as it came from the hand of God, but the fall, and every sinful moment (Not our expression, but Daane's) that issues from the fall is also 'very good' and indeed 'perfect.' Hence says the writer, 'Of the cross God also said, as He looked down from heaven, 'Behold it is very good'. Of the fall of man He said the same thing!"

Now here we have some amazing revelations. Daane ridicules the idea that God would say of His *own* works that they are good, and the idea that every moment of time God has all things perfectly under His control to bring forth the new Jerusalem and make man, who was created a little lower than the angels, enjoy highest glory with Christ. BUT this same Daane is quite ready to say, and is emphatic to insist upon saying, that the man described in Romans 8:7, 8 (The man with a carnal mind, not subject to the law of God, nor able to be subject to that law, the man that cannot possibly please God) can do something because of which the holy God from heaven will look down and say, "Very good." In fact Daane, as a strong proponent of the unscriptural theory of "common grace" is ready to say that this spiritually dead man can do civic *righteousness*, and that is saying a whole lot more than that he can do things that look good to man, and bring



material good to man! We, in our article were speaking all along – and Daane knows it – of that which is good and perfect because it is complete, is as planned, and is able to serve its purpose. Daane stumbles over this while he still insists that without the regenerating grace of God the totally depraved sinner can do something that is *ethically* perfect in God's judgment. Let him look up the third infamous point of 1924 and he will find that synod spoke of good in the sense of *righteousness*, that which is right according to the judgment of God's law, that which pleases Him because it is *ethically* perfect. God cannot say of His own works that they are good, according to Daane, but He will call ethically, spiritually good and perfect the works of unregenerate men!! No wonder Daane has that question in his last paragraph of his brief article!

Still more, God have mercy on those precious souls of the Christian Reformed constituency who must call Daane in when they suffer loss and bereavement. For not only has his sharp scissors cut pieces out of the picture we painted and altered them, he has also removed from his Bible The Triumph Song of the Redeemed which we find in Romans 8. He is not able to come to his sorrowing people and say, "we *know* that all things work together for good to those that love God." When his sorrowing sheep come to him after a bereavement *by the violence of a criminal*, he will have to say to them, "Every sinful moment" is not under God's control. Some things work for your good, but you better decide for yourself which do. I do not believe that ALL things, sinful deeds of men included, work together for the good of those that fear God." What will he say to them, then, when they say, "Yes, but did Joseph not tell his brethren, 'As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people Alive' "? Faith sees how perfectly, yes how *perfectly*, Dr. Daane, everything – all the hatred, the deceit, the cruelty, of Joseph's brothers – served the sparing of the lives of God's covenant people. Did Joseph spout forth a devilish doctrine when he so informed his brothers? Did Paul have a devil when he not only says that WE KNOW, but also somewhat later speaks his firm convictions of being PERSUADED that *nothing* is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ? Again we warn Daane against denying God His glory of sitting on the throne ruling all His creatures, the spiritually good, and the spiritually evil as well, to fulfill the mystery of uniting all things in Christ.

We cannot answer Daane's question in that last paragraph, that is, we cannot answer it according to

the way he asks it. Plainly when he asks, "Why is it that in conservative Reformed churches heretical expressions about God's love and grace bring forth immediate response and sharp criticism, but worse than heretical expressions about God in terms of sin evoke only silence, no matter how often and loudly proclaimed as Reformed orthodoxy?" Daane's implied answer is: "Because they are not fair. Because they are not consistent." The real answer is that the conservative Reformed churches are exactly that, churches that want to conserve (preserve) the Reformed Faith, and the liberal "Reformed" churches want to be liberated from that Reformed Faith. Having lost a sovereign God – a God Who does as He pleases (Psalm 115:3) and has a right to do as He pleases (Romans 9:18-24) – these liberal "Reformed" churches no longer understand either God's sovereign grace or sin. Daane's brief article shows this.

That is why Daane's title is all wrong! It should have been, "God's Grace: Two Versions." Ellwood gave a version of God's grace that makes it so common that it is universal and ultimately saves every human being. Protestant Reformed truth, which is a defence of what Christian Reformed doctrine was some sixty years ago, maintains a particular, sovereign grace of God so wonderful that in His perfect control over all creatures God uses the devil and all sinners (confer the book of Esther) in their very sinful deeds to cause all things to work together for the good of this people that is called according to His sovereign, eternal purpose of election.

Let Daane carefully and seriously exegete Ephesians 1:9, 10; Colossians 1:15 and Revelation 13:8, letting Scripture interpret Scripture; and let what he then finds bring him up short before he skates to still thinner ice of calling other doctrines of Scripture devilish doctrines. It will do him personally much good to listen to God speak from Holy Writ. J. A. Heys

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of Redlands, California, wishes to extend its heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Jean Jabaay in the recent death of her father,

MR. JAMES VERHEY  
of Hull, Iowa.

"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).

Sue Porte, Pres.  
Audrey Van Voorthuysen, Sec'y.



## News From Our Churches

Classis East met in regular session on January 5, 1972 at Southeast Church. Rev. Schipper led in opening devotions and Rev. Van Baren served as chairman of this session. Each church was represented by two delegates.

Heartly welcomes were given to both Rev. C. Hanko who returned to Classis East after seven years in Classis West and Rev. G. Lubbers who was spending his last day of furlough in "the states" before returning to his missionary labors in Jamaica. Classis bid the Rev. Lubbers Godspeed and God's richest blessing as he returns to his work.

The reports of the Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee were received. The usual committees were appointed. Elders R. Clawson and J. Bomers served on the Finance Committee, Elder J. Heys thanked the ladies for their catering services and Rev. Heys, Rev. C. Hanko and Elder C. Westra prepared the classical appointment schedule. The schedule adopted for HOPE is as follows: Jan. 16 — M. Schipper; Jan. 30 — J. A. Heys; Feb. 13 — C. Hanko; Feb. 27 — H. Veldman; March 12 — G. Van Baren; March 26 — R. Harbach; April 9 — H. Veldman.

Subsidy requests were received from Holland and Kalamazoo and were forwarded to synod requesting approval.

An overture regarding the proposed seminary building site was also forwarded to synod.

Voting for synodical delegates resulted in the following elections: MINISTERS: *Primi* — C. Hanko, R. Harbach, J. A. Heys, G. Van Baren *Secundi* — G. Lubbers, M. Schipper, H. Veldman ELDERS: *Primi* — J. M. Faber, J. Kalsbeek, Sr., D. Langeland, G. Pipe *Secundi* — G. Bouwkamp, J. Buiter, James Heys, D. Meulenberg.

Rev. Van Baren was elected to serve a three-year term as *primus* delegate *ad examina* and Rev. C. Hanko and Rev. Veldman were elected to serve three-year and two-year terms, respectively, as *secundi* delegates *ad examina*.

Questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were answered satisfactorily.

Classis will hold its next session on April 5, 1972 at Hudsonville.

Rev. C. Hanko closed the session with prayer.

Jon Huiskens, Stated Clerk, Classis East

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All the "Call" news for this issue concerns Rev. R. Decker, pastor of our church in South Holland, Illinois. Rev. Decker has declined the calls extended to him from the Randolph and Hope (Grand Rapids) con-

gregations. And, at present, he is considering the call from Redlands. Redlands' trio, incidentally, included Rev. R. Decker, Rev. R. Harbach, and Rev. J. Heys.

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A pulpit exchange was arranged between Rev. C. Hanko and Rev. G. Van Baren for the evening of January 2. Rev. Hanko, then, preached for one of his former congregations (First Church), while Rev. Van Baren preached in Hudsonville.

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After the worship services on that same Sunday evening, many of our people in the Grand Rapids area traveled to Hope Church to attend a program at which they were able to "meet and hear our Missionary tell of his labors in Jamaica." The size of the audience was, in Rev. Lubbers' words, "proof of continuing interest in and support of the work in Jamaica."

In speaking of his labors on the island, Rev. Lubbers stated that, in order to make the brethren there Protestant Reformed in doctrine and in the use of the sacraments and in the exercise of discipline, it is of vital importance to prepare future ministers. To that end, he continued, we have a school there. Instruction in that school includes such things as Old Testament History and the Heidelberg Catechism, as well as English grammar. And, according to Rev. Lubbers, instruction is given with much profit. The students are able to acquire "profound theological insights."

How are things progressing on the island? According to the testimony of our missionary, in a speech given at First Church last summer, it's very difficult to give a progress report. There are "intangibles there that can not be measured. One can not measure growth of joy in Christ Jesus." For himself, Rev. Lubbers asserted at that time, he "neither looks forward nor backward, but upward to God." His progress report: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

In both of the speeches Rev. Lubbers emphasized his desire for our prayers that he may have boldness in preaching the gospel. And on both occasions he added, "Don't forget Mrs. Lubbers." In his words, "she's practically a second missionary on the island," and, "only the Lord knows how valuable she is to the ministry." Of the 16,500 miles put on their little Ford, he mentioned last July, "Mrs. Lubbers couldn't have missed more than 200."

From a January 9 bulletin: "Rev. and Mrs. G. Lubbers left from Kent County airport this past Thursday for their labors in Jamaica. May we continue to remember them in our prayers and through correspondence."

And through correspondence.

D.D.