

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE



It was an historic occasion in the deepest sense in that the *significance* of the history of our forty-nine years of existence as Protestant Reformed Churches all seemed to be concentrated, condensed, into that one evening. The hopes, the fears, the struggles, the labors, the trials and tribulations and tears — yes, all these! But more than all these, the fact that the Lord our God has preserved us as churches, has kept us faithful to the truth of His Word and of our Reformed Confessions, has given strength for the battle, encouragement at times of discouragement, has raised up men, servants, whenever needed, has given to us a singular place as churches, as witnesses of the truth of His sovereign grace and His everlasting covenant of friendship, and that, too, in an era when all around us is apostasy and decadence — all of this seemed to charge the very atmosphere on that memorable evening. [See page 245]

Voluntary Severing of Earthly Ties

Rev. M. Schipper

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!"

John 19:26, 27a.

Already approximately two hours had the Lord spent on the cross!

During this time He had spoken what is known as the first two crosswords. Almost immediately as they were pounding the nails into His blessed hands and feet, He uttered the first word: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And a little later, He uttered the second, a promise of salvation to a dying thief; "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." In the midst of a tumultuous mob which cursed and mocked and derided Him, He took time out to assure one of His chosen ones of his blessed estate.

But now it seemed that the confusion and tumult had subsided a little. The soldiers had seated themselves near the foot of the cross, while the people with their rulers were gathered into little groups and scattered on Golgotha's crest, only to wait for the end, which they expected was very near.

Almost unnoticed by the now quieted mob, there appears another little group, slowly making their way to the cross and the crucified Saviour. One of them was the disciple whom Jesus loved. John, the beloved, had been very near to Jesus throughout His trial and suffering. It was he who had followed within the palace of Annas and Caiaphas, where he had witnessed the testimony of the false witnesses and observed the mockery and suffering imposed upon Jesus. He was there also when the Lord was brought before Pilate, and he heard the final verdict of this representative of Roman jurisprudence. No doubt, immediately upon hearing the sentence of death, he left quickly to bring the other disciples word. They, either from fear or utter disappointment, had been

absent throughout. At least, so it seems, he was absent from the scene of the crucifixion for a short time, because fails to record in his gospel the first two words of the cross. Perhaps also he was intent on calling on Jesus' mother and offering to take her to the scene of the crucifixion. The text informs us that with John there now appeared Jesus' mother and other women, one unnamed, except to say that she was Jesus' mother's sister, and Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus therefore saw His mother and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He begins to speak the third word of the cross!

Woman, behold thy son!

And to the disciple . . .

Behold thy mother!

Here, indeed, we observe the voluntary severing of all His earthly ties!

A most significant act!

Significant it was not only for Mary and the beloved disciple, but especially for the Lord Himself!

Woman, behold thy son!

This was not the first time He addressed His mother this way. We remember the incident in the early part of His ministry when He performed the first of His miracles in Cana of Galilee. At the wedding feast evidently Mary His mother was intent on seeing her Son show forth His power; and when she approached Him to inform that the supply of wine was depleted, Jesus rebuked her saying, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Mary was reminded not to interfere

when He was about His Father's business. Of His Father's business He was always deeply conscious. Even at the early age of twelve, though He did not address His mother as He did at Cana and now again as in our text, He nevertheless rebuked her for what appeared to Him an interference in His Father's business, when He said: "Wist ye not that I must be about by Father's business?"

Could it be that now again the Lord interprets Mary's appearance at the cross in terms of interference with His Father's business?

But how can that be? Could He not for once, and now of all times, address her as Mother? Can He not understand that His own flesh and blood mother would take this last precious moment to bid her Son her fondest good-bye, and if it were possible impress upon His lips her kiss of farewell? And should He not reciprocate, by informing her in no uncertain terms how much He esteemed her, and how greatly He prized her tender care from birth and her sound instruction in the fear of God? Would it not have been appropriate and normal to expect that in such a moment as this, when death was about to separate them, when a mother's grief was so unbearable, and a Son's suffering so intense, that each would express to the other their heart-felt sympathies, and give to each other the solace they needed?

O, indeed, the relationship between Jesus and His mother must have been very close! Was He not in every point like as we are, though without sin? And therefore, as it is in most human and earthly relationships, that of mother and son, and son and mother, especially the tie between Jesus and His mother would be very close?

So close in fact was the bond between Jesus and His mother, that if He did not at this moment sever it, He might be drawn from the path of obedience. Do the Scriptures not inform us that He was tempted like as we are, while He was the sinless One?

And this explains why Jesus at this point must abandon the normal, because He had come into the world for the express purpose to accomplish the abnormal, the miracle, the wonder of grace! Nothing may interfere, and especially the normal relationships of life!

Because Jesus is so bent on performing the Father's business faithfully to the end, He does not even allow His mother to speak and to express her mother-love. Noticeably Mary says nothing, nor is she given an opportunity to say anything. Nor for one moment is she allowed to give vent to her human passions. While His own heart bleeds with love and compassion for His mother, the dearest possession He has on earth, He may not allow Himself to be distracted from the path of obedience.

Hence, Woman . . .!

Not, Mother!

Woman, behold thy son!

It is not I, but the young man standing next to you who is your son!

Was this word of Jesus perhaps the sword of which the aged Simeon spoke when he held the infant Jesus in his arms and predicted as he spoke to mother Mary, a sword would "pierce through thy own soul also"?

The sword that severed all earthly ties!

The tie of mother and Son, and Son and mother!

At this moment it was necessary that the Lord adhere to the doctrine which He had on several occasions taught His disciples. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." This doctrine He here applies to Himself. Not even His mother may stand in His way of attaining unto the kingdom of heaven. And if Mary will also see her Son no longer in the earthly relationship but in the light of His Lordship and Saviourhood, then she too will well understand why the earthly relation must be severed.

Woman, behold thy son!

To the disciple, Behold thy mother!

From now on this disciple whom Jesus loved will fill the place left by Jesus. Significantly we read in the words that follow the text: "And from that hour that disciple took her into his own home," signifying that John also understood completely that Jesus had voluntarily severed His earthly ties only to transport the disciple into the responsible place He had occupied.

Thus Jesus bequeathed to His most beloved disciple His most precious earthly possession! While at the same time He revealed to him, who was most able to understand, that by His power as the Son of God He was able to rise above the sphere of human relationships, in order to accomplish His heavenly calling.

Significant also was this act of separation for Jesus!

Voluntarily He severs earthly ties in the determination to carry out His Father's work alone! This also explains why He did it, that is, why He cut these earthly bonds.

It was the hour of darkness! When all the vials of God's holy wrath would be poured out upon Him, when the Sin-bearer and Sacrifice of atonement which He was, must tread the wine press of the wrath of God alone. No one may succor Him in that hour! All human help, even the gentle presence of His

mother, would only interfere, distract Him. The weight of the awesome price He must pay for the redemption of His people no one can help Him to bear. The fire of God's judgment, the intensity of whose heat He will in a few moments give expression to when He cries out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He must endure all alone. The law of God which He came to fulfill He must keep with respect to both its tables. The love of His God must be supreme, and the love of the neighbor, also the love and honor of His parent is possible only because He loves God so much that He is willing to lay down His life for all His own.

But who can understand the suffering He endured? And who can begin to comprehend the pain He suffered when that hot knife that severed His earthly bonds pierced also into His own soul? The loss He

suffered in deference to the will of the Father?

Surely also this suffering was added to that He already bore as the Saviour on the cross!

We say, voluntarily He severed His earthly ties, implying that the suffering He surely felt as His mother was cut from Him, He willingly assumed, in order that He might be a perfect Mediator!

And after He has saved us, He in turn makes us also willing to forsake all things, even father and mother, husband and wife, parents and children, if necessary, in order that we also may be wholly consecrated unto God. Only so will we be able to deny ourselves, in order that He may confess us before our Father in heaven.

So, indeed, the very cross of Jesus makes us strangers to the world!

EDITORIAL

An Historic Evening

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The evening of the Dedication Program for our new seminary building will be one long remembered by this writer — and undoubtedly by all who were present. It will go down in the annals of our history as one of the high points, one of those occasions when we reach the exhilarating atmosphere of the mountain tops of faith.

The faculty's letter of appreciation, found elsewhere in this issue, was written before that evening of February 15. But even if it had been written afterward, sufficient descriptive adjectives could not be found to describe the God-centered note that was heard throughout the entire program, the outpouring of love and devotion to the cause of our Reformed faith that seemed to hang in the very atmosphere in First Church's auditorium, the joyous exultation and thanksgiving which made the rafters ring from the songs of that tremendous audience. Not since my student days have I been nervous when I had to ascend a speaker's platform; but when the

duty fell to me to close the program, I was afraid I would not be able to speak. I had a great big lump in my throat — not from sadness, but from overwhelming joy and gratitude! It was one of those occasions when the impact of "What hath God wrought!" simply overwhelms a person!

Indeed, it was an evening to remember!

But why was it such a memorable occasion?

After the first excitement of the evening had worn off, I began to take inventory and to try to account for that spontaneous feeling of exhilaration which seemed to overwhelm so many of us who were present at the program.

Was it the fact that this evening represented in a formal sense the climax of all our denominational efforts to obtain new and suitable facilities for our Theological School? Was it the feeling of achievement, of attainment? Achievement and attainment for the building committee, the

Theological School Committee, the faculty, the churches, our people? Undoubtedly there was this element. And in addition to this, there was the feeling of attainment with respect to our seminary itself. At long last, after some forty-nine years, our Theological School had gotten out of the basement of First Church, had emerged from quarters which were always intended to be temporary but which had tended to become almost permanent. Our seminary has its own place, a place to which we can point and say, "There is our Protestant Reformed Theological School!" Undoubtedly there was this element, too.

But there was more than these elements, I think, which served to produce the air of excitement that seemed to pervade the evening.

It seems to me that it was intrinsically an historic occasion. Historic it was, not only in the sense that it represented a climax, a high point, in our history as Protestant Reformed Churches. Historic it was, not only in the sense that it was one of those occasions which one witnesses, perhaps, once in a lifetime or once in a generation. But it was an historic occasion in the deepest sense in that the *significance* of the history of our forty-nine years of existence as Protestant Reformed Churches all seemed to be concentrated, condensed, into that one evening. The hopes, the fears, the struggles, the labors, the trials and tribulations and tears — yes, all these! But more than all these, the fact that the Lord our God has preserved us as churches, has kept us faithful to the truth of His Word and of our Reformed Confessions, has given strength for the battle, encouragement at times of discouragement, has raised up men, servants, whenever needed, has given to us a singular place as churches, as witnesses of the truth of His sovereign grace and His everlasting covenant of friendship, and

that, too, in an era when all around us is apostasy and decadence — all of this seemed to charge the very atmosphere on that memorable evening. It was present in the ringing notes of Prof. Decker's dedicatory address, "That All The Earth May Know That Jehovah Is God." It was present in the Liturgy of Dedication. It was present in the Psalms of praise and thanksgiving which were raised to Almighty God, the God of our fathers. Yes, it was represented even in the personnel of the evening's program: did you not recognize the fact, the glorious fact, that it was the second and third generation of our Protestant Reformed Churches who led us in the program, and that they stood faithful to the same Reformed faith to which our fathers were dedicated?

Yes, there was much history concentrated in that evening, the history of the faithfulness and preserving grace of our covenant God!

And now?

Let us go on! Let us go on with renewed zeal and courage! Let us go on, dedicated anew to the preservation, the development, and the proclamation of the same glorious truths of God's sovereign predestination and everlasting covenant of friendship!

* * * * *

We hope to pass on to our outlying churches and to our people who could not be present something of the excitement of that evening of dedication. Professor Decker's address will appear in printed form in the near future in our *Standard Bearer*. Besides, the program of the evening was recorded. And we would like to prepare a program, tape-recorded, for our churches, and also include with the program a pictorial account of the seminary building project. You will be hearing of this in the near future.

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QUESTION BOX

Isaac and Abimelech

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Question —

From a Grand Rapids reader comes the following question:

“Our Men’s Society in our study of Genesis became involved in the following question: ‘Did Isaac sin by making a covenant with Abimelech, who came to him seeking a truce in their feuding?’ ”

“Some in our meeting thought that he did sin, while others felt he simply did what we are all obligated to do. We should live peaceably with all men as long as we do not sacrifice our principles in doing so.

“Your thoughts on this matter would be appreciated.”

Reply —

The reference in this question is to the history recorded in Genesis 26:26-33. The background of this peace treaty between Isaac and Abimelech is: 1) Isaac’s sojourn in Gerar, at the Lord’s instruction, at a time when there was famine in the land. 2) Isaac’s attempt to pass off Rebekah as his sister for fear that the men of Gerar would kill him, and the exposure of this lie. 3) Isaac’s being prospered by the Lord, the request of Abimelech that Isaac separate from them because “thou art much mightier than we,” and the controversy about the wells between the herdmen of Gerar and the herdmen of Isaac.

Now the question is whether there was any wrong-doing on Isaac’s part in this transaction. My questioner does not give me any reasons which may have been furnished in the Men’s Society discussion referred to. I can only guess that if someone thought this wrong on Isaac’s part, it would have to be on the ground that Isaac here put on an unequal yoke with an unbeliever. But with this I cannot agree. In the first place, it is not impossible that this was the same Abimelech with whom Abraham had dealings, Genesis 20. It is not possible to determine with

certainly that this was or was not the same Abimelech. If, however, it was the same Abimelech, I would certainly see nothing wrong about this treaty: for I consider the Abimelech of Abraham’s time to have been a God-fearing man. In the second place, even apart from the preceding, I see no wrong in what Isaac did here. They established a kind of peace treaty. This was done, mind you, because Abimelech and the men of Gerar recognized the fact that Isaac was “the blessed of the Lord” and were evidently afraid because Isaac was becoming a great man in the land, being prospered of the Lord. Whether this treaty was motivated, on Isaac’s part, by the desire to “live peaceably with all men” is, I think, a matter of speculation.

However, I do not think this is the important question with regard to this passage. To me, the more important question in connection with this passage is this: what does this history reveal to us concerning Isaac as the heir of God’s covenant and concerning God’s maintenance of His covenant with Isaac? And then it would seem to me:

1) That Isaac was not a spiritually strong man, but rather a man who was rather peace-loving and ease-loving, but also a man who in a sense lagged behind the Lord. He was slow to recognize the fact that he was indeed the heir of the covenant, that the Lord was with him, and that among the inhabitants of the land he occupied a unique place.

2) This, it seems to me, is especially plain from the history of the wells. His servants dig one well; they have trouble with the men of Gerar about it; and Isaac calls it “*Esek*, Contention.” They move on and dig another, have trouble about that one also, and he calls it “*Sitnah*, Hatred.” Finally, when they dig a well about which there is no strife, Isaac says, “Ah, *Rehoboth*! For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.” And even after that the Lord must appear to Isaac at Beersheba to

encourage him.

3) The same, it seems to me, is true of Abimelech's coming to him. The very fact that Abimelech came to him was an indication that Isaac was recognized by the men of Gerar as a great man. They have seen that the Lord was with Isaac. And evidently, after the herdmen of Gerar have made life miserable for Isaac and his men, they are afraid that Isaac might take

vengeance on them. But this was at the same time a testimony to Isaac of the status which the Lord had bestowed upon him and of the fact that as the Lord had promised when he appeared, so He would indeed be with Isaac. Significantly, vss. 32 and 33, when his servants report that they have found water, Isaac names the well Shebah, "an oath," evidently mindful of the fact that the Lord, according to His promise (vss. 23-25), was with him and causing the Philistines to recognize his greatness and to fear him.

Denying The Lord That Bought Them

Question —

From a reader in Jenison, Michigan I received the following question:

"I have a problem understanding II Peter 2:1 in the light of sovereign election. The text is: 'But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.'

"It would seem that those who 'even deny the Lord that bought them . . .' cannot have been bought in the first place, since they are false teachers or hypocrites. Please explain."

Reply —

My questioner is basically correct when he views his problem in the light of sovereign election. More specifically, of course, the question comes down to this: does this passage teach a falling away of the saints, that is, a falling away of those whom Christ bought by His atoning death? But basically it is a question of sovereign election: for Christ died for those given unto Him by sovereign election. Hence, ultimately the question becomes: can God's election be rendered ineffectual? And my questioner recognizes that the latter is impossible, in the light of Scripture. Hence, how must this passage be explained?

There are two possible explanations.

1) We may follow the rendering of the King James Version, and then, as my questioner suggests, the explanation lies in the fact that these false teachers

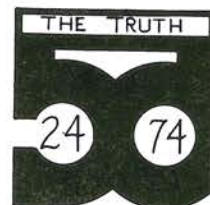
are hypocrites. That is, they are outwardly and according to their profession members of the church. They are of those who profess with the mouth that the Lord bought them, that is, atoned for them. But in process of time they become manifest as false teachers, who then deny the very Lord Whom they once professed to be the Lord Who bought them. They never had been bought by the Lord: for as Canons V, 8 puts it, "the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ cannot be rendered ineffectual." But they once *professed* to be Christians, to have been bought by the Lord; and later they deny by their heresies that very Lord. If we adopt this explanation, then the text says nothing as to the specific nature of their heresy, except that it is a denial of the Lord.

2) It is also possible to read the text as follows: "... even denying the having-bought-them-Lord." Or: "... even denying that the Lord bought them." In that case, the text purposes to specify the extent of the damnable heresies of these false teachers. They even deny that the Lord *bought* them, deny the atonement. Then these false teachers are pictured as teaching a salvation by works, rather than by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. Personally, I am inclined toward this interpretation for various reasons. But whatever explanation is adopted, it must certainly be emphasized that this passage does not teach a falling away of the saints, that is, of the elect.

Incidentally, as I was busy answering this question, the question and the answer sounded vaguely familiar. So I checked up, and discovered that I had answered this question almost four years ago, in Volume 46, p. 493. Fortunately, my answers agree.

The Standard Bearer

In Retrospect



Rev. G. Van Baren

(At the annual meeting of the publishing association which prints the Standard Bearer, inspirational speeches are given — usually by one of the ministers of the Protestant Reformed Churches. At one of the meetings, in 1945, the late Rev. H. Hoeksema delivered the following address which was subsequently distributed in pamphlet form. Its message is surely as pertinent today for the Standard Bearer as it begins the second half-century of its publication.)

THE STANDARD BEARER AS A WITNESS

Rev. H. Hoeksema

Well I remember, and, perhaps, some of you with me, the gathering that was held, now more than twenty years ago, that resulted in the organization of your association. The purpose that convoked the brethren was to provide ways and means for the publication of the writings of the Revs. H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema. It was a time of controversy in the churches. The debate centered chiefly in the question concerning “common grace.” Already the two pastors mentioned, who had earnestly endeavored to shed the light of the Word of God in this problem, and who insisted that God’s grace is upon His people only, were attacked from every side, and threatened with ecclesiastical discipline. The official organs of the churches were closed to them, so that they could not use them as an avenue through which to present their ideas to the people. Hence, some brethren, deeply interested in the truth of Scripture and of our Reformed faith, conceived of the idea of creating an organization that would sponsor the publication of whatever the two pastors might write in the interest of the development and maintenance of the truth that was dear unto us all. The Reformed Free Publishing Association was the result. Whatever was written in the form of pamphlets and books by the Revs. H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema this society proposed to publish. And it was, in part, due to their efforts that also a regularly appearing publication was started in the form of our Standard Bearer.

Now, when I call your attention for a few moments to the Standard Bearer as a witness, I may well connect my remarks with the name of your association. It is called the Reformed Free Publishing Association, and in this name I find expressed the character and purpose, not only of your association, but also of the periodical whose publication you are sponsoring. It is *Reformed*, that is, it is devoted to the development and defense of the Reformed faith. It is free, that is, it is non-ecclesiastical in the institutional sense of that word. It is a *publication*, that is, it intends to reach the public and to witness for the Reformed truth. And, therefore, it is supported by an *association*, it is not sponsored by the Synod, but by the free association of brethren that are interested in the truth and its propogation.

The Standard Bearer means to be a free witness of the Reformed truth.

But what do we mean when, in this connection, we speak of the Reformed truth and of witnessing for it through the Standard Bearer? To be sure, by Reformed truth we mean the truth of Scripture as it is briefly and officially expressed in the Reformed Standards, particularly in the Three Forms of Unity: the Netherland Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht. The Standard Bearer intends to be confessionally Reformed. However, this is not to be understood in the sense of a dead Ortho-

doxy, that is perfectly satisfied with what our fathers developed and expressed of the truth, and proceeds from the assumption that they have said the last word about it. Such an attitude would be the expression of a conservatism without life and love of the truth, such as our Reformed fathers certainly would have condemned. No, we do not intend merely to repeat, and rise in defense of, what has been officially laid down in our Standards. But taking our stand on the basis of those Confessions, we make it our aim to continue in the direction plainly indicated by them, to criticize much that is offered as Reformed truth, and is not, and, always endeavoring to maintain the very heart of the Reformed faith as our starting point, to advance to a purer and richer development and expression of the truth as such, and its application to every phase of the life of the believer in this present world.

The Standard Bearer wants to send forth a trumpet blast of no uncertain sound.

It purposes to send forth a testimony that is very specifically Reformed.

With regard to this specifically Reformed truth, we may assert that its very heart is found in the idea of the covenant of God. It is true that, in order to give a truly Reformed testimony, this truth concerning the covenant of God dare not be divorced from the doctrine of sovereign predestination. Election has rightly been called the *cor ecclesiae*, the heart of the Church. And yet, fundamental though this truth may be, and though its heart-beat must be discernible in every part of the doctrine proclaimed by one that lays claim to being Reformed, it is not the most peculiar, not the most distinctive of Reformed principles. There are other denominations, besides those of the Reformed persuasion, that adhere to the truth of God's sovereign predestination. But the doctrine of the covenant of God is a distinctively Reformed heritage. The reason for this fact, that it was in Calvinistic circles alone that the truth concerning God's covenant was developed and given a central place in the system of doctrine, is that in those circles more than in any other strong emphasis was placed on the glory of God as the sole purpose of all the work of God, both in creation and in re-creation, and that this glory is realized in the highest possible degree in the revelation of God's covenant. Especially is this true if the very essence of that covenant is found, not in the idea of a pact or agreement, or in a way of salvation, but in the fellowship of God's friendship, the highest revelation of the covenant-life of the Triune Himself. When, therefore, we say that it is the purpose of the Standard Bearer to send forth a specifically Reformed testimony, we mean especially that it purposes to witness concerning the covenant of God, as He

Himself realizes it through Jesus Christ our Lord, according to His sovereign good pleasure, in the way of sin and grace, and along the antithetical lines of election and reprobation; and that, too, in connection with the organic development of all things.

Of this truth the Standard Bearer means to be a *witness*. I use this term to distinguish the nature of its testimony from the official preaching of the Word of God through the instituted Church, whether in the ministry of the Word within the Church, or in its missionary work to the ends of the earth. Our publication has sometimes been called a missionary. Strictly speaking, however, this is not correct. Christ has committed the task of preaching the gospel, not to individuals, nor to an association or to a Bible Institute, but very definitely to His chosen and called apostles, and in them to the Church. And for this purpose He also gave unto His Church in the world pastors and teachers, that through them the Church might fulfill its calling and mission to preach the Word. But the Standard Bearer, and the association that sponsors its publication, are not a part of the Church as an institute; they belong to the Church as an organism, and they function in virtue, not of the specially instituted offices, but in virtue of the office of believers. It is with this distinction in mind that we speak of our publication as a *Witness*.

It is also with this distinction before our consciousness that we say that the Standard Bearer is free, and that the society that sponsors it calls itself the Reformed Free Publishing Association. The freedom we thus denote is not akin to doctrinal licentiousness. We do not intend to separate ourselves from the institute of the Church. The very fact that we adopted the name Reformed Free Publishing Association, and that, therefore, we place ourselves on the basis of the Reformed Confessions, indicates the very opposite. But free we are in the same sense in which our Christian Schools are free schools. The Standard Bearer is not an official church organ. It is not sponsored by the church as institute. And this freedom implies that we are not hampered by purely institutional bonds, and are not motivated by mere, formal, institutional considerations or prepossessions. In 1928 the institute of the Christian Reformed Church meant to silence our testimony. They closed the official organs to us. They tried to put the yoke of the Three Points upon us. They cast us out of their fellowship. Much of this action was motivated by personal opposition, and the desire to maintain so-called "rest" in the churches, the rest of corruption and death. But the Standard Bearer remained free. No institution controlled it. Its voice could not be silenced. And free it should remain. Unhampered by considerations that are foreign to the love of Reformed truth, our publication purposes to

continue to maintain and develop the truth as our God delivered it to us!

This also implies that the Standard Bearer is yours. It is not an organ of any consistory, classis, or synod. Nor is it under the sovereign control of the editors that fill its pages. It is yours. Even as our free Christian Schools are not ultimately controlled by the teachers, but by the parents, so the Standard Bearer, though its contents are the care of its editors, is your paper, it is a means through which you have the opportunity to sound forth the testimony in behalf of the Reformed truth, within our own circles and without. To have such a paper, to be able to let this testimony be heard as far as possible, is your privilege. To render this testimony as effective as lies within our power is your responsibility; and I do not mean only you who are present here, but all the members of the Reformed Free Publishing Association, and, in fact, all Protestant Reformed *men*; yes, and why not include our women also? You who are present here ought to make it your task to impress this truth, this privilege and this responsibility, upon those that are absent. Tell them that the Standard Bearer is theirs, that they ought to consider it a privilege that, in virtue of their office of believers, they may work for the sending forth of this testimony far and wide; and that they ought to assume their responsibility in this respect. In the Standard Bearer God has given us a work to do. Let us do it with all our might!

Has it been worth while? When we pass in review the more than twenty years during which our paper was published, may we say that it has been faithful to its original purpose? And has its testimony been effective? Has it born fruit?

No one knows better than I that there is abundant room for criticism here. And many a time the Standard Bearer was criticized during these years. Its contents were too limited. Its articles were too long. The material it offered was too deep. I am well aware of it. Our powers are limited, and with the limited powers God gave us we must work. Then, too, in as far as the criticism was not destructive, but had a positive purpose, was offered not by those that refuse to put on their thinking-cap and put forth

effort to read and understand, but by those that read and are interested in rendering our publication as effective as possible, it was gladly received, and did not go unheeded.

Yet, first of all, I may confidently assert that anyone who will peruse the volumes of the Standard Bearer thus far published, will have to come to the conclusion that, in the main, it was faithful to its purpose, and strove to serve the defense and development of the Reformed truth.

Secondly, the very fact itself, that through all these years the testimony of the Standard Bearer as a free witness might be heard, and that still its voice has not been silenced, is a cause of deep gratitude to our God, Who provided and still provides this medium of expression for us.

And thirdly, we do not say too much when, with thanks to God, we acknowledge the fact that our organ was a blessing, an instrument of edification and instruction, to many in our own circle, as well as a mighty influence outside of our Protestant Reformed Churches, both here and in the Netherlands. Hundreds outside of our own group have read it. Ministers have used its material for sermonizing. As soon as the war was over we received letters from Old Holland asking for it. Before the war it was an exchange with some thirty papers and periodicals in the Netherlands. Its volumes are carefully preserved in the library of the Free University. Some of the most important volumes written by Reformed men in the old country were sent to the Standard Bearer for review. Its voice was respected as often as it expressed an opinion with respect to points of controversy over there. Any many a paper reviewed the material of the Standard Bearer, when in book form it was sent to the leaders of the Reformed Churches in the land whence we came.

Do I recount all this to boast? Yes, indeed; but not in self. Rather let us marvel with a grateful heart that our God gave to so small an organ of so small a group as we are such a wide place!

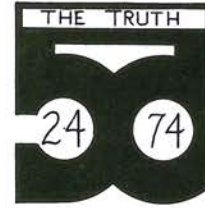
And considering what God has done for us in the past, let us not grow weary, but continue, advance, and work while it is day, ere the night cometh in which no man can work! The privilege is YOURS!

Gift Idea? Give good books. Give RFPA publications!

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

The Standard Bearer and Youth

Rev. J. Kortering



In this fiftieth year of publishing the *Standard Bearer*, we should take inventory.

Are young people reading the *Standard Bearer*?

Hopefully, many young people are reading this article, so we will address our concern to them. In the event that you parents know that *your* young people do not read it, may we suggest that you put forth a little effort that they at least get this article before them. By young people, we do not mean only high school aged, but also college students and young married couples as well.

Is our younger generation *reading* the *Standard Bearer*? Conceivably they might subscribe to it or have it in the house, but are they reading it?

The editorial staff decided in 1969 to include in the *Standard Bearer* a rubric especially for young people. In doing this, we did not mean to imply that such a rubric would salvage our young readers. The entire *Standard Bearer* is for them. Rather, our concern was to give our young people something specifically geared for them and thereby to show our interest in the particular problems facing them. The Word of God must also be their strength in the days of youth.

This has always been the concern of the *Standard Bearer*. While perusing old volumes of the *Standard Bearer*, we came across an article written by Rev. H. Hoeksema in the May, 1931 issue. It is as up to date now as it was some forty-three years ago.

The background of this article was the publication of a letter from a young man who was member of the Young Men's Society of First Church, Grand Rapids. Their society had received a short speech on the subject, "What's wrong with the *Standard Bearer*". As he states, "In the discussion which followed this talk, it was brought out that there existed among our society members a decided condition of dissatisfaction and later inquiry disclosed the fact that this condition was quite general among our

young people." Their concern was first of all over the Holland language. Much of the *Standard Bearer* then was printed in Dutch. This of course is irrelevant today. He states, "A further protest is that the articles as a rule are too long and because of this it becomes necessary to limit the variety of subjects treated." He adds, "To our mind, the function of a church paper is to apply the religious principles to every day events and circumstances of life. Other leading religious papers carry only one purely Scripture expository article, and for the rest concern themselves with the matter of timely conditions in their relation to Scripture and the application of Scriptural principles to everyday life, which, as we have said before, is to our mind the more unique function of a religious periodical." He then gives many suggestions: systematic division of the subject matter, different rubrics, e.g. a children's page, book reviews, local church news, current events, and signs of the times, nature studies, etc.

It is interesting to observe that many of the suggestions given have in fact been carried out. Rev. Hoeksema's answer contains a reaction to these suggestions and he makes some observations of which we do well to remind ourselves today also.

In his opening remarks, he expressed gratitude for the published letter. The reasons are three-fold: "First, of all because it is practically the first sign the *Standard Bearer* ever received that our young people took any interest in our publication whatsoever. I do not remember that we received a contribution by one of our younger generation before . . . Secondly, I also rejoice because the contribution assures us that our young people are not growing indifferent to Reformed doctrine and that their lack of interest in the *Standard Bearer* must not be attributed to the lukewarmness with respect to the truth . . . And thirdly, we were glad to publish this contribution because it not only informs the *Standard Bearer* that there is a lack of interest among our young people in

the present form of the paper, but it also offers some suggestions how our publication might be so improved as to create more interest and better to suit the needs and wants of the younger generation."

After concurring with many suggestions, Rev. Hoeksema continues:

Whether, however, a change quite as radical as the writer suggests, is desirable, is a different question. He is of the opinion that one article of the expository type, like the meditation would be sufficient. All the rest of the articles could then be devoted to subjects of a different nature.

I cannot agree with this view.

It must be remembered first of all, that our paper is no church publication.

Neither was it the original purpose of the association that publishes the *Standard Bearer*, that our paper in its general contents should be exactly like a church paper. To be sure, it was to be a religious periodical of the Reformed type. But its contents were to be devoted to the specific purpose of developing the principles of the Reformed doctrine. Its original purpose was not at all to take the place of a church paper, as may easily be understood from the fact, that when the association for the publication of the *Standard Bearer* was organized we were still in the Christian Reformed Church. It stands to reason that the contents, in harmony with this original purpose, were to be chiefly doctrinal, though from the very beginning it was decided also to devote some space to the application of our principles to matters of every day life and current events. And if from now on the contents of the paper would be chiefly of a practical nature, its doctrinal material being limited to one expository article like the present meditation, the *Standard Bearer* would be greatly depreciated and certainly it would be far from realizing its original aim.

The question Rev. Hoeksema faces next is pertinent to our situation today. If the *Standard Bearer* is not read by youth, is it the fault of the *Standard Bearer* or could it be perhaps the fault of the readers?

But it must be admitted, there is another side of the question.

When there is lack of interest among the readers in a certain kind of publication, in a certain class of literature, the one side to be considered is the reading material that is offered; if it is indeed of such a nature, that it is not worth reading, or that it cannot possibly awaken the interest of the readers, it ought not to exist.

If, in this respect, it is defective and could be improved as far as form and contents is concerned, it should be remedied.

And that this is possible in some respects with

regard to the *Standard Bearer* we have admitted in the preceding articles. Though we do not agree with all the writer suggests, we have agreed that in some respects he is quite right and a change is feasible.

The other side to be considered in a question of this kind is the *reader*.

Him our contributor left entirely out of view.

He proceeded from the assumption, that if the *Standard Bearer* does not create sufficient interest among our young people, the blame must naturally be with the *Standard Bearer*.

But is this entirely true?

At any rate, does it not constitute an equally interesting question as the one the author of the contribution writes: In how far are the young people to blame, when they show no interest in the *Standard Bearer*?

This ought to be determined just as well.

If the taste of the young people with respect to reading material is entirely good, the *Standard Bearer* is wholly to blame and it ought to reform itself in order to suit the good taste of young people. But if there should also prove to be something wrong with the taste of the younger generation, that task ought to be improved too, before you can expect that the matter of lack of interest will be remedied.

There is, for instance, the matter of long articles. I have admitted that the articles are sometimes too long and should be abridged. But now I am going to add a word in favor of those long articles. It is this. In a short snappy article (take for instance: A Word a Week in the *Banner*) it is impossible to develop any line of truth whatsoever. If our paper should consist entirely of short articles, it would certainly lose in value.

Now, if our young people see that an article is long, do they lay it aside, just because of that fact? Will they read only short and snappy articles? Then there is something wrong with their taste.

Another question, what do our young people read outside of the *Standard Bearer*?

What books are found in their library?

What periodicals are found in their magazine rack?

I wish our young people would send to me a complete list of the titles of books and magazines they read, outside of the *Standard Bearer*. They need not send their names, I will publish the list in the *Standard Bearer* and express my opinion. Let us have this inquiry as the beginning of an attempt to create interest in the *Standard Bearer*.

It will, no doubt, be interesting. (And how! Especially today, j.k.)

And the point is this: we must also develop a taste for good reading, that may tend to the proper spiritual development of the mind and heart.

Nowadays, there is a good deal of cheap literature, that is worse than worthless.

If we indulge in it, we may be sure that we spoil our taste for good literature.

How we must underscore this, not only in reading, but in every form of communication. If we saturate our souls with television, movies, dancing, rock music, and what have you, no wonder the reading of the *Standard Bearer* seems unbearably dull.

We have inestimable riches in the volumes of the *Standard Bearer*. This holds true for all the fifty volumes that now have been almost completed. Everyone of our churches would do well to have a complete set of these volumes and encourage our young people to consult them. From my own experience, there is not a question raised or an issue discussed today, but one will be more qualified to come up with a Scriptural answer through looking up an article in the *Standard Bearer*. Perhaps some day we can have a completed up-to-date index of all

articles according to subjects and Scriptural texts for all fifty volumes. Maybe some retired person could do this as a favor for the younger generation.

It is all too common that one fails in reading good material. Every young person should consider it a matter of personal discipline to read the *Standard Bearer* faithfully. The *Beacon Lights* has its place as a magazine entirely for our young people. The *Standard Bearer* should have its place right along side of it as a challenge to mature.

Through the means of writing and preparing the *Standard Bearer* for publication, we are furnished with a paper that bears the standard of the truth of God's Word. We need it in these critical days of spiritual apostasy and indifference.

The *Standard Bearer* was intended for young people over forty years ago. It still is.

Do you read it faithfully?

CRITIQUE

Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility

Prof. H. Hanko

SCRIPTURE, TRADITION AND INFALLIBILITY, by Dewey M. Beegle; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973; 332 pp., \$4.95 (paper).

The controversy concerning the doctrine of Scripture goes on, and many books, articles and pamphlets continue to stream from the presses as the debate continues. The debate is not so much between conservative scholars and liberals — as it was up until fifty or so years ago; it is now a debate which is carried on within conservative and evangelical circles. This is not to say that the higher critical attacks against Scripture no longer have any influence on the debate; quite the contrary is the case. But in many conservative and evangelical circles, concessions of critical importance have been made to liberal higher critics, and there has been a certain attempt made to preserve the historic views concerning inspiration and

infallibility while accepting the findings and conclusions of higher critical studies. This is to be deplored because, in the long run, it means that the doctrine of Scripture is lost.

What has happened in conservative circles that so many concessions have been made to higher criticism? What has brought about this rather radical change from the historic and traditional view of Scripture to one in which the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture is denied within conservative circles. It seems to me, as I read the literature, that the trouble is that conservative scholars have made a fatal error in methodology. I mean to say that conservative scholars have taken an entirely wrong approach in the defense of these truths and have adopted a method of defense which is guaranteed to lead them, step by step, into the liberal camp. I refer

to the fact that the debate has become an argument which makes use of rationalistic methods. The critics of Scripture, beginning already in the 17th century, have attacked Scripture on *rationalistic* grounds. Those who have risen to the defense of the truth of Scripture have, especially in recent years, done so at times in a rationalistic way. Perhaps they have been stung by the criticism that their arguments lack scholarship — a charge not infrequently levelled against those who have defended the truth of Scripture on the grounds of faith. Perhaps they have been enamoured with the detailed and involved lines of argumentation which the liberal critics employed. Whatever may have been the reason, they have adopted the liberal methodology of rationalistic defense of this truth. They have in effect, allowed the liberals to choose the battlefield. They have capitulated on the all important question of what weapons will be used in the battle. They have forgotten that the doctrine of the Scriptures is an article of *faith*, that it is a part of the *confession* of the child of God, and that, therefore, this truth (as well as all the truths of the believer's confession) must be defended on the basis of Scripture alone.

By allowing the critical opponents of Scripture to choose the battlefield and determine the weapons to be used in the conflict, they have themselves approached the defense of Scripture with the weapons of rationalistic argument. This is a serious fault. It is a serious fault, in the first place, because the basic assumption is that the truth of God is a matter of human reason and can be gained by the exercise of reason. This immediately removes the truth of Scripture from the area of faith and, almost inevitably, removes it from the area of the miraculous. Scripture is a "natural" phenomenon, and, as such, can be defended by scientific investigation and rationalistic defense. In the second place, this is so serious because of the fact that it obliterates the fundamental antithesis between faith and unbelief. The defense of the truth of Scripture is *not*, in the final analysis, a matter of mere argumentation. It is not a matter of who constructs the best argument, the most logical and reasonable apologetic; it is not a matter of who employs most accurately scientific investigation and faces the scientifically discovered evidence the most honestly. It is not a matter of overwhelming weight in a formal debate. The defense of the truth of Scripture is a matter of the defense of the faith. It is part of the battle of faith. And the antithesis between faith and unbelief is sharp and absolute. Those who do not come to Scripture with faith cannot see the things of the kingdom of God. For unbelief is a spiritual blindness which makes it impossible for the man devoid of faith to receive the truth of Scripture. Only

the God-given power of faith enables a man to see and understand the truth as it is given in God.

This is not to say, of course, that the defense of the faith does not have an intellectual dimension. Scripture, in several places, emphasizes this. Peter, in I Peter 2:1, calls the preaching the "wordy" milk which we need to nourish us; and one of the implications of his statement is that we appropriate that truth which God has revealed with our minds. Later on in the same epistle (3:15) Peter speaks of the fact that we must be ready always to give an answer (an apology) to those who ask us a *reason* for the hope that is within us.

Nevertheless, the viewpoint is one of faith. And in our controversy with those who deny the truth, the viewpoint is one of faith over against unbelief. Jesus speaks of the fact that unto the disciples it was given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables. Mark 4:11. And in I Corinthians 2:12-14, Paul writes: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

The point is that the man who comes with rationalistic arguments adopts the methodology of unbelief. He makes concessions to unbelief. But this approach can never discover the truth which is found in Scripture, nor the truth of the Scriptures themselves. Only faith can know these truths. But faith is that power which God bestows upon His people by which they receive the Scriptures as the final and authoritative rule of all their faith and life. Faith clings to the Scriptures. Faith does not exalt human reason above the Scriptures; faith bows, as a little child, before God's Word. Only in this way can the truth be discovered and maintained. This is true of all the truth; this is also true of the doctrine of Scripture. Scripture gives us the doctrine of Scripture. It cannot be found anywhere else.

Now what does all this have to do with the book, the title of which appears at the beginning of this article?

There have been many, even conservative and evangelical scholars, who have attempted to defend the Scriptures with rationalistic arguments. No matter what the results of these efforts were, already a major concession had been made to liberalism. Even though some of these conservative and evangelical scholars

have come to conclusions which are in keeping with Scripture's teaching concerning its own infallibility and authority, the very fact that they have used a wrong method has put them in an extremely precarious position. In fact, to the extent they have maintained Scripture's inerrancy, they have abandoned their rationalistic approach and come to rest in the statements of their faith. But to the extent they have adopted rationalistic methods, they have made themselves vulnerable to increasingly fierce attacks from higher critics. The result of all this has been that there has risen a certain ambiguity in many conservative writings. There is a kind of double track. On the one hand, they claim to defend and believe in infallibility; but on the other hand, they modify this very doctrine at key points. As this trend becomes increasingly common, all attempts to maintain inerrancy are abandoned.

The book under review is a striking illustration of this very thing. The author, while considering himself a conservative and evangelical, no longer makes a pretence of defending infallibility. In fact, he openly and forthrightly attacks this doctrine and pleads with the Church to abandon her position in this respect. He rather scornfully characterizes those who defend inerrancy as having a "Maginot-line mentality," and claims it is high time to get rid of all these indefensible notions concerning inerrancy and authority.

How does he come to this position?

The answer to this question strikes, in my opinion, at the very heart of the argument of the book. Although this subject is not treated extensively until well on in the book, the author makes a strong plea of an inductive method of determining the whole doctrine concerning Scripture, as over against the so-called deductive method.

What does the author mean by this distinction? Although the matter is discussed in various parts of the book (and, by the way, this is evidence of one of the weaknesses of the book, i.e., that it is not well organized), in general, the inductive method means: 1) That there is no definite teaching in Scripture concerning the doctrine of Scripture. That is, he rejects the contention which has been historically the claim of the Church that Scripture itself gives us the doctrine of infallibility, inspiration, revelation,

authority, etc. What the Church has believed concerning these things is inferences, not specific and explicit teaching of Scripture. 2) For this reason, we cannot go to Scripture to learn what Scripture teaches concerning itself, except in a very general way. Even the classic passages in II Timothy 3:15, 16 and II Peter 1:20, 21 do not give us any specific doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy — although Beegle very lightly and without any thorough discussion, brushes these passages aside. 3) Hence, in the author's opinion, the approach which must be taken in determining the doctrine concerning Scripture is the scientific approach. That is, one must apply the scientific method by collecting all the available data and coming to certain conclusions on the basis of an evaluation of this data. 4) What is included in this data? Well, one must reckon with "extra-canonical" writings, for this is evidence. One must pay close attention to apocryphal writings, for they have evidence which must be considered. One must apply to Scripture itself literary and historical criticism so as to determine the worth and value of each individual writing. One must take into account the tradition of the Church and evaluate the "authority" of tradition. All these things and more are necessary for one to come to a "doctrine" concerning Scripture's inspiration, inerrancy, authority, etc.

The author is conscious of the fact that this is the approach of reason, but he defends this. He writes, e.g., on pp. 217, 218:

The only way to break out of this circular reasoning (i.e., that Scripture is infallible because Scripture itself teaches this, H.H.) (with its implicit claim of inerrant interpretation) is to employ our reason objectively with respect to all the evidence, biblical and otherwise.

He rejects, therefore, the approach of faith, and adopts the rationalism of the higher critics.

The result of this is that he has no Scripture left. He would, of course, deny this. But it is true nonetheless.

We shall have to wait till next time to demonstrate this from the book itself; but let there be a warning in this that faith alone can be the position of the child of God in his defense of Scripture.

(to be continued)

Know the standard and follow it. Read THE STANDARD BEARER.

FROM A READER

World Events in the Light of Scripture

Herman Woltjer*

The late Rev. H. Hoeksema in his excellent exposition of the book of Revelation writes about the fact that many Christians are accustomed to run in the narrow track of their individual salvation, and no doubt this is very significant. Nevertheless it is only part of the truth. The Biblical truth is that all the world which fell into the power of sin will again be restored and raised to a far higher glory. That is why there must necessarily be continual war between God and Satan. In the final analysis this is the war of all ages. Unless we accept this *cosmological* view of salvation, we shall never be able to understand Scripture, least of all the book of Revelation.

It was in the year 1914 that the British statesman, Lord Gray, on the eve of World War 1 with an almost prophetic view gave the epitaph for an entire era when he said, "The lights are going out in the western world, and we will not see them lighted again." Since then tremendous changes have taken place not only in the church world but also in the political, economical and social world. Nothing has been the same anymore. People who still think are stunned by what has happened in the last decades of history.

Recently one could read in the public press, "In a society where the computer increasingly has become the ultimate keeper of records, aren't we becoming a nation of numbers with individuality rapidly becoming a thing of the past?" In the same issue one could read that science made significant progress by achieving human conception in a test tube. No wonder that even a magazine such as *U.S. News and World Report* wrote, "This society has outdone Sodom and Gomorrah." One who observes the world events stands in awe how Scriptures are being fulfilled. After Pentecost the white horse and his rider of Revelation 6 has, up to the present day, pursued in the main a definite course. Starting from Jerusalem,

the Lord in His good pleasure and absolute sovereignty has sent the messengers with the glad tidings of salvation not eastward, to the old world, but via Asia Minor, westward to the new world, Europe (Acts 16:9) and in due time to the North American continent. These nations outwardly have been Christianized. Of course there are Christians all over the world, but there is a distinct difference.

During the course of the New Testament dispensation, the bright light of the Sun of Righteousness was shining from many pulpits in the western world, but especially in the last decades has been replaced more and more by the dim light of human philosophy. The goddess of reason is worshipped in many churches. Have we reached that point in history where there will be reformation no more? The western nations in general have rejected the Christ and the consequences are, "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels." (Ps. 81:11, 12)

We read in the book of Revelation that Babylon, the nominal Christian nations of the west, which are rapidly becoming anti-christian, shall come to her final destruction. The Lord shall execute his vengeance upon Babylon. It was in Babylon that God's people, the apple of His eye, were in tribulation. It was in Babylon that God's people were made a laughing stock because of their other-worldly hopes. We read further in the same book that when the end draws nigh, the ungodly in despair shall ask the mountains to cover them; that the river Euphrates shall dry up; that the nations on the four corners of the earth shall rise up. Do we see the beginning of the fulfillment of these prophecies today?

The nominal Christian nations of the west have dominated the entire world for many centuries. The western nations have been the center of civilization.

For many centuries, from the western world went forth the law over many nations and tribes and multitudes. But the world picture is beginning to change. Today there is much unrest in the western world. Inwardly we are plagued by inflation. Our economy is upset. Our international monetary system is in disorder. There is disregard for authority. (2 Tim. 3:2) Truth is fallen in the street. (Isa. 59:14). Outwardly there is the growing threat of the U.S.S.R. building a war machine as the world has never seen before.

The river Euphrates, in the N.T. dispensation the symbol of the boundary line between the Christian and heathen nations, shall no more serve its purpose. Today the western nations feel the impact made by the policy of the oil kings of the east. Will this be the prelude of the last conflict fought here on earth between east and west, the battle of Armageddon? For "the nations on the four corners of the earth" are awakening. I refer to the millions of people who live in Asia and Africa, nations which never have played any appreciable part in history, but today clamor for their own place in the midst of the nations of the world. They are becoming conscious of their tremendous manpower. Scripture even says, "The number of whom is as the sand of the seashore." I refer to the United Nations where the western nations are outvoted by the heathen nations. I refer to a nation as China. This immense country with about 20% of the world population, that has lived in seclusion for many centuries, but today rapidly is becoming a world power to be reckoned with.

There was some interesting reading in "*Oil Industry Officials, International Monetary Fund.*" Japanese imports played a major role in the monetary crisis that rocked the U.S. in 1971. Arab funds reportedly accounted for nearly a third of the 6 billion dollars that poured into West Germany to set off the February 1973 currency crisis. It is expected that by 1980 the foreign exchange holdings accumulated by Saudi Arabia alone could exceed the combined U.S. and Japanese hoards of gold and other reserves.

The shape of the future already is evident. The world supremacy of the western nations is declining rapidly. People who still think seriously are

concerned about the future of the western nations. Some time ago one could read, "This age is lost, lonely, homesick, thinking of itself, as bits of matter floating in a hostile universe." Like a worldly poet said, "There is no horizon and no shore, the last star has disappeared."

How altogether different is the world and life view of the Christian, for he knows it is written that all these things must come to pass. For about 6000 years mankind has lived on this planet called earth, but in the last decades we have reached a standard of living unknown in history. Indeed, Scripture tells us that from a human point of view the antichristian time will be a glorious time for the flesh. Antichrist will take care of all our physical needs. For many even in the church, world life on this earth looks "good." Why should one look for a better country. (Heb. 11:16) To them this earth is more like a playground instead of a battlefield. They don't see that we are living in a sick society for they are spiritually blind because, "God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." (2 Thes. 2:11) As history will come to a close, apostasy in the church and violence in the world increases. The Christian while he continues his earthly pilgrimage, looks beyond the treacherous waves of life's stormy sea waiting for the dawning of that great day, the glorious return of his Saviour Jesus Christ. He will not come back like 2000 years ago as "the man of Galilee doing good, meek and lowly," but this time as the Triumphator, riding on the white horse of victory, his eyes as a flame of fire, clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, ready for battle to destroy all his enemies, all who are not looking forward for that blessed hope, the glorious appearance of their Saviour Jesus Christ. Terrible will He be in His dignity. He for whom earth and heavens tremble.

"For when Jehovah shall appear,
He shall consume afar and near
All those that evil cherish.
As smoke before his dreadful ire,
As wax is molten by the fire,
So shall the wicked perish."

* This special article is from the pen of a member of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan. We thank brother Woltjer for this interesting essay. HCH

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CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Eschatology--

The First Period

(80-250 A.D.)

INTERMEDIATE STATE

Rev. H. Veldman

Continuing with our discussion of the history of the doctrine of the Intermediate State as confessed by the church during these early years of the New Dispensation, we now wish to quote from Philip Schaff. In his *History of the Christian Church*, pages 590 f.f. of Vol. II, he writes, and we quote:

Christianity — and human life itself, with its countless problems and mysteries — has no meaning without the certainty of a future world of rewards and punishments, for which the present life serves as a preparatory school. Christ represents Himself as “the Resurrection and the Life,” and promises “eternal life” to all who believe in Him. On His resurrection the church is built, and without it the church could never have come into existence. The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting are among the fundamental articles of the early baptismal creeds. The doctrine of the future life, though last in the logical order of systematic theology, was among

the first in the consciousness of the Christians, and an unfailing source of comfort and strength in times of trial and persecution. It stood in close connection with the expectation of the Lord’s glorious reappearance. It is the subject of Paul’s first Epistles, those to the Thessalonians, and is prominently discussed in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. He declares the Christians “the most pitiable,” because the most deluded and uselessly self-sacrificing, “of all men,” if their hope in Christ were confined to this life.

The ante-Nicene church was a stranger in the midst of a hostile world, and longed for the unfading crown which awaited the faithful confessor and martyr beyond the grave. Such a mighty revolution as the conversion of the heathen emperor was not dreamed of even as a remote possibility, except perhaps by the far-sighted Origen. Among the five causes to which Gibbon traces the rapid progress of the Christian

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religion, he assigns the second place to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. We know nothing whatever of a future world which lies beyond the boundaries of our observation and experience, except what God has chosen to reveal to us. Left to the instincts and aspirations of nature, which strongly crave after immortality and glory we can reach at best only probabilities; while the gospel gives us absolute certainty, sealed by the resurrection of Christ.

Then follows a section by Philip Schaff which I consider very interesting. He writes about the heathen notions of the future life as vague and confused. We quote:

The HEATHEN notions of the future life were vague and confused. The Hindoos, Babylonians, and Egyptians had a lively sense of immortality, but mixed with the idea of endless migrations and transformations. The Buddhists, starting from the idea that existence is want, and want is suffering, make it the chief end of man to escape such migrations, and by various mortifications to prepare for final absorption in Nirwana. The popular belief among the ancient Greeks and Romans was that man passes after death into the Underworld, the Greek *Hades*, the Roman *Orcus*. According to Homer, Hades is a dark abode in the interior of the earth, with an entrance at the Western extremity of the Ocean, where the rays of the sun do not penetrate. Charon carries the dead over the stream Acheron, and the three-headed dog Cerberus watches the entrance and allows none to pass out. There the spirits exist in a disembodied state and lead a shadowy dream-life. A vague distinction was made between two regions in Hades, an Elysium (also "the Islands of the Blessed") for the good, and Tartarus for the bad. "Poets and painters," says Gibbon, "peopled the infernal regions with so many phantoms and monsters, who dispensed their rewards and punishments with no little equity, that a solemn truth, the most congenial to the human heart, was oppressed and disgraced by the absurd mixture of the wildest fictions. The eleventh book of the *Odyssey* gives a very dreary and incoherent account of the infernal shades. Pindar and Virgil have embellished the picture; but even those poets, though more correct than their great model, are guilty of very strange inconsistencies.

What a difference between these heathen notions concerning a future life and the presentation of the Word of God! How utterly devoid of the living God! How completely earthly! No wonder that they were so vague and confused! Of Socrates, Plato, Cicero and Plutarch who, according to Schaff, rose highest among the ancient philosophers in their views of the future life, they reached only to belief in its probability and not in its certainty. However, Socrates must have written that death is either eternal sleep, or the transition to a new life, but in neither

case is it an evil, and he drank with playful irony the fatal hemlock. Plato, viewing the human soul as a portion of the eternal, infinite, all-pervading deity, believed in its pre-existence before this present life, and thus had a strong ground of hope for its continuance after death. All souls, according to this philosopher, pass into the spirit-world, the righteous into the abodes of bliss, where they live forever in a disembodied state, the wicked into Tartarus for punishment and purification (which notion, writes Schaff, prepared the way for purgatory.) Of course, Plato's definition of a good and a righteous man would certainly differ from the presentation of the Word of God. Plutarch, we are informed, the purest and noblest among the Platonists, thought that immortality was inseparably connected with belief in an all-ruling Providence (whatever that may be), and looked with Plato to the life beyond as promising a higher knowledge of, and closer conformity to God, but only for those few who are here purified by virtue and piety. In such rare cases, departure might be called an ascent to the stars, to heaven, to the gods, rather than a descent to Hades. And he also, at the death of his daughter, expresses his faith in the blissful state of infants who die in infancy. The Stoics, we are told, believed only in a limited immortality, or denied it altogether, and justified suicide when life became unendurable. And the great men of Greece and Rome were not influenced by the idea of a future world as a motive of action. During the debate on the punishment of Catiline and his fellow-conspirators, Julius Caesar openly declared in the Roman Senate that death dissolves all the ills of mortality, and is the boundary of existence beyond which there is no more care nor joy, no more punishment for sin, nor any reward for virtue.

Of a resurrection of the body, according to Schaff, the Greeks and Romans had no conception, except in the form of shades and spectral outlines, which were supposed to surround the disembodied spirits, and to make them to some degree recognizable. Heathen philosophers, like Celsus, ridiculed the resurrection of the body as useless, absurd, and impossible.

Later, when calling attention to the fact that the Jewish doctrines are far in advance of heathen notions and conjectures, but present different phases of development, Schaff writes in the same volume, 594f.f., and we quote:

The Jewish doctrine is far in advance of heathen notions and conjectures, but presents different phases of development.

(a) The Mosaic writings are remarkably silent about the future life, and emphasize the present rather than future consequences of the observance or non-observance of the law (because it had a civil or political as well as spiritual import); and hence the

Sadducees accepted them, although they denied the resurrection (perhaps also the immortality of the soul). The Pentateuch contains, however, some remote and significant hints of immortality, as in the tree of life with its symbolic import; in the mysterious translation of Enoch as a reward for his piety; in the prohibition of necromancy; in the patriarchal phrase for dying: "to be gathered to his fathers," or "to his people," and last, though not least, in the self-designation of Jehovah as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," which implies their immortality, since "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." What has an eternal meaning for God must itself be eternal.

(b) In the later writings of the Old Testament, especially during and after the exile, the doctrine of immortality and resurrection comes out plainly. Daniel's vision reaches out even to the final resurrection of "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth to everlasting life," and of "some to shame and everlasting contempt," and prophesies that "they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." — see Job 19:25-27, Eccls. 12:7, Daniel 12:2, 3, Isaiah 65:17, 66:22-24.

But before Christ, who first revealed true life, the Hebrew Sheol, the general receptacle of departing souls, remained, like the Greek Hades, a dark and dreary abode, and is so described in the Old Testament. Cases like Enoch's translation and Elijah's ascent are altogether unique and exceptional, and imply the meaning that death is contrary to man's original destination, and may be overcome by the power of holiness.

(c) The Jewish Apocrypha (the Book of Wisdom, and the Second Book of Maccabees), and later Jewish writings (the Book of Enoch, the Apocalypse of Ezra) show some progress: they distinguish between two regions in Sheol — Paradise or Abraham's Bosom for the righteous, and Gehinnom or Gehenna for the wicked; they emphasize the resurrection of the body, and the future rewards and punishments.

In addition to the foregoing Schaff also calls attention to the Talmud as it adds various fanciful embellishments. Incidentally, the Talmud is a collection of Jewish writings of the early Christian centuries. There is a Palestinian Talmud, and a later, more authoritative, much longer Babylonian Talmud. Each consists of Mishnah and Gemara. Mishnah grew out of oral tradition, whose origin is obscure. When, to preserve these, they came to be written down, a further need was felt for a commentary on them. This function the Gemara fulfills. The scope of the Talmud may be seen in the titles of the six parts of the Mishnah: Seeds, relating to Agriculture; Feasts: Women and Marriage; Civil and Criminal Law; Sacrifices; Clean and Unclean Things and their Purification. This definition of the Talmud I gathered from the Pictorial Bible Dictionary of Merrill C. Tenney. This Talmud, writes Schaff, adds various fanciful embellishments. I believe it of interest to call attention to this. But this will have to wait until our following article.

Book Review

TOWARD A CHRISTIAN PSYCHOTHERAPY, by Theodore Jansma; Mack Publishing Company, Cherry Hill, New Jersey, 1973; 71 pp. [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

The author is Chaplain and Pastoral Counselor at the Christian Sanatorium in Wyckoff, New Jersey. He writes this brief pamphlet to develop what he calls a

"Christian Psychotherapy" which he defines "as a talk technique for the treatment of certain kinds of 'mental illness.'" Recognizing the inadequacy of modern psychiatric treatment, the author lays down an outline for a Christian approach to pastoral counseling which, though brief, will be of some help to those who are engaged in this work.

Faculty Letter

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

... OF THE ...

PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

February, 1974

Dear Brethren and Sisters in the Lord,

It has been some time since we have written you through the columns of the Standard Bearer. But this is not really so serious, because various reports concerning our activities have appeared rather regularly. We do hope to be more regular with these letters in the future.

Our reason for writing this time, however, is to express publicly to all of you our deep gratitude for your generous support of the Seminary which has made possible erection of our new facilities. Others, particularly from the Theological School Committee, have expressed thanks before; but we as faculty, and in the name of the student body also, want to let you know how much we appreciate your generous support.

It is a little difficult for us to describe how we feel about our new building; and this is because we are still quite overwhelmed by it all. The facilities are so beautiful and commodious and the site so inspiring that we have not really gotten used to it yet. We do want to assure you, however, that all this has aided in making our work very pleasant.

What has particularly overwhelmed us is the generous support which you have shown in making this building possible. We are confident that this generous support is an indication of your love and concern for our Theological School and your deep interest in our affairs. Without the support, the interest, and, above all, the prayers of our people, this building would not be possible, nor would our work be in any way blessed. We bring a special word of thanks to our readers who, while not members of our Churches, have nevertheless contributed to this cause.

We shall not include in this letter any news of the Seminary. We shall wait with that till a future letter.

May God's blessing rest upon you all; may your prayers continue on our behalf; and may God's name receive all the glory now and forevermore.

With love in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Robert D. Decker

Herman Hanko

Glover E. Hockema

Church Directory

[Note: After the first of the year many of the addresses of clerks and treasurers of our Protestant Reformed Churches as given in the Yearbook are no longer correct. Upon the alert suggestion of one of our readers, we have prepared the following correct directory. HCH]

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Hope Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

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South Holland, Illinois

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18313 Hickory St.
Lansing, Illinois 60438

Treas.: Richard Poortinga
18523 Christena Dr.
Lansing, Illinois 60438

News From Our Churches

Delegates of Classis West attended an officebearers' conference Tuesday, February 5, in Doon, Iowa. Rev. Moore presented a paper, on that occasion, on an aspect of the work of the deacons. On Tuesday evening Candidate Mark Hoeksema preached his Classical sermon in a special worship service held in Doon Church. And on Wednesday there was the convening of Classis West, part of the agenda for which was the examination of Candidate Hoeksema, pastor-elect of Ebenezer Protestant Reformed Church of Forbes, North Dakota.

On the basis of that examination, Classis recommended that our Forbes congregation proceed with his installation. The installation took place two days later, on Friday, February 8. Ebenezer's consistory invited the congregations of Doon, Hull, and Isabel to witness the ordination of their pastor-elect into the ministry. At the service, which was held in the Ebenezer Church at 2:00 in the afternoon, the candidate was ordained into the ministry by his father, Professor H.C. Hoeksema. Following that service, a reception was held in the parlors of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Forbes.

That the congregation in Forbes would describe this as a "joyous occasion" in their invitation to their sister congregations in Iowa and South Dakota, is understandable, of course, in light of the fact that Forbes has been for so many years without a pastor.

And we all rejoice with them, both in that they have received an undershepherd, and in that, as stated in First Church's bulletin, God "has seen fit to add another young man to the ministry of the Word."

* * * * *

As these lines are being written, on the 14th of February, another installation is taking place — this one in South Holland, Illinois. On February 4 the congregation of Loveland, Colorado, met in a farewell gathering for Rev. and Mrs. Engelsma and family. A program was presented and refreshments were served in the Loveland Community Building. On the following Sunday, February 10, Rev. Engelsma preached his "farewell sermon" in Loveland, and on Monday he and his family left for Illinois. On Thursday evening Professor Decker and Rev. Bekkering officiated at his installation as pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland.

* * * * *

Rev. G. Lubbers expected to be in Prospect Park, on a preaching assignment, on the last three Sundays of February. His work there followed that of Rev. Joosten, who was in New Jersey on the three preceding Sundays. At the end of February, Rev. Lubbers plans to go to Houston, Texas, and remain there until the first of June.

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies this fall in either the pre-seminary or seminary department of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches are requested to appear before the Theological School Committee at its meeting to be held on Friday, March 29, 1974, at 7:30 P.M. in the Theological School Building, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418.

Pre-seminary Department:

Permission to pursue the pre-seminary course of study shall be granted by the Theological School Committee. A transcript of grades from High School and College (if any), a letter of testimony from a student's pastor or consistory, and a certificate of health from a reputable physician shall be submitted.

Seminary Department:

Permission to pursue the Theological course in the seminary shall be granted by the Synod, upon recommendation of the Theological School Committee, to such an aspirant only who comes supplied with a testimonial of his consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, and also a certificate from a reputable physician showing him to be in good health.

A complete high school education and the equivalent of a four year (125 hour) college education are required for entrance into the seminary department. Moreover, each entrant into this department must produce evidence that he has credit for the required college courses.*

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

*Requirements are listed in the school bulletin, available from the school.
Richard H. Teitsma, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Adult Bible Class of the Pella Protestant Reformed Church express their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Loren De Zwart in the loss of their infant son

ANTHONY RAY DE ZWARTE

May they together with their family be comforted by the Word of God as found in Psalm 145:17 — "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works."

Mrs. V. De Vries, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session, the Lord willing, on April 3, 1974 in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least ten days prior to the convening of this session.

Jon Huiskens
Stated Clerk

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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Rev. Bernard Woudenberg
317 N. Park St.
Lynden, Washington 98264

Rev. Ronald J. Van Overloop
1550 Ferndale, S.W.
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49504
(after March 15)

Two forthcoming lectures: on April 18 in First Church, Professor Hoeksema will speak on the topic, "Why Are We Protestant Reformed?" and on May 9 in the Hudsonville Public High School, there will be a lecture on "The Signs of the Times" delivered by Professor R. De . . . — but that's right, I was going to stick to things that have already been.

So . . . from an October 28 bulletin from Isabel, I noticed that I missed a couple of Reformation Day lectures in a previous report concerning them. On October 31 Rev. Miersma delivered a public lecture, in the Isabel church, entitled "The Church of Today in Light of the Reformation." On Friday of the following week he presented the same lecture in Forbes.

Response to the materials sent out by Mr. Vander Wal is often most interesting. He has, incidentally, recently received response from Thailand. Not all the requests come from so far away, of course, but even those closer to home can be very interesting. Imagine Mr. Vander Wal's surprise, for example, when he opened this letter from a reader in Florida: Ik kan niet het Engels schrijven zoo ik hoop dat een van jullie Hollands kan lezen, nu wou ik heel graag dat jullie 'Good News for the Afflicted' zou zenden, en een paar van die preeken ook 'The Unbreakable Bond of Marriage.' "

Fortunately, Mr. Vander Wal was able to find someone to "lezen Hollands," so he could fill the request for several of our pamphlets.

That our literature is, on occasion, very well received is evident, further, from a letter received from a Kingsport, Tennessee, reader. He writes, "I have just finished reading your pamphlet titled 'Missions' and found it most instructive. I would like to avail myself of the offer on the back of this pamphlet of a number of additional pamphlets, listed below." After listing those titles, the writer stated, "I commend you, the Protestant Reformed warriors for the faith once delivered unto the saints, for your constancy and purity of doctrine."

D.D.

THE STANDARD BEARER

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Advertising Policy: The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st or the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

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