

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE

Meditation

A Prayer For Forgiveness

To Be Tolerant Or Intolerant

(see: In His Fear)

The Supreme Court and Abortion

(see: All Around Us)

“ . . . and earthquakes. . . .”

(see: Signs of the Times)

CONTENTS:

Editorials —	
Editor's Notes	266
Should OPs and RPs Unite? (5)	
Information, Please!	267
Meditation —	
A Prayer For Forgiveness	269
Question Box —	
Some Pertinent Questions About	
Our Reformed Position (2)	271
All Around Us —	
The Supreme Court and Abortion	274
Some Thoughts On Dialoguing	276
Signs of the Times —	
"... and earthquakes ..."	277
From Holy Writ —	
Pure and Undeified Religion (9)	279
Voice of our Fathers —	
Belgic Confession, Article 14	
Man, Created In God's Image	281
In His Fear —	
To Be Tolerant Or Intolerant —	
That Is The Question	283
Book Reviews —	
The Covenantal Sabbath	285
Feed My Sheep	286
Farewell To Anglicanism	287
News From Our Churches	288

THE STANDARD BEARER

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Editorials

Editor's Notes

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Publication News. The second, correct printing of *Reformed Dogmatics* has long been in the hands of our printer. We had hoped that it would be ready by now. However, a delay of some six weeks is due to a paper shortage. We have received word that the book is in process of being printed now. After that it must still go to our binder, who is also behind schedule. Working on the principle that misery loves company, I am glad that I'm not the only one who gets behind schedule. But as to the book, who knows? Maybe ... April 15???

New Publications Catalogue. That brings to mind a second item which is behind schedule, namely, our new, (hopefully) up-to-date folder listing Protestant Reformed publications. If our printer keeps his promise, we might even be able to enclose a copy with

this issue. I'm sure you will notice it if it is enclosed; so if you don't notice it, it isn't there. But we do promise that it will be available soon. And we do urge you to use it and to order good literature.

Question Box. At the risk of being monotonous, let me remind you that I still receive occasional letters for Question Box which are unsigned. Sorry, but they cannot be used and will not be answered. Let me clarify once more: we cannot accept anonymous questions, but we do not publish your name when your question is printed. So you can safely sign your name; I can keep a secret.

Ten for Two. Do you have a friend or acquaintance to whom you would like to introduce the *Standard*

Bearer? You can do so at a very reasonable price and still give him a good sampling of our magazine. Send in a Ten for Two subscription (10 issues, a half year, for

\$2.00) for that friend. Send the name and address (and, of course, the \$2.00). Our Business Manager will do the rest.

Should OPs and RPs Unite? (5) Information, Please!

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In our discussion of the proposed merger of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Evangelical Synod) we must diverge briefly from the discussion of the OPC and Arminianism, in order to pay attention to another — to me, *new* — aspect of this proposed merger.

This new aspect concerns a matter which I have not seen discussed in the *Presbyterian Guardian's* recent discussions of this subject. The matter, briefly, is this: *are the two denominations agreed on the question of ecumenism, particularly on the matter of denominational attitudes toward the World Council of Churches?*

My question is occasioned by a rather disturbing report in Dr. Carl McIntire's *Christian Beacon* (January 25, 1973). Much of this issue is devoted to criticism of the recent WCC meetings in Bangkok and the "Dialogue With People of Other Living Faiths." — among them, Buddhists. Among the various critical articles is one entitled, "Dr. Glasser: Fundamentalist Turned Ecumenist." I will quote the first five paragraphs of this article:

The activities of Dr. Arthur F. Glasser, a voting delegate and "reflector" in the Bangkok conference of the World Council of Churches, stand out as a major accomplishment for the ecumenical movement. His presence and participation reveals how men who once stood for the faith have joined hands "in fellowship" with those who have long since rejected it.

Dr. Glasser was a top leader of the China Inland Mission and then of its renamed organization after it was driven out of China by the Communists. He was an early graduate of Faith Theological Seminary, and he became a strong critic of the International Council of Christian Churches and of Dr. Carl McIntire in particular. After the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, withdrew from the Bible Presbyterian denomination and from the International Council of Christian Churches in 1954, Dr. Glasser, with other mission leaders of inclusivist ideals, joined the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. Today he is not only a minister in that church but a member of the board of the World Presbyterian Mission.

Dr. Glasser now is a professor on the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary whose president, David Hubbard, participated in the National Council of Churches' Dallas Assembly held on December 3-7, 1972. These men have gone into the ecumenical movement for fellowship and personal testimony.

The Rev. K. C. Quek of Singapore, who as a reporter covered the Bangkok Conference for the *Christian Beacon*, said that the "Affirmation on Salvation Today" was prepared by Dr. Arthur Glasser who played quite an important role being on the Steering Committee, thus adding to the evangelical facade of the WCC.

Dr. Glasser's place of missionary leadership in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, is of the greatest significance, for its board was a breakaway from and a repudiation of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions founded by Dr. J. Gresham Machen.

The article then goes on to classify Dr. Glasser as a leader of the "New Evangelicals" and to criticize others of both the RPC and the OPC as "new evangelicals." Elsewhere in this same issue of the *Christian Beacon* the "Affirmation on Salvation Today" is reproduced (with Dr. Glasser's name attached), and this "Affirmation" is criticized.

Now it is not our purpose to express sympathy with Dr. McIntire's position; while McIntire rightly criticizes the WCC in many respects, we nevertheless are not in sympathy with his movement. Nor is it our purpose to enter into the *material* of Dr. Glasser's accomplishments at the Bangkok Conference of the WCC.

Our concern is with the report as such. The report presents Dr. Glasser as a voting delegate at the WCC conference and as an active participant in its activities. And the report repeatedly associates this same Dr. Glasser with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, the denomination with which the OPC proposes to merge. He is called a *missionary leader* as well as a *minister* in that denomination.

This raises a few questions.

The first question is, of course: is the above report concerning Dr. Glasser *factually correct*? I have no way

of knowing whether the *Christian Beacon* is correct when it states that Dr. Glasser is a minister of the RPC and occupies a place of "missionary leadership." Neither have I any reason to doubt the accuracy of the report, though I can hardly imagine that the *Christian Beacon* would dare to say these things without good information. But I am simply asking for information. The evidence that Dr. Glasser was an active delegate to this WCC conference appears to be incontrovertible.

If the answer to the first question is *Yes*, then my second question is three-fold: 1) Is the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, a member of either the NCC or the WCC, or in any way denominationally connected with either of these organizations? 2) Does the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, *officially tolerate* participation by its members and officebearers in the WCC or the NCC? 3) Or, if neither of the preceding is true, does the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, *passively wink at* such participation, so that it is acceptable for a minister in good standing to participate in the activities of the WCC or the NCC? Any of these questions can be answered by a simple *Yes* or *No*.

My third question is this: in the official merger discussions between the OPC and the RPC, has this matter of participation in the WCC been openly and thoroughly discussed? I repeat: I have seen no reference to this question in anything I have read about this proposed merger, and especially not in the *Proposed Basis of Union*. Has the question been overlooked? Has it been passed by? Did it simply never come up for consideration? Just what is the situation?

Now why do I raise these questions?

First of all, let no one imagine that I am trying to throw a "monkey wrench" into the merger machinery. This is not the purpose, let alone the fact that it would be ascribing too much influence to the *Standard Bearer*. However, I stated in the beginning of the discussion of the merger that there should be compatibility between the marriage partners *before* they marry. They should enter this union with both eyes open and with full persuasion.

And, secondly, I was of the understanding that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is rather strongly opposed to membership in the World Council of Churches. I do not have at hand any detailed decision of the OPC on this subject. But I recall that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church had objections to the simultaneous membership of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the WCC and the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Moreover, these objections were based on *principle*. The Thirty-seventh General Assembly of the

OPC, July 6-10, 1970, decided to submit the following overture to the 1972 Synod of the RES:

That this General Assembly overture the Synod of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, meeting in Sydney, Australia in 1972, to declare that its Rules and Standing Orders, especially its articles on Basis, Purpose, and Membership, make membership in the World Council of Churches and other religious organizations which allow unbelief to be uncensured incompatible with membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, and to provide two years from the 1972 meeting of the Synod for Reformed Ecumenical Synod member churches which are in such fellowship (1) to decide in which they wish their membership to remain, and (2) to notify the Reformed Ecumenical Synod secretariat of their decision.

It is certainly a fair conclusion that the above overture represents not only the attitude of the OPC toward simultaneous membership in the WCC and the RES, but also the attitude of the OPC itself toward the WCC. For: 1) In the view of the OPC the World Council is an organization which allows unbelief to be uncensured; and, 2) The reference to the Basis of the RES includes reference to the *confessional basis* of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

And it would appear to follow, therefore, that there is a serious incompatibility between the RPC and the OPC with respect to the World Council of Churches — provided, of course, that it is true that the RPC even tolerates participation in the WCC by its ministers. Moreover, this is an incompatibility which extends (in the light of the above overture) to the understanding and maintenance of the Presbyterian confessions.

To this observer it would seem mandatory for the OPC and the RPC to settle this question between them before the ecclesiastical wedding bells ring. And if the purpose of the merger is to achieve "a Presbyterian church in our land with the strength to challenge the apostate churches and the size to provide a fellowship for all those of like precious faith throughout the land," (a hope which the Rev. John J. Mitchell expressed editorially), then this question must not only be settled, but settled *in the right way*. If it is not, the result can only be a fatal compromise of the Presbyterian witness.

Hence, I respectfully suggest that Editor Mitchell provide information on the above questions in the *Presbyterian Guardian*. If the fears which I expressed are unfounded, so much the better; and then the *Christian Beacon* should do some retracting. But if they are not unfounded, then the brethren of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church should be alerted by the *Guardian*.



Meditation

A Prayer For Forgiveness

Rev. M. Schipper

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do . . ."

Luke 23:34a

The first word of the cross, uttered by the crucified Saviour!

One of seven utterances He is recorded to have spoken as He lays down His life for His sheep!

Words, however, which are not to be interpreted as being merely the last utterances pressed from the lips of a dying man; which are intended to evoke your sympathy, or to command your condolence. Such perhaps might be the significance of the last sayings of an ordinary, and especially of a great man. But not so may we approach the last words of the dying Saviour. Rather, He enters into death victoriously. His life is not taken from Him, but He lays it down of Himself. And His words are those of life and power. They are intended by Him to be for His own a revelation of His atoning work.

Such is, without question, His intention in the first word of the cross. At the very moment that the nails were driven into His blessed hands and feet and He was affixed to the cross, He uttered this beautiful prayer for forgiveness.

Father, forgive them!

Forgiveness for what? Forgiveness for whom? And on what ground does the Lord utter this prayer?

These are the questions that demand our attention as we give consideration to this first utterance from the cross. There can be no doubt that in this prayer Jesus is concerned about forgiveness of sin, and particularly now the forgiveness of the sin of the crucifixion.

It is to be noted that it was not merely an innocent man who was being crucified. O, He was that, to be sure! All His life testified to His perfect holiness. And all the trial He endured at the close of His life produced no other verdict than that He was innocent. Of this the Roman judge bore testimony repeatedly during the trial, and of this the washing of his hands was a sign. And, of course, to slay an innocent man, apart from any other considerations, would have been a terrible crime, and a diabolical sin.

But the sin of the crucifixion of Jesus was much greater. They were crucifying the promised Messiah. Still worse, they were crucifying the Son of God. Verily, it was the only begotten Son of God whom they made their victim. And to crucify God is a sin which defies all description. Very really on the cross wicked

man demonstrates what he will do with God if God will allow him to get his hands on Him.

Talk about the inherent goodness of man, or even of a certain goodness man may have due to a certain common grace of God, — ridiculous! There is surely no evidence of it at the cross. Yea, the very opposite is the truth. At the cross you see the awful extremity of the depravity of natural man. As we said, if God will allow Himself to be taken by the hands of depraved and natural man (and He did), then this is precisely what man will do with God, — crucify Him.

Awful wickedness!

Even so, when you have said all this, you have not yet described all the sin which the Lord had in mind when He prayed as He did. Not only were they shedding the blood of the Son of God, but they were also shedding the blood of the covenant, and counting it an unholy thing. That blood of the covenant was the blood of atonement, the very blood whereby men must be saved. And to despise this blood and count it an unholy thing, is the greatest of all sin. Concerning the despising of this blood, the writer to the Hebrews informs us: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" The writer to the Hebrews answers his own question by informing us that for such there is no more offering for sin, there is no hope of forgiveness. (Hebrews 10:26, 29) It follows that if this sin were to be reckoned to the perpetrators thereof, no deliverance would be possible. Indeed, the crucifixion of Christ would have been the end of the world.

Therefore Jesus must pray at this moment this particular prayer.

Make no mistake about it, of this sin the whole world made itself guilty.

How naive we would be to conclude that only they who were immediately involved in the crucifixion of Christ were those, and those only, for whom Jesus prayed! Not only the Jews were guilty, who cried for His blood. Nor was Pontius Pilate the sole responsible party, though he gave sentence that He should die. Nor was it only the Roman soldiers who were nailing Him

to His cross, though it cannot be denied that they carried out the sentence of the Roman governor.

But it was you and I who did it!

The whole world, all the sons of Adam, were responsible for this horrible crime!

Reverently speaking, therefore, if the Lord had not prayed as He did at this moment, the world would have perished. Christ would have died in vain, and no one would be saved.

Jesus must pray this prayer!

Father, forgive them!

But what does that mean?

Does it mean, as some aver, that Jesus here prayed that the Father would not immediately destroy those wicked who were crucifying Him, in order then to give them another chance, because they did not know what they were doing? Did Jesus want the Father here in His leniency to postpone judgment, so that ample time might be given for them to convert, after the offer of the gospel might be proffered to them? Must the grace of God become evident both in the restraint of punishment, as well as in the general offer of grace in the preaching of the gospel?

Such an interpretation, beloved reader, would be contrary to all of Scripture. Forgiveness, in the Scriptures, never means delay of punishment.

Always forgiveness of sin means to wipe out the guilt. It means to lift up the guilt of sin, to send it away, to blot it out so that nothing of it remains. And therefore it also means that where guilt has been removed, there remains no longer the punishment for sin. One who is forgiven is completely exonerated. All of his sin is blotted out, and forever. Nor should we conclude that the Lord is praying only for the forgiveness of this one sin. The Lord does not forgive one sin, and allow all the rest of our sins to remain.

Therefore we should understand here that when the Lord prayed as He did, He petitions the Father to lay also this sin upon the burden of sin He bore as He appears on the cross as the sin-bearer. Wicked hands were busy shedding the blood of atonement, and Jesus prays that they may be forgiven in the same blood; for without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!

But did they not know what they were doing? Did not the Jewish council know that He was perfectly righteous, whom they had condemned? Did not the trial before Pilate make perfectly clear to Pilate and to the Jewish rabble that milled in his court-room, that Jesus was perfectly innocent? Did not the soldiers, who were immediately responsible for His crucifixion, but who had mocked Him, spit in his face, beat Him with their fists, ripped open His back with their leaded thongs, pressed down His thorny crown upon His noble brow so that His blood trickled down the lines of His face, — did they not know what they were

doing?

Most assuredly, they all knew what they were doing! When the Jewish council summoned men to deliver a false witness, they knew full well they were dealing with one who was innocent. When they chose Barrabas instead of Jesus, they chose not unwittingly. When Pilate's wife warned him not to have anything to do with this righteous man, but he sentenced Him to death anyway, he knew full well that he was violating justice. When the soldiers mocked and derided His kingship and He was apparently impotent to fight back, they wickedly took advantage of Him. The world, represented in the Roman government, and the church, represented in the Jewish council with its rulers and the people, — all of them knew without a doubt that they were crucifying a really righteous man.

But this one thing they did not know, and of it they were totally ignorant, — they did not know that they were shedding the blood of the covenant. They did not know that the blood of Jesus was the blood that must take away sin. They did not know that their victim was the very Prince of life. This they could not know, for the light of Pentecost had not yet risen over the cross and the resurrection. Therefore Jesus prays.

For they know not what they do!

Ground for the Lord's prayer! Not for forgiveness!

It can never be so that forgiveness is granted on the ground of ignorance. Also here it must be true that ignorance excuses none. Guilty we are because of sin, though we do it ignorantly. It may be true that ignorance changes the character of sin, but it never can be the ground for forgiveness. Rather, forgiveness finds its ground in the atoning blood of the Saviour. And undoubtedly also here the Lord is pleading that the sin committed in the crucifixion be added to the burden of sin He bore when He came to the cross. But ignorance of the fact that it was the Son of God Who was being crucified, and the blood of atonement was being shed, — this is the ground or reason for the prayer the Savior uttered.

And this prayer will surely be heard! As the Lord informs us in John 11, His prayer is always heard, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always." The sin of those for whom Jesus prayed will surely be forgiven. Not only the sin committed here, but all their sin. Father must forgive, on the basis of His atoning blood and sacrifice.

But for whom then did Jesus pray?

Was it for the Roman soldiers, who, perhaps more than any other, were ignorant of the act they were performing? Or, was it perhaps the Roman governor Jesus had in mind? Or, could we perhaps say that it was the Jewish nation, which was not ashamed to cry out: "His blood be upon us, and our children;" so that Jesus is particularly concerned about His own kinsmen

according to the flesh?

Let us stop asking such questions, and cease looking for particular individuals, or even a particular nation that moved the Lord to pray as He did!

If we keep in mind, as we mentioned above, that we all are guilty of the sin that needs forgiveness in His precious blood, then there is a sense in which the prayer of Jesus is universal in its scope. And that means that everyone in the whole world for whom Jesus prayed is included in this prayer.

But we hasten to add, that this prayer or any other the Lord may have uttered may not contradict the sacerdotal prayer the Lord uttered shortly before His crucifixion, and recorded in John 17: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." You feel immediately this is a prayer for all the elect, those whom the Father had given unto Him to be saved by Him.

If you really want to know who they are for whom Jesus prayed, I refer you to the very next cross-word, spoken to the penitent thief. In answer to his penitent cry: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," the Lord answers: "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

I refer you also to Acts 2, 3, where the apostle

Peter, after Pentecost, is speaking to a vast multitude, and charging them with the sin of the crucifixion. He informs them that they had delivered up and denied Jesus in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. He shows them that they had chosen a murderer instead of Christ. He charged them that they had killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead. And he concludes these charging statements with this notable assertion: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." The result of this preaching was that they were pricked in their hearts, and cried out: "What shall we do?" And the apostle answered: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, . ." And three thousand souls were added unto the church. These are they for whom Christ prayed!

What is your reaction to the charge of guilt in the shedding of the blood of the Son of God, the very blood of the covenant whereby you must be saved?

Are you pricked in your hearts? Does it bring you to your knees in godly sorrow?

Then rest assured that not only this sin, but all your sin is graciously forgiven.

The Saviour's prayer finds its answer in your heart, in which you experience perfect peace!

Question Box

Some Pertinent Questions About Our Reformed Position (2)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

[Note: For the questions with which we are busy in this article, we refer the reader to the March 1 issue.]

We began last time to answer the following question: "According to one of your contributors . . . all our present troubles in the Christian Reformed Church are because of our views on common grace. But there are so many churches which never heard of common grace, and they are going the same way as our churches. How do we have to see this?" In answering this question, we reached the point of a more specific question, namely: why has the decline been so terrifyingly rapid, both here and in the Netherlands? At the conclusion of my previous article, I promised some thoughts on this question.

That the decline has, indeed, been rapid is, I believe, a fact. If some of our fathers who died only, say, twenty years ago would be able to view the scene today, they would undoubtedly be dismayed at what

they see and hear. And if our fathers who passed on some fifty years ago could be brought back to today's ecclesiastical scene, their dismay would turn to dumbfoundedness, I am sure. Why this decline? And why is it so rapid — more rapid than in other churches? Some years ago a minister in the Reformed Church in America remarked to me that in recent years the Christian Reformed Church has been going downhill faster than the RCA; and I agreed. I believe the same may be said of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in comparison with the *Hervormde Kerk* in the Netherlands. In fact, I have seen observations by Dutch writers to the same effect. Are there reasons for this? I would suggest the following.

In the first place, there are historical reasons. For one thing, I have in mind the fact that many of the larger denominations in this country and in Canada began to decline, and in large measure finished their

decline, already in the last century and in the beginning of this century. They fought the battle which has sometimes been generally described as the modernist-fundamentalist battle. The Christian Reformed Church did not face and fight that battle. But when they began to come out of their isolationist shell, they had in a sense some "catching up" to do. Not only so, but they emerged upon an ecclesiastical scene where there had already been considerable decline and apostasy among the major denominations. And there is always an influence of the false and of the apostatizing church upon the faithful church, drawing the latter away from the pure line of the truth. That, I think, is one factor. A second factor concerns the history of the Christian Reformed Church itself. I refer to the fact that today a new, post-1924, generation has arisen. That is simply a fact. Both in our denomination and in the Christian Reformed Church the generation which gave leadership in 1924 is well-nigh gone. A new generation has arisen. And this automatically means change and development, whether for good or for ill. I myself belong to the second generation, and I was brought up and educated wholly under the influence of Protestant Reformed theology and preaching. The same is true in the Christian Reformed Church: there is at present in seminary and in pulpit, as well as in pew, a generation which has been brought up wholly under a theology colored by the theory of common grace and all that it implies. This is simply a fact. And it means development: this generation is simply farther along in the course of development — whatever the course may be — than the previous one. The "old guard" who were in many instances responsible directly for the adoption of the Three Points are largely gone. They brought forth and trained a new generation; and that new generation was steeped in common grace theology. To an observer of these things it was a striking and a rather sad fact that in their declining years many of this "old guard" who had themselves been responsible for the liberalizing trend in their earlier years became the conservatives who bemoaned the liberal trends in their own denomination when they saw the new generation taking over. Once upon a time, I recall, Dr. James Daane hailed and welcomed this very development and spoke of the "winds of change" blowing through the denomination. Now, put this second factor in connection with the first; and I believe this partially accounts for the rapidity of the decline.

In the second place, I believe that there is a doctrinal reason. My questioner wrote early in his letter: "Since our church has begun to debate the infallibility of the Word of God, it has gone down very fast." I agree. And again, the same is true in the Netherlands; only there the departure from the truth of inspiration and infallibility is farther advanced, and the results are even more devastating, although the

Christian Reformed Church is catching up probably faster than most realize or want to admit. But I have two observations in this connection. The first is that the leaven of this wrong view of Scripture has long been present in both the Christian Reformed Church and the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. And the proponents of this wrong view have long been working. If you will trace history, you will discover that this whole debate about Scripture has been going on in the GKN ever since the rise of "*de jongeren*." In the 1920s there was already pressure exerted for a broadening out of the confession concerning Scripture. Think, too, of the Geelkerken Case in 1926 and of the fact that Dr. Geelkerken's defenders were always to be found in the GKN. The same is true of this country. Dr. Ralph Janssen was deposed in 1922 because of his errant views of Scripture and his higher criticism. But do not forget that for the most part his followers remained in the church — and were active. In fact, it was some of those followers who took vengeance upon Danhof and Hoeksema in 1924. Today a man like Dr. Harry Boer (in the *Reformed Journal*) is engaged in a posthumous "*eerherstelling* (restoration to honor)" of Dr. Janssen, even as the GKN did with Geelkerken. Why? Because essentially the views of Dr. Janssen have won the day in the Christian Reformed Church in Report 36/44. And because in the Netherlands the views of the "*jongeren*" have essentially won the field. But this brings me to a second observation. Have you ever noticed how closely associated in history the Janssen Case and the Common Grace Case were? And have you ever noticed that it was the same *jongeren* who took the bit of Kuyper's common grace in their teeth who also were the early proponents in the Netherlands of broader views of Scripture? Personally, I am more and more of the conviction that the relation between these two is more than coincidental, and that the relation between the Janssen Case and Common Grace Case is more than historical. It is, I believe, intrinsically *doctrinal*. And at least part of the connection is this, that common grace leads to an esteem of the world's science and learning and the world's methods and the world's literary criticism which, when applied to the doctrine of Scripture, ends in higher criticism and the denial of infallibility. That is putting it very briefly and simply; perhaps I will write about that in greater detail later. But do not forget: Dr. Janssen was a common grace man. He made a point of it. And he accused his critics, some of whom later played a leading part in 1924, that they were heretical because they denied common grace. The record will prove this.

In the third place, — and here I touch on a crucial aspect in the life of the church — there is, I believe, a spiritual, ethical reason. I almost hesitate to speak of this because people are often touchy about this. But speak of it I must and shall. And when I do so, please remember that I am speaking not of individual

members but of churches, of official actions, and of ecclesiastical trends. Besides, I do not write in an accusatory, holier-than-thou tone. I want to say this explicitly because I have too often heard the taunt that "you PRs think you're so much better." No, what we are, we are only by the grace of God. We have nothing to boast in ourselves. If we are faithful to the Reformed truth, it is only because *God has kept us faithful*. Let there be no misunderstanding about that! But I want to emphasize that the matter of truth versus error in the church of Jesus Christ is never a minor matter, never a mere academic matter. At stake in the deepest sense is never *our* view or *our* opinion and *our* church, but at stake is God's truth of God's Holy Word in God's church. You see, the matter is a deeply spiritual one. For this same reason, no church can ever tamper with the truth with impunity. To do so can only have dire results. Moreover, the closer any church stands to the truth of Scripture and the clearer the light which that church has, the more wrong it is and the more spiritually devastating when such a church deviates from the truth. And, as a rule, the more rapidly the devastating results become manifest. Add to that the fact that the common grace controversy is indeed concerned with the very heart of the truth — sovereign, particular grace, and, in fact, one's fundamental view of God and of man — and I say that it was predictable that the common grace deviation from the Reformed truth could only have dire consequences. And if you add to that fact that the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 cast out men who were according to the official testimony of the Synod "fundamentally Reformed," then you have exactly such a sorely wrong spiritual, ethical situation with respect to God's truth in a church of which my questioner correctly writes that it did "bask in the sunshine of God's favor" and received "much light" from God's Word, — such a situation which was ripe for rapid decline. The fruits we are witnessing today!

All this stands in connection, in the fourth place, with the fact that God always deals judicially with His church in the midst of the world, and always judges a righteous judgment. After all, the deepest reason why one cannot tamper with the truth with impunity is that God, the Righteous and Holy One, cannot be mocked! Let me put it this way: only as we walk in the way of His truth and in the way of the love of His truth and faithfulness thereto does God also lead us more and more into the riches of His truth. And, conversely, when we turn from the truth to error, then God gives us over to our own wilfulness and foolishness, so that we depart farther and farther. And, unless He give us repentance, this is dreadful! I say it with fear and trembling! Let us never forget that in the church it is GOD — not merely men — with Whom we

have to do! And God deals thus with men, but He also deals thus with churches. He always judges a righteous judgment! You can observe this again and again, for example, in the history of the church in the old dispensation. One example: when the Old Testament church sinfully clamored for a king, He "gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath." But have you ever wondered why the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in recent years seem to be smitten more and more with a spirit of blindness, so that they blunder from one bad situation into the next? Have you ever connected that with the judgment of God? Have you ever wondered why the Christian Reformed Church, ever since 1924, has been virtually paralysed every time they faced a crucial ecclesiastical situation or any kind of doctrinal crisis? Have you ever wondered why it has become virtually impossible even to have a doctrinal controversy, much less bring one to trial for heresy? No, do not forget that the Reformed church is ever reforming, and that this "ever reforming" means *ever repenting*, and that it is only in the way of repentance that individuals and churches can and may expect to bask in the sunshine of God's favor! In the way of sin and apostasy from the truth no individual or church can experience the favor of the living God!

Finally — for I have already used up more than my space for this issue — I want to emphasize that all this must be seen in the light of the fact that we are living in the last times. Why is the decline in the church so rapid? Because the end of all things is at hand! And the closer we approach to the end, the more rapidly all things move and develop. This is true in the history of the world in general; it is also true in the sphere of the church. We are hastening toward the end! And we may expect that the lines between church and world, and especially between the true church and the false church will become ever more clearly drawn! We *must* expect that! This, I think, basically explains the almost dizzying pace at which things develop today on the ecclesiastical scene. And the pace is indeed so rapid that one can hardly keep up with it!

Let us take heed! Sometimes today I hear it said that there must be a general banding together of so-called conservatives, or orthodox, with an ignoring or sweeping under the rug of their so-called minor differences. I do not believe this, tempting as it may sometimes be for a small denomination. What I believe is this: it is time for all truly Reformed people of God, those who want to adhere strictly and one hundred per cent to the Reformed faith, to band together under the banner of truth. Perhaps the time is at hand when they can no longer ignore this imperative, but will be providentially *thrown* together!

[To my questioner: I promise to answer your second question next time, the Lord willing.]

All Around Us

The Supreme Court and Abortion Some Thoughts On Dialoguing

Prof. H. Hanko

THE SUPREME COURT AND ABORTION

All our readers are, no doubt, aware of the fact by this time that the United States Supreme Court has overthrown the abortion statutes of the State of Texas, and, in effect, of all the states who still have anti-abortion laws on their books.

There were some peculiar features of the Supreme Court ruling which are worth noting.

The Court ruled that a state may not regulate abortion at all during the first three months of pregnancy; during the second three months, abortion is allowed to protect the health of the mother. At this point, so the court ruled, the fetus becomes viable, i.e., capable of meaningful life. From this time on, that is, during the last three months of pregnancy, the Court ruled that "if the State is interested in protecting fetal life . . . it may go so far as to proscribe abortion during that period, except when it is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother." But the hitch is that the court specifically said that it meant the mental health of the mother as well as her physical health. In effect, therefore, abortion is permissible during any period of pregnancy under the right circumstances.

This ruling of the court was based upon the right of privacy. Apparently the meaning is that the constitutionally guaranteed right of privacy gives to a pregnant woman the right to determine whether or not she shall carry her child to birth or have it aborted. We fail to see what the right of privacy has to do with this whole matter.

There are a few remarks which ought to be made in connection with this ruling.

The court made the ruling that it did on the grounds that there has not, up to this point, been any agreement among doctors, theologians, or any one else interested in the matter on the question of when the life of the fetus actually begins. After having stated this, however, the court itself proceeds to settle this very question. It declares a fetus viable when it is capable of meaningful life; i.e., when it reaches the approximate age of six months. Since when does the court have the right to determine this question?

When the court bases its decision on the right of privacy, it evidently considers the whole matter of a pregnancy a personal matter of the pregnant woman. No one else may interfere with her decision on whether the pregnant woman shall carry the child full

term or have it aborted. But this is strange and evil. There are others who are necessarily involved in the decision whether the court will recognize this or not. For one thing, certainly the father is involved. He is responsible for that unborn child. But the court evidently forbids him to have any word in the matter. He may not enter into the decision which will affect his own child. A family is involved. But these, too, do not count in the eyes of the law any more. The State certainly is involved, for the State has the calling before God to protect the life of the citizens of the State. But with this decision, the State has abrogated its responsibility before God. But a private matter it is not.

It is also strange and ominous that the court defined "viable life" as being "meaningful life." It is hard to say what precisely this means. It certainly ought to be clear to anyone in his right mind that an unborn child has "meaningful life." It certainly is a life with meaning. And if by this expression the court means only meaningful life outside the mother's womb, then one wonders about a lot of people who are not normal. There are many children born who are retarded or handicapped. There are many people in this world who, because of illness, old age, crippling diseases, or other sufferings can hardly be characterized as living meaningful lives according to the court's definition. If the ability to live a meaningful life is to be a criterion for saving a life or ending a life, then one can easily see that presently the court could very well order the "mercy-killing" of all kinds of undesirables.

There is a point here which is worth emphasizing. Who is to determine whether a life is "meaningful" or not? Even children of God have often stood at the side of the bed of a loved one who is very aged, perhaps has been in a coma for a number of months or even years, has a terminal disease which is beyond treatment, and wondered in his own soul why the Lord does not take such a loved one out of this life. The fact of the matter is that no man is in any position to determine the purpose why God puts someone into the world, why that person remains in the world, and when that person has finished his God-assigned work and is ready to leave this world. That is solely the determination of the Most High. And that is true not only of the retarded and handicapped, not only of the ill and aged, but also of the unborn infant whose life is in the hands

of the Most High Who gave it.

The court has spoken of the "right" of abortion, and has granted this right to pregnant mothers. The court has not (yet?) ruled on the *obligation* of abortion. It has not yet made abortion under certain circumstances obligatory. We may be thankful for this. For we still have the right under the law to determine for ourselves whether we shall abort a child or not. And a child of God may, therefore, still live in obedience to His God in this matter without legal penalty or enforced abortion. But even this is a precarious "right." It is not difficult to envision the possibility of a later ruling of the court which will make abortion mandatory under certain circumstances. And this is not difficult to imagine because there really is a very close relationship between right and obligation. It is emphasized, e.g., even in this country that a citizen has the "right" to vote; but this right is also an obligation. It is something he owes to his country as a citizen. The same thing is true in all our relationships to God. Right and obligation are inseparable. The Christian has the right to pray, but also the obligation. He has the right before God to go to Church, but also the obligation. He has the right to worship, but this is no less a calling. In the whole sphere of Christian ethics, right and obligation go together. Is it not possible that the court may think this true also in the whole area of abortion? You can almost predict the reasoning. A mother is pregnant whose physical and/or mental health is precarious. She now has the right to an abortion. It is not a big step to go on and say: for the sake of herself, her family and society at large, she also has the obligation to abort her child. Or perhaps the argument will go something like this: a pregnant mother is ready to be delivered of a child whom she does not want because of the financial, social, and economic stress which such a child will bring. She will add to a world already overburdened with a population which is too great for this planet to support. She has the right of abortion. If the argument is valid, however, it almost has to follow that this right is also an obligation. She ought to, no, she *must*, abort her child for the sake of humanity at large, etc.

Above all, however, the court has abandoned any semblance of determining these matters in the light of the law of God. This ought not strike us as strange. It has been a long time since the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government have made decisions which are reflections of the will of God. And in this country, increasingly paganized and secularized, it is not surprising that this trend should continue. But it is a serious matter for all that. The magistrate is called, in Scripture, to be a servant of the Lord Christ. Every magistrate has the solemn obligation before God to rule in Christ's name and according to His will. That will is recorded in the Holy Scriptures. So real is this that every magistrate shall some day have to render

account before the judgment seat of Christ for all that he did as servant of Christ in his position of authority in the State. When, therefore, the State not only ignores the Scriptures in matters of law, but enacts legislation and makes rulings which are directly opposed to the Scriptures, the State becomes Antichrist. And that is the situation which is fast developing in this country.

What must the believer do? Certainly the child of God who subjects the whole of his life to the Word of God may never, in spite of the ruling of the Supreme Court, take advantage of this weakness of the laws of the land. There may, indeed, be temptation to do exactly that. So often it happens that terrible sins become so customary that we ourselves scarcely consider such deeds to be sins at all, simply permitting the generally accepted customs of the day to rule our life. This we must never do. In fact, even if the Supreme Court should make abortion obligatory under certain circumstances, the child of God may not obey for conscience' sake.

But the question arises whether or not we should voice our objections against this monstrous evil. The answer is, undoubtedly, *yes* — in whatever way it is possible for us to do that. But there is a warning that is in order in this connection. There are many organizations about the country who make it their business to fight legalized abortion. From time to time various church groups also join these organizations and give out statements condemning abortion and fighting for the rights of the unborn. Many times, however, these organizations base their arguments on issues other than the directives and principles of Scripture. They may, e.g., argue from a legal point of view that the law ought to defend the *rights* of the unborn: for the law is instituted to protect life. They may argue on the basis of natural law by pointing out that the murder of infants is against even natural feeling and against the laws of nature; that it violates even the instinctive feelings of man. They may argue that historically the Judaeo-Christian ethic has forbidden abortion, and that abortion has been always a pagan practice. These and many other arguments are raised against abortion.

There is, of course, an element of truth in these arguments. No one can deny them. But it is, after all, the *Scriptures*, and the Scriptures alone, which determine decisively the truth in these matters. The argument against abortion which is not based upon the Scriptures is an argument which will eventually fail. And therefore the Christian is called to protest this evil; but he is called to do so on the basis of the Word of God. For He is a servant of the Word, and before that Word alone he bows. Let his testimony be therefore, based only upon the Scriptures.

If the objection is raised that the wicked will not listen to the Scriptures, that an argument must be brought to their attention which is more readily

acceptable to them, the answer must be that Scripture alone is our guide and authority. We must make our testimony on the basis of God's Word — whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. This only is our calling.

Let us in the meantime prepare ourselves for evil days which are ahead. The storm clouds gather on the distant horizon and the rolling of the thunder already reaches our ears. If we expect the storm to come and prepare ourselves beforetime, then we will not be caught unprepared when that day is here.

SOME THOUGHTS ON DIALOGUING

To hold a dialogue is the "in thing" in the area of ecumenical relations. The caption is not a grammatical error. Today, in modern parlance, people "dialogue." There was a time when the word was only a noun. Today it has become a verb. A recent news headline reads: "WCC dialogues with Buddhists."

Everybody who is interested in church unity "dialogues." Not only does the WCC dialogue with Buddhists, but churches within the Protestant tradition dialogue with each other; Protestantism dialogues with Roman Catholicism; the Christian religious leaders dialogue with pagan religious leaders. Dialogue is really the thing. You just are not with it today unless you are, somewhere along the line, carrying on a dialogue.

This is not a Scriptural concept. So one must turn to the Dictionary to find out what it means. My Unabridged Dictionary tells me that, among various other meanings, the word can also mean: "an exchange of ideas or opinions on a particular issue, with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement." My Dictionary is a few years old, and does not designate the word as a verb. This is of more recent vintage.

The goal of dialogue, as is evident also from the definition quoted above, is agreement and settlement of issues; hence, when dialoguing is carried on within the Church, the goal is the settlement of issues with a view to some sort of church union.

Apart from the whole question of the rightness or wrongness of the ecumenical movement, is it correct to engage in efforts to resolve differences by engaging in dialogue? or by dialoguing?

It is well to think through the matter for a moment, because these words which so easily become a part of

the ecclesiastical jargon can often win a place in our speech without our realizing the implications involved.

If talks aimed at church merger are defined or characterized as a dialogue, there is implicit in the word a hidden assumption which is very evil. That hidden assumption is there; just think about it for a moment. If the definition which the Dictionary offers is the correct usage in this instance, then it is clear that church leaders who engage in dialogue begin their conversations with the admission on both sides that both sides are, in a measure, right concerning their ideas and opinions. Though they may violently disagree, though their ecclesiastical positions are directly at odds with each other, they both are right in some measure. And the real truth of the matter can be ascertained by both sides discussing the issue until they find a common ground on which both can stand without materially altering their position. Hence, the assumption is that no one is really right, and no one is really wrong. The truth is a relative thing. Union can be reached between denominations by means of both merging their positions into a position common enough to both so that both can accept it. So the goal of dialogue is not to find out what the Scriptures teach; the goal of dialogue is rather to find that common ground upon which both can comfortably stand.

The Scriptures do not admonish us to "dialogue." Jesus did not carry on dialogues with the Scribes and Pharisees. The apostles knew nothing of this either. Paul did not invite the Judaizers in the Galatian Churches to sit down for a dialogue. Jesus said: "Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites." And Paul said: "If any one preach any other gospel than that which I have preached, let him be anathema."

To sit down together to search the Scriptures is one thing. This is our calling. It can, indeed, only be done where all concerned are willing to bow before the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and life. But this is not dialogue. To preach the truth, witness to the truth, and speak the truth in love is our calling. Nothing else will do, for we are enjoined by the Scriptures to do this. But this is not dialogue either.

Let dialoguing be accursed. There is no place for it in the life of the Church.



Signs of the Times

“ . . . and earthquakes. . . . ”

Rev. G. Van Baren

The quake was not, according to the Richter scale, particularly severe. It did not take as many lives as many other earthquakes. Yet, two days before Christmas, there was a reminder of the terrible devastation that an earthquake causes. The Central American capital Managua, of the country of Nicaragua, was virtually wiped off the map. The quake, with its epicenter in the heart of this city, caused unbelievable destruction. Evidently no one knows for certain the number of lives taken. *Time* magazine presented the estimate of 6,000 dead and at least 20,000 injured. Other, later reports suggest more than 10,000 killed. Such numbers of dead seem difficult to imagine. Whole families were wiped out. The sorrow, the suffering, the destruction after just a few moments of quake are indescribable. The same *Time* magazine of January 8, 1973 presented through pictures the destruction and portrayed the horror of the scene.

Time listed other earthquakes of the past, including a list of those of this century. There was an earthquake in China in 1556 killing some 830,000 people. Another in Lisbon, Portugal in 1755 killed some 50,000. In 1920 in China another earthquake killed 180,000. In 1923 in the Tokyo-Yokohama area 143,000 were killed. The list presents other quakes, each killing thousands of people. Since 1900 there were 26 quakes which caused serious damage and great loss of life. In our own country, in 1906, there was the great San Francisco earthquake when 700 were killed.

The question the child of God confronts when reading of all these disasters is: “Is this a sign that the end of time is near?” We think, often, that earthquakes, especially are reminders that soon our Lord shall return on the clouds of glory. It might be well to consider what Scripture does teach concerning earthquakes.

Jesus speaks of those in that well-known passage of Matthew 24. In verse 7 we read, “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.” These are presented as part of the signs of Jesus’ coming and the end of the world (vs. 3).

Yet many have pointed out that earthquakes are not limited to any one location on this earth and surely not to any one time-period. It is simply not so that severe earthquakes happened only in recent years. In recent years (from 1900 on) there has been nothing to compare to the magnitude of the earthquake of 1556

in China (see above). Can, then, earthquakes be considered as signs of the end of time? Are these not normal and usual events which have always taken place? Must we regard the Managua earthquake as merely a natural phenomenon unrelated to the end of time?

The Scriptural answer, of course is, “no.” These are definitely signs of the end of time. There is no doubt about that because Jesus Himself points this out. However, Jesus also states in Matt. 24:8, “All these are the *beginning of sorrows*.” This means that the signs Jesus mentions in verse 7, including earthquakes, are not to be considered indications only of the imminent end of time. They are rather the “beginning of sorrows.” Literally, these represent the “birthpangs” of the new creation. Each time one of these signs is seen, it is as the labor-pain of a woman in travail. These pains come not just at the moment of birth, but for some time before. So also the “beginnings of sorrows” are seen on this earth. Each pestilence, each famine, each earthquake (which cause great pain and suffering) is used by God in order that finally the new heavens and new earth may be ushered in. These “pains” have been present from the beginning of time after the fall of man. There were earthquakes already before the coming of Christ. We read of some of these in the Old Testament books. These “pains” continue into the New Testament age. And each time these remind us that the coming of Christ is a little bit nearer.

Scripture does suggest certain truths which earthquakes must convey. This becomes evident as one considers the quakes recorded in Scripture and the times when these occurred. There was an earthquake at the time of Christ’s death. We read in Matt. 27:54, “Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.” Several times in the book of Revelation one reads also of earthquakes. These come near the end of this age and are extremely devastating. In chapter 6:12, we read, “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became so bold. . . .” Or we read in Rev. 16:18, “And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.”

The above earthquakes all come as sign of judgment

of God upon a wicked and perverse generation. God shall tear apart this earth as it presently exists. He shall do all of this in His wrath against all wicked, reprobate, men. He shows to the wicked no mercy. He destroys all that in which they boast. The very earth, which the wicked consider relatively permanent, shall open up before the wicked.

Each earthquake which comes upon this earth is God's clear testimony of this judgment. It is His judgment already now upon wicked men, but also a reminder of the final earthquake which shall rock the very foundations of this earth.

Children of God must consider earthquakes in that light too. We can not simply wring our hands and wish, as it were, that such would never happen. We can not simply deplore the terrible destruction and great loss of life. But we hear God speak to remind us that He has not forgotten His people here on the earth. His people may truly suffer much. These may be the scum of the earth; downtrodden of men. Sometimes one might think that there is not a just and holy God Who sees the wickedness of men and does judge. But we have had a comforting reminder again, two days before Christmas, that God does see and know and judge. We do not rejoice in loss of life or destruction of property as such. We do rejoice that God gives constant testimony that He has not forgotten the plight of His people here on the earth. We can observe the "beginning of sorrows" or "birthpangs" of the new creation. Do you see all of this when you read of another earthquake? We will be seeing more of these earthquakes in the days to come — and probably in our own country as well. Remember why God sends these.

But another fact must be kept in mind in connection with these earthquakes. They are signs of renewal. There was an earthquake at the time of Christ's death, but also again at the time of His resurrection from the dead. Both remind us that through the death and resurrection of Christ, there comes a renewal of all things. It is worthy to note that at Christ's death, three things took place: the vail of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom; the graves were opened; and the earth was rent. Each represented a tearing or rending of the old. Each rending was directly related to the death of Christ. Because of His suffering and death on the cross, the old is done away. The vail of the temple was rent (from top to bottom — thus, not by human hands) because through the death of Christ, His people now have direct access to their God. These need no more come by way of sacrifice, nor through the priest. The graves were opened as a sign of the fact that through the death of Christ, the grave no longer has the victory. His people shall arise from the graves in the last day in order to inherit the new heavens and new earth. But also the earth was rent. This earth is presently affected by the curse. The thorn and thistle still grow.

Drought strikes the earth. The hot sun parches it. Famine racks it. Quakes change its very terrain. Disease destroys much of it. Death affects all of it. This is the earth on which we live — the earth under the curse for man's transgression. Therefore also we read in Rom. 8:21,22, "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

The rending of the earth, therefore, at Christ's death and again at His resurrection indicates that this old, corrupted earth shall be rent in order that the new might be ushered in. That curse presently affecting the earth *can* be removed because of the perfect work of Christ on the cross. He removed the curse and condemnation upon His people by satisfying the justice of God. Then the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The old must be rent in order that the new may come.

That reminds faithful children of God of the truth that they must have their hearts set on the heavenly rather than upon the things of the earth. The things of this earth shall surely pass away. Some place their hearts on the earthly. As the rich man in Christ's parable, these make plans to take their ease, for their soul have gotten them much goods. But all these things shall be taken away: in the last day not only, but in the day of our death. None of the material can we take with us. Also God sends reminders of this fact. The rich of Managua in a moment were stripped of all that in which they had boasted. It does not take God long to remove from one everything that he has. How foolish, then, to set one's heart upon earthly riches! The Christian looks rather for the new, which shall never be rent nor destroyed. There righteousness shall dwell. There we shall behold the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the reality for which the child of God longs.

May we learn, then, in the rending of this earth to look for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ when the earth shall be rent once more, and finally, in order that the new may come in all of its beauty. And each time we read of, or experience, the rending of this earth, we can truly say, "The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5).



*From Holy Writ***Pure and Undeiled Religion (9)**

AN EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

*Rev. Robert D. Decker**Chapter 1:19-21, Receiving the Word With Meekness...*

There are two possible readings of verse 19. It is possible to read the text as it appears in the King James, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren..." And it is also possible to read, "Know this, my beloved brethren..." While in either case it makes no difference concerning the sense of the passage, we prefer to read, "Know this." The inspired writer means to catch the undivided attention of his readers and stir them up. "Know this!" "My brothers, this you must know." What must we know? We must know that we are to receive the engrafted Word with meekness, being swift to hear and slow to wrath, because the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. We are to receive that Word in the way of laying aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness; and this is all the more urgent because this engrafted Word is able to save our souls.

All of this follows very naturally from the astounding truth of verse 18, where James teaches that we are born again with the Word of truth in order that we should be a kind of first-fruits of God's creatures. Of God's own sovereign will He determined to make us, by nature dead in sin, alive in Christ for the purpose that we should be the ones in whom the whole creation is consecrated to the praise of God's glory. This means something for us; it means that we must receive the engrafted Word which alone is able to save us. This is an absolute imperative.

That engrafted Word is the Word which God spoke. It is the Word of truth of which verse 18 speaks. It is the eternal Word by whom and for whom all things were made; it is the Word which became flesh and dwelt among us, revealing the glory of God (cf. John 1). The engrafted Word is the Word which God spoke in His Son Jesus Christ. By the miracle of infallible inspiration that Word of God in Jesus Christ is *inscripturated*, so that we may say it is the Bible.

That Word is "engrafted." A better translation of the term is "implanted." The term really means "to sow or to plant." The idea, therefore, is that the Word of God is rooted in us. God implants His Word first by the wonder of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Christ, the Word of God, by the Spirit enters our hearts and gives us new, heavenly, resurrection life which never dies. Christ nourishes and sustains that life and brings

it to its fruition by means of the pure preaching of the Word. By that means the implanted Word sinks its roots ever more deeply into the "good ground" of the elect hearers (cf. Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13); and the seed of the new life sprouts and grows and develops and brings forth fruit "some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty." This is what James speaks of. The Word of God in Christ, implanted in us by regeneration, must be received by us through the means of the preaching and the sacraments which signify and seal the grace of salvation preached.

Receive that implanted Word! This is a powerful concept and rich in meaning. To receive the Word is more than a simple acceptance of the gospel. It's more than saying to our preacher, "That was a nice sermon, I enjoyed that." Receiving the engrafted Word is more than merely agreeing with what was preached. The receiving which the Scriptures speak of in this passage is to appropriate the Word preached. The idea is that we hear the voice of the Good Shepherd; and hearing His voice, we know Him and follow Him (John 10). Putting it another way, to receive the implanted Word is to embrace the Christ Who is preached. It means that we take that Word of Christ to heart and with joy and thanksgiving; in faith believing, we embrace the implanted Word.

This is an imperative. James is not saying, "I wish you would please accept the implanted Word, my beloved brothers." This is no offer for the hearers to accept or reject at will. This is the exhortation of God Himself to His servants through the Lord Jesus Christ who have been begotten again with the Word of truth. And as always with the Word of God, it is an "either... or" matter. Either one embraces the implanted Word, or one rejects the Word; either he embraces Christ by a true and living faith, or he rejects in unbelief. But God presents no offer to men, He comes with no choice. God simply says to the regenerated servants of Jesus Christ, "Embrace the implanted Word."

The idea is further emphasized by more imperatives in the text: "Let every man be swift to the hearing, slow to the speaking, slow to wrath." While as a general rule it is always true that we should do more listening than talking and be slow to wrath, the text does not come with generalities or "helpful hints for good living." James speaks of more than our everyday talking and conversation. "Be swift to the hearing":

that means to be quick, ready to hear the implanted Word. Those begotten again with the Word of truth are to be full of eager longing and eagerness to hear Christ preached, so that they may more and more embrace Him in faith. For that reason they are to be slow to speak, i.e. slow to begin speaking. How true! One cannot embrace Christ through the preaching of the Word without hearing His voice; and one certainly cannot hear His voice when one is speaking. But again, James is not merely speaking of talking when the Word is preached. That being slow to the speaking is further defined by "be slow to wrath." Wrath refers to a deepseated anger, a settled indignation, which always carries with it the desire of revenge. It is wrath against God, the expression of hatred against and opposition to God. Be slow, James writes, to that kind of wrath. Be dull or inactive to speak out of wrath against the implanted Word of God. In plain words, what the text says is that we are never to let that wrath be in us, so that we speak out in opposition to the implanted Word of truth. Rather are we to be eager to hear Christ so that we may embrace Him by faith.

It belongs to our sinful nature to be quick to speak out of wrath against the Word. In the context of this first chapter of James when the Word of God says, "Count it all joy in divers temptations, ask for the wisdom of God to be in harmony with His will, rejoice in your low degree, put away your doublemindedness, endure the temptations, and when you fall do not say you are tempted of God"; in brief, when the Word of Truth — Christ through the preaching — points us to our sin and sinful natures, we do not want to hear it! That flesh is so very strong in us, and our inclination is exactly to speak out against the Word rather than receive it. We have many ways of doing that, too. Some subtle and others not so subtle. "That word applies to brother so and so," or "That word applies to those other apostatizing churches," or "That's the preacher's opinion, he's welcome to it, but I have mine"; these are just some of the ways we oppose God's Word. And that "wrath of man" is the very antithesis of the righteousness of God. It does not work, produce the righteousness of God. We fail to measure up to God's standard. The tragedy of this is that we cannot grow in the faith in the knowledge of God. Receive the Word, the implanted Word, my brothers, be slow to speak out in wrath against God's Word.

There is only one way. Negatively, the Scripture teaches that we must lay aside "all filthiness." This is what our indifference to the Word is. Our speaking out in wrath against the Word implanted is not merely a shortcoming, a failure, a weakness, but vile, rotten, filthy sin. Lay it apart, get rid of it; all of it.

And "lay apart all superfluity of naughtiness." This is a catchy phrase, but a poor translation. Superfluity is superabundance; and the point is that we are not to

get rid of the excesses of sin but the superabundance of sin. There remains in us an overflowing of sin. "Superabundance" emphasizes that sin is an unbelievable monster in us. "Naughtiness" is only one of many words used in the Bible for sin. We should always remember that the Holy Spirit never uses words indiscriminately. "Naughtiness" denotes a very specific sin. More often than not the term is translated "malice." And malice is that evil disposition which desires to injure one's fellow believer. This is Scripture. Scripture is its own interpreter. Romans 1:29 lists maliciousness as one of the characteristics of the reprobate. I Peter 2:1,2 teaches that we are to lay aside all malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, evil speakings, and as newborn babes desire the pure milk of the Word so that we may grow. Eph. 4:31 calls us to put away from us all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speakings, and malice, and to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving to one another. All of these passages indicate the same truth. Malice has to do with our relationships together as members of the Body of Christ. The point is simply this: we cannot receive the implanted Word as it comes through preaching and sacrament when filled with that evil disposition to hurt our fellow saints. This is the filthy root which bears the bitter fruit of evil speaking, bitterness, envies, hypocrisies — terrible sins all — which rip and tear the church apart, wound and kill members of Christ's sacred Body. Ultimately this malice is the root out of which springs that wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God, but which speaks out against the Word. Lay that apart. Hearts full of malice cannot receive the implanted Word.

That Word must be received positively with "meekness." This is humility. It's that mild, gentle disposition that confesses when the Word is preached, "Yes, Lord, that's I." Meekness is godly sorrow for our sins and confession of them all before the Father. And meekness is reflected in our relationships one with another. Recognizing ourselves as sinners saved only by grace, we edify one another rather than destroying one another. Each esteems other better than self. Bearing one another's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ. That is the righteousness of God.

Know this, my beloved brethren! Receive with meekness the implanted Word. It's the Word which is able to save your souls. Literally the text reads: "powerful to save your souls." The implanted Word, Christ crucified and raised again, as that Word comes through the preaching and as it is signified and sealed in the holy sacraments, is God's almighty power to lift our souls out of deepest misery into the enjoyment of God's blessed friendship and favor.

There is the urgency of this Word of God. Yes, we are saved, our sins are forgiven, we are born again by the Word of truth, and that Word has been implanted in our hearts. Still we must continue to embrace that

Word with meekness. God does not implant it, and then we have it and somehow go to heaven. As the beloved brethren, the saints in the dispersion who encounter divers temptations, we are called to embrace the implanted Word. That is God's means and God's power to comfort in our sorrows, instruct and build us

up, encourage us when downcast, correct us when we wander, preserve us in the temptations, and strengthen us in the battle of faith. Know this, my beloved brothers. Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, receive with meekness the implanted Word, which alone is powerful to save your souls.

Voice of our Fathers

Belgic Confession, Article 14 Man, Created In God's Image

Rev. J. Kortering

One concise statement in the fourteenth article of the Belgic Confession expresses volumes of truth concerning the image of God. "We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth and made and formed him after his own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God."

We have considered the implications of God having formed man out of the dust of the ground. We examine in this article the effects of God's image upon man.

IMAGE AND LIKENESS

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them," Gen. 1:26, 27.

These words demonstrate the close relationship between our previous article and the present one. By virtue of God's having formed man out of the dust of the ground, He made man able to bear His own image. God made man in His likeness to such an extent that man possessed a nature that enabled him to think, and to will, and thus to have the capacity to receive the image of God.

Image and likeness are not identical terms which breathe redundancy into the inspired record. Likeness is a further definition of image, an expanding upon the meaning. Conceivably, one may have an image which is

not a likeness, e.g. a picture of a loved one who is living elsewhere. That picture is the image of the person, but hardly the likeness. In another sense, it is possible to become acquainted with another person who may be the image of a loved one, so that he looks like him very much, but also acts very much like him:

he may laugh the same way, have the same gentle nature, etc. Such a one would be both image and likeness.

Thus, when God created man, He made man in His likeness. By this, Scripture indicates that man possessed a nature that enabled him to enter into fellowship with God. God possesses a mind; God made man with a mind. This does not mean that man is divine: God's mind is entirely divine; man's mind is entirely human (of the dust). In a creaturely way, man was able to reflect God. He could think, he could express his desires, he could enjoy creation, he could enter into friendship and express his thoughts in speech.

In addition to this, God also made man in His own image. This applies not only to the general character of man's nature, but specifically to the spiritual content of that nature.

GOD BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul," Gen. 2:7. The last part of the verse describes how God made man in His own image. What was true for the creation of man's physical, earthly nature, applies also to the creation of his spiritual nature. The words describe in human language a divine wonder. God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life.

By this description, we are made to think in earthly ways of a great mystery. How else could we even *think* of it! God pictures before our eyes the act of physical resuscitation to demonstrate the infusion of His own spiritual nature in man. Certainly, God does not mean by this phrase, "breathed into his nostrils" the inflating of Adam's lungs with oxygen. This is the earthly picture of a spiritual reality. Two things are immediately added, "the breath of life" and "and Adam became a living soul." Both of these ideas, life

and soul, are not to be taken in a limited earthly sense. The life that followed the inbreathing was far more than physical; it was life in the all comprehensive sense of fellowship with God. So also with the word soul, it means much more than Adam's physical ability to breathe and live; the animal has this capacity as well, Lev. 17:14ff. Rather, man as a living soul refers to his ability to enter into conscious fellowship with the creation, not only, but with God the Creator. Paul makes mention of this in his letter to the Corinthians, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit," I Cor. 15:45. Adam was a living soul in relation to God; he enjoyed the blessedness of friendship with God within the context of the earthly creation. Christ however, is a quickening spirit; He is able to make the dead alive, and that, too, in perfect covenant fellowship with God beyond the limits of the earthly life: He brings His people into the glorious presence of God in heaven.

THE IMAGE OF GOD

We must ask, what really is implied in the image of God.

Our answer will lead us into controversy with the Pelagian. When God formed man in His image, He infused into the very nature of man certain qualities of goodness. It is on this point that we part company with the Pelagian who insists that there are no good qualities inherent in man's nature, heart, mind, will, etc. just as there are now no bad qualities as a result of Adam's sin. The only good or bad in anyone is seen in the deeds he performs, not inherent in his nature. Our Reformed fathers describe the Pelagian position in Canons II & III Rejection of errors, article 2, "The spiritual gifts, or the good qualities and virtues, such as goodness, holiness, righteousness, could not belong to the will of man, when he was first created, and that these, therefore, could not have been separated therefrom in the fall." This view was rejected by the Reformed churches as unscriptural. When God created man in His image, He made man in such a way that his very nature spontaneously sought after God.

If we try to put some specific content into this idea, we might express it this way. Adam was God-conscious the moment He was created. God did not have to come to Adam to introduce Himself to Adam and tell Him that He was the Author of his life. Adam possessed this knowledge innately. He knew God existed, he understood his relationship to God, he was overjoyed with the blessedness that he could walk and talk with God in the cool of the day. This was his highest moment of bliss in the midst of God's creation. Covenant joy with God, however was not restricted to certain moments when God condescended to the earth in a personal encounter, Gen. 3:8. His whole life was engrossed in learning and articulating the greatness of God, which surrounded him in the whole creation. The

naming of the animals demonstrates Adam's innate ability to understand God's revelation and return to God all the glory of it.

We agree with Calvin, that the way to learn the specific content of this image of God is to read the New Testament and discover what is included in the image as it is restored to His people in Christ Jesus. "But our definition of the image seems not to be complete until it appears more clearly what the faculties are in which man excels, and in which he is to be regarded as a mirror of the divine glory. This, however, cannot be better known than from the remedy provided for the corruption of nature," Institutes, Book I chapter 15 (4). This renewed image or "new man" is detailed in Eph. 4:23, 24, "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Similarly in Col. 3:10, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

The material content of the image of God is distinguished as threefold.

First, Adam possessed not only a mind by which he could think; God filled his mind with proper thoughts. As stated above, he was able to know God personally, to understand God's revelation, to function as a true prophet in the midst of the house of God, Paradise, a type of heaven.

Secondly, not only did Adam possess a human will, but God created that will with the inclination to seek the good. Our fathers express it this way in the Belgic Confession, "in all things to will, agreeably to this will of God." This is the beautiful description of Adam's free will. Adam's will was created by the righteous God who willed that man should express his will by doing what God willed. Hence the freedom of Adam was not simply being able to do whatever he wanted to do, whether good or evil. Because he was created in the image of God, Adam was able to will agreeably to the will of God, to want what God wanted him to want. Indeed, Adam was able also to want the evil, but this constituted not an added measure to the freedom of his will, rather it formed a severe limitation upon it, viz. that it led him into the bondage of sin. We once again quote Calvin, "At first every part of the soul was formed to rectitude. There was soundness of mind and freedom of will to choose the good. If any one objects that it was placed, as it were, in a slippery position, because its power was weak, I answer, that the degree conferred was sufficient to take away every excuse. For surely the Deity could not be tied down to this condition — to make man such that he either could not or would not sin. Such a nature might have been more excellent; but to expostulate with God as if he had been bound to confer this nature on man, is more than unjust seeing He had the full right to determine how

much or how little He would give." Institutes, Book I chapter 15 (8). Adam's righteousness was expressed in his ability to do what God told him to be right. As such, he was the perfect king, obedient unto God his Sovereign.

Thirdly, Adam not only possessed a heart, God filled his heart with good. The Bible speaks often of God's holiness. All Israel could see the evidence of God's holiness when Moses descended from the Mount: his face was white, Ex. 34:29. The Word exhorts us, "Be ye holy; for I am holy, I Peter 1:16. This holiness was communicated unto Adam through creation. His heart was filled with the love of God and therefore he gladly set apart his whole life unto the service of God. The image of God so permeated the depth of his spiritual being that he was a perfect priest in the tabernacle of God. Everything he possessed belonged unto God and was gladly used in the service of God. Such consecration reflected the perfect consecration that God has toward Himself as the only

good. God eternally seeks His own good; He created man to serve Him in this lofty goal. Adam naturally desired this and rejoiced in it.

Little wonder that we can hardly understand the depth of such a beautiful creation. Man possessed the nature (the tools) whereby he was made able to serve God. Gladly he rendered this service as prophet, priest, and king. In this way God was glorified by His own creation.

What a perplexing contrast follows, "But being in honor he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death, and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil."

How are the mighty fallen.

We believe he fell into the arms of Christ.

In Christ, we are renewed in that image of God and now have the privilege to serve God as prophet, priest, and king. A better day awaits us when we shall serve God in the tabernacle that is four-square.

In His Fear

To Be Tolerant Or Intolerant — That Is The Question

Rev. D. H. Kuiper

Tolerance is allowance for error or deviation. The human body is able to tolerate certain environmental factors which work physiological detriment externally, or the body can tolerate a certain level of poison (drugs) which combat the body's well-being internally. The term toleration is also commonly used in the manufacture of tools and machines. By using hard metals and precise measurements, workmen are able to produce parts which deviate from a standard by as little as .005 of an inch. This allows for mass production and the interchanging of parts. The third area in which our subject is important is that of intersocial volition; here tolerance is sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from, or conflicting with, one's own. We are, of course, interested here not in physiology or industry, but in this last area of personal relations, more precisely, those relations where a child of God is involved. It is here that the question raised in the title is most pressing.

There is scarcely an aspect of life where men would not have us believe that tolerance is the ultimate virtue. It seems that a good church member is above all else a "nice" person. He is friendly, he does not

offend, he is tolerant. If he should come into contact with a man who holds positions or practices which differ or conflict with his own, why, he smiles rather than confronts. He judges according to the touchstone of *sincerity*. A man may believe and do pretty much as he pleases; yet he gets high marks if only he is *sincere*. With such "good church members" the work of the church can go forward, forward in such things as the preaching of the Gospel, discipline, ecumenism, evangelism projects, and education, both at home and at school. It is certainly the case that such things are affected by the matter of tolerance or intolerance.

Basic to the entire tolerant position in matters of a moral, ethical nature is the premise that man, that is, man in the church, does not have an absolute standard of truth. It is so often said that truth is not as absolute as some would make it. There must be room for diverse opinions in matters of doctrine and walk. And since there is no absolute standard, who would dare to condemn an idea or an action? Maybe the other fellow is right. Maybe the other fellow is partly right. So there is in the church a growing agnosticism, perhaps better called a Christian agnosticism, that states that we really can't know who is right and who is wrong. When the

Bible is brought forth as just such a standard by which all doctrines and behavior may be evaluated, various ploys are used to escape such consequences that would then follow. They are familiar: the Bible, especially the Old Testament but also the New, is bound to the time of its composition: there are errors in the Bible which ought to make us hesitant in using it too strictly; and then the catch-all, who can tell what the Bible really means? Is it not sufficient that a man sincerely holds to what he thinks the Bible means? Must there not be room for diversity of opinions?

Let it be stated here that the truly Christian man is intolerant. And he is intolerant according to the Scriptures. He does not allow for error or deviation. That is, he does not give room to practices or beliefs which differ from or conflict with the teaching of the Word of God. He does not allow room for sin, any sin. He does not allow room for doctrinal error, however small or insignificant that departure may appear. If this shakes you a little bit, then it ought to be recognized that Christianity is an intolerant religion. Although Mohammedanism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Taoism are content to occupy the stage with Christianity, true Christianity does not reciprocate this contentedness. Nor is true Christianity content with much that happens within the sphere of, and under the name of, Christianity. Here tolerance says, "Let it go." Christian intolerance says, "Let it stop." Tolerance says, "Maybe." Intolerance says, "No." This "no" must be directed not only against opponents outside the church but against the opponents within as well. Opponents of the Bible do not become less dangerous, but they become far more dangerous when they are found within ecclesiastical walls.

Jesus, the apostles, the entire Bible, present an attitude and a teaching that can only be called intolerant. According to John 14:6 Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." This answer of Jesus to Thomas employs the most absolute words possible; there is no life apart from Christ, there is no truth except as it is in Christ, there is no way unto the salvation of the Father other than Christ. In the church on earth that must be preached with all authority and emphasis. Any departure from those words is a lie, destroys the way of salvation, and invites devilish heresies. In Galatians 1:8 inspired Paul dares to say, "But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." What lies behind such absolutism? Surely there lies in Paul's heart the Spirit-worked conviction that what he has preached is *truth*! And that which the false teachers present are damnable heresies that subvert the entire gospel of Christ. What sort of evangelism can be indifferent to the question of what is being preached?

Writing his second epistle, John admonishes, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." The doctrines of the Word of God are clear and understandable. The church member may not receive or send off with well-wishing any that do not hew strictly to those doctrines.

Further, our confessions demonstrate this same intolerance towards doctrinal deviation and sin in the life of the church member. Please confer the Heidelberg Catechism, Questions and Answers 62-64, 80, 82, 83-85, 87, and 115. All this from the most practical and personal of the three confessions. See also the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordt; any article will demonstrate that truth is sharp and sure, can be known, must be confessed and lived. There is one other document that ought to be read at this point. For every office-bearer in our churches (and others) the Formula of Subscription is binding. It, too, is based on the above mentioned characteristics of truth, as truth is revealed to us by God in His Word. As men today say, Instead of theological differences let us sing together Paul's hymn of Christian love, instead of controversy let us have prayer, instead of polemics let us have evangelism, *let the man of God say*, I will have theological differences, controversy, and polemics when the Word of God requires it of me. And then I will enjoy Christian love, prayer, and evangelism in the way of that same Word.

It is time to inject two important considerations. In the first place, all the above does not imply that there is never any room for a difference of opinion in respect to beliefs and practices. The fourteenth chapter of Romans certainly teaches us that within the Church of Christ there is room for some variation, and there *must* be room for this. This is the well known question of the things indifferent. The Church Order also recognizes that in the area of church mergers and congregations joining a denomination, "Churches whose usages differ from ours merely in non-essentials shall not be rejected." (Art. 85) So there is room for the exercise of Christian liberty according to an individual's conscience. We would point out, however, that this consideration does not vitiate what has been previously stated, because tolerance has been defined as sympathy or indulgence for those things which are contrary to the Word of God.

The second consideration has to do with love. Surely the question has already occurred to many, Where does love fit into this picture? Tolerance is not love; never may they be confused. And intolerance must be grounded in love. What kind of love is it that allows a brother to continue in his sin unrebuked? The brother offends God, experiences a deadly guilt, and loses the sense of God's favor. Tolerance allows him to stay that way. Intolerance in respect to sin will humbly

insist that the brother confess his sin and forsake it, will restore him with the spirit of meekness, and cause him to experience the lifting up of God's countenance upon him. Again, what kind of love is it that allows a false gospel to be preached on the mission field, a gospel which cannot save? False teachers make a fair show in the flesh and with feigned words make merchandise of their hearers, but God does not use them for the gathering of His Church. If you have love for those who are as sheep without a shepherd, if you are concerned for the welfare of those who are God's children but as yet unconverted, then you will want the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ preached unto them. And that will require a position of intolerance toward all errors. John sums this up beautifully by saying, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Historically, toleration in religion and ethics shows itself to be deadly. The one example of the Edict of Toleration issued by Constantine in 313 will suffice. Although there were certain benefits for the Church due to this Edict, the disadvantages far outweighed them: the Church became wealthy and pre-occupied with material things; because the emperor favored Christianity, hordes of people joined the Church who had no business there, and they brought with them the

vices of the pagan world which resulted in a decline of spirituality and discipline; the Church forsook Christ and His Gospel and whored after secular and political matters. It is written large in the history of the church that toleration causes the life of the Church in this world to become sullied, her witness is dimmed, and her true message is put to silence.

The calling of the faithful child of God is, then, to be intolerant, uncompromising, and unbending in respect to doctrinal errors and all sin. His calling is to love God and his neighbor, and this calling he fulfills by standing on the Scriptures and speaking the Scriptures. He will then find that those that shout "Toleration!" the loudest will not be tolerant of him. J. Gresham Machen, writing in "The Importance of Christian Scholarship" (p. 27) notes that "The representatives of the dominant Modern-indifferentist forces have engaged in the most violent adjectival abuse of their opponents; yet they have been called sweet and beautiful and tolerant: the defenders of the Bible and of the historic position of the Church have spoken courteously, though plainly, in opposition, and have been called "bitter" and "extreme." Words like bitter, extreme, narrow-minded, old-fashioned, cannot hurt those who esteem the favour of Christ more than the favour of men.

What kind of church member do these latter days require? One who is vigilant, who stands firm in the faith, who behaves as a man and is strong!

Book Reviews

The Covenantal Sabbath

THE COVENANTAL SABBATH (The Weekly Sabbath Scripturally and Historically Considered), By Dr. Francis Nigel Lee; The Lord's Day Observance Society, London, United Kingdom (343 pages, 2.00 pounds) [Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema]

On the dust jacket of this book there is an interesting note about the author. However, I prefer to quote the author's own testimony as found in the Introduction of this book:

This thesis reflects part of the story of my life.

Born a Roman Catholic, for the first eight years of my life I was compelled to go to Church every Sunday, never understanding why. Yet between attending the morning mass and the evening benediction, extremely unfortunately, I then spent the greater part of Sunday in finding my own pleasure on God's holy sabbath (cf. Isa. 58:13).

At the age of eight, I was converted to atheism. This meant a total breach with all Church attendance,

and for the next fifteen years Sunday was my weekly vacation. The ecclesiastical holy day had become my personal holiday.

In the extreme mercies of Almighty God, at the age of twenty-one my soul was turned from my sinful ways to serve not the ecclesiastical tradition of fallible man, but to serve the living Lord according to His infallible Word — to serve Him in every sphere, including the sphere of sabbath observance.

But here my problems began. The Seventh-day Adventists told me that God would have me keep the sabbath from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. The Antinomians told me the weekly sabbath had been abolished in Christ's death, and that Sunday is not the sabbath and not to be kept as such, and that mere Church attendance suffices. The Modernists assured me that the whole issue was unimportant. And so I had to determine for myself: What saith the Scriptures?

My searching of the Scriptures against the claims of numerous Churches finally led me to *Calvinism*,

Here my weary soul found rest: rest in the immutable counsel of that glorious covenantal Being, the Triune God, Who made me, preserved me, saved me, is now sanctifying me and shall presently perfect me. Here I could rest in the great Seventh Day creation sabbath of God the Father, rest in its principal fulfilment in the death and Lord's day resurrection of God the Son, rest in the assurance of the glorious advent of God's Eighth Day, the Day of the Lord – an assurance guaranteed me by Him Who came on Pentecost Sunday to abide with me forever – God the Holy Spirit.

These then are the necessary presuppositions which govern my approach to the subject of this thesis. I would not leave the reader in any doubt as to my point of departure. I consider academic neutrality to be impossible, and affirm my childlike faith in the plenary verbal inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures as the very Word of God, their exclusive role as the supreme arbiter in all matters of faith and conduct, and their substantially correct reflection in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Decrees of Dordt, the Thirty-nine Articles and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The above language comes as a refreshing breeze on a hot and sultry day, and it promises much good in the pages of this book, a promise which is faithfully kept.

The book is a slight abridgement of the author's doctoral thesis, submitted to the University of Stellenbosch, Republic of South Africa. In the nature of the case, this is not an easy book for popular reading; it is a technical, theological, exegetical study,

and for that reason chiefly a book in which ministers and theologians would be interested.

But in a day when in some Reformed circles the sabbath has become an issue, this is a good book. It is Reformed. It is Scripturally founded. It is a sound study of the sabbath. I am afraid that the sabbath is under discussion in some Reformed circles today simply out of a desire to justify its desecration. This book, however, will furnish a sound and Scriptural antidote to the spirit of sabbath-desecration. It answers two questions, and answers them both affirmatively: "Is the sabbath of *perpetual* obligation?" and "Was the historical change of the sabbath-day from Saturday to Sunday *scriptural* or not?"

With the main thrust of this book I am in thorough and warm agreement. On some of the details I find myself in disagreement. And I was disturbed by the author's surprising failure to insist that the days of creation-week were ordinary 24-hour days. However, the book as a whole is to be recommended.

It is too bad, in my opinion, that the publishing of this work could not be more generously and attractively executed. The print is small, and the pages are crowded. The book is deserving of better treatment.

Ministers and theological students will do well to add this work to their libraries. Be prepared, however, to put on your thinking-cap!

[For those who might wish to order the book, here is the address: The Lord's Day Observance Society, 55 Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4, United Kingdom.]

Feed My Sheep

FEED MY SHEEP (A Manual for Sunday School Teachers, Superintendents, and Leaders), Compiled and Edited by John H. Schaal; Baker Book House, 1972; 162 pp., \$1.95 (paper). Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.

This book is intended to be of assistance in making the Sunday School a more effective educational force in the Church. I am not very happy with the book for various reasons. One important omission in the book is a discussion of the history of the Sunday School movement, its proper place in the life of the Church – especially in relationship to Catechetical instruction and the specific purpose which it ought to serve. The unexpressed assumption of the book seems to be that all the instruction in the Church must be in the Sunday School, and thus there is an implied denial of the official task of the Church in Catechetical instruction. Another facet of the book which warrants far more

study than is given, is the Sunday School as an arm of evangelism. A great deal is made of this in the book and several chapters refer to it. But the fact of the matter is that, while certainly the Sunday School is not even a part of the official ministry of the Church, making the Sunday School an evangelistic force in the Church is a denial of the doctrine of the covenant. The idea is, of course, to get children from the community into the Sunday School where, hopefully, they will be saved; and perhaps this will also make it possible to get into the homes of these children. Yet the whole truth of the covenant emphasizes that God saves families; i.e., God saves parents and their children. There is little or no recognition of this important truth. Further, there is too much emphasis placed in the book on "gadgets" and too little on sound instruction.

Nevertheless, there is some profit in reading the book for those who teach in Sunday Schools. There are some good chapters on the nature of a child,

effective ways of teaching, various means of making Sunday School more interesting, etc. If our teachers

will read the book with spiritual discernment, it will, I am sure, be of some assistance to them in their task.

Farewell To Anglicanism

FAREWELL TO ANGLICANISM, by H. M. Carson; Henry E. Walter Ltd., 26 Grafton Road, Worthing; 1969; 144 pp., 7/6 (paper). Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.

The author of this very interesting book was ordained in the Anglican Church. He served in the church for a number of years and was Vicar at St. Paul's Cambridge. But he had increasing doubts about his place in that Church and finally, in 1965, left to join the nonconformist movement in England. This book, written in 1969, is a description of his spiritual pilgrimage as he struggled with the problems of conscience which finally led him to resign his vicarage and become a minister in a Baptist Church. The book deals primarily with his reasons for leaving.

There were several such reasons. He was convinced of the principal wrong of Establishmentarianism, especially the control of the Church by Parliament. He became increasingly dissatisfied with the prescribed and repetitious rituals of the Prayer Book. He had objections to the whole idea of the episcopate. He was disillusioned with the worldliness and liberalism of the clergy and with the spiritual weakness of the people who only came to Church to have their marriage confirmed and their children baptized, and who were carried into Church to be buried under Anglican rites.

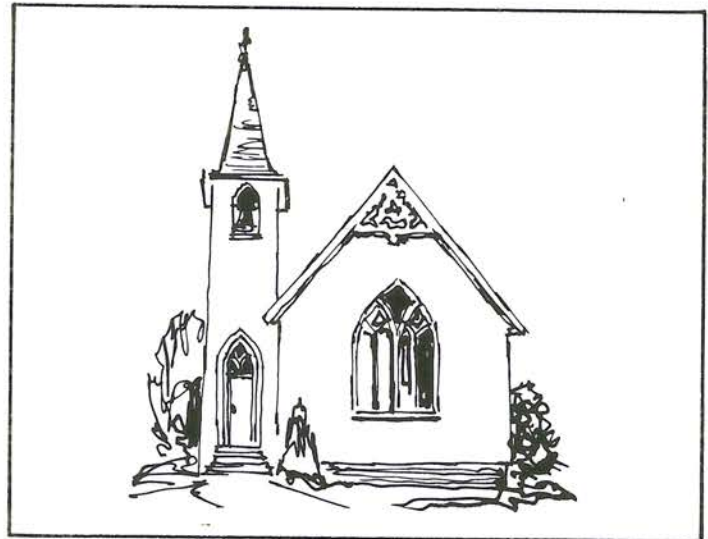
In the vows he had taken at the time of his induction he had pledged to be faithful to the Anglican system; and this increasingly nagged at his soul and conscience.

But one of his chief reasons for leaving was his increasing conviction that infant baptism was contrary to the requirements of Scripture. This part of the book is most interesting because the author examines closely all the arguments which have been raised over the years in support of infant baptism and finds them wanting. Nevertheless, one becomes increasingly convinced while reading this material that there are other reasons why the author abandoned the doctrine of infant baptism. One such reason is his vehement protest against baptismal regeneration. Another reason is an altogether defective view of the covenant. When he talks about the grounds for infant baptism as being covenantal grounds, it is quite obvious that he does not understand the doctrine of Scripture at this point. One wonders what would have happened had he thoroughly understood this central truth of Scripture.

At any rate, the book is well worth reading. There are various reasons why it is important. One such

reason is that it gives insights into the situation in the modern Anglican Church. Another reason is that it is a clear apology for secession. It has thus considerable importance for all those who are in similar situations, whether they are members of an Anglican Church or some other denomination.

The style is clear, lucid, and lively. The book is heartily recommended.



NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on April 4, 1973 in Southeast Prot. Ref. 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 the session.

Jon Huiskens
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, extends its sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. M. Haveman, in the death of her brother,

ANDREW HOLSTEGE.

May our covenant God comfort her and grant her His peace.

Mrs. J. Van Kampen, Pres.
Mrs. T. Elzinga, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

Probably the most exciting news for this issue is that of the organization of the new Protestant Reformed congregation in the Grandville-Jenison area. The organizational meeting, preceded by a divine worship service, was held in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, of Grand Rapids, on February 23. The public was invited to the divine worship, and was privileged, also, to witness the organization procedure itself.

Prof. Hanko preached on I Timothy 3:15b, "... the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Immediately after the sermon, the nineteen families which were to become the new church's charter members, presented their membership papers. Rev. Van Overloop, assisted by a couple of elders from Hope Church, presided during the conduct of the necessary business. An open election was held for the office of elder and deacon. Three elders were chosen: Herman Schipper (vice-president), Gerrit Vanden Top, and John Van Baren (clerk). The two elected deacons were Franklin Block and David Ondersma. After the election, Rev. Van Overloop read the form for ordination, and the new officebearers were officially installed. After the organizational meeting, the doxology was sung by all present, and Rev. Van Overloop pronounced the benediction. Most of you who are reading these lines were not able to be present in Hope Church on that memorable occasion. Neither was this writer. But we can, I think, sense some of the excitement, even from a second-hand account. To quote from Southeast's February 25 bulletin, "may God be praised for this token of His loving kindness!"

I could probably pass on a couple of related items of interest. The new church began, as we mentioned, with nineteen families on the charter member list. Of these nineteen, ten came from Hope, four from Hudsonville, three from First, and two from Southeast. And, we're told, the papers of two more families will be received, shortly, from Hudsonville. The new church includes, already, thirty-four young children; and no less than three baptisms will take place in the first few weeks of the church's existence.

The congregation plans to meet temporarily in the auditorium of Jenison Christian Junior High School. The consistory has asked the Classical Committee for a Counselor, and for classical appointments. Their first church service (Sunday, February 25) was led by Professor Hanko. Seminarian Joosten led the evening service on that day.

Suggestions for a name for the new church were to have been dropped in the collection plates on Sunday, March 4. And a trio for minister will probably have been announced before these lines appear in print. So, perhaps in our next issue we'll be able to provide some additional information.

Classis West was scheduled to meet, as you know, in South Holland on March 7. I understand that there was a Ministers' Conference planned for Tuesday, March 6. The ministers and elder-delegates of Classis West were to arrive in South Holland a day early; and the ministers, professors, and the seminary and pre-seminary students would join them from the east. Activities were to include a 9:00 A.M. paper on "Pentecostalism," presented by Rev. Decker, and followed by a discussion period; a 1:00 P.M. paper on "The Power, Work, and Fruit of the Holy Spirit," delivered by Rev. Van Baren, followed, again, by a discussion period; and, to cap it all, a dinner together in the evening.

It seems that all of the Protestant Reformed ministers would be present at that Conference, except for Rev. Heys and Rev. Lubbers who are laboring in Jamaica, and Rev. Veldman who, you recall, has been sent by the Mission Committee to try to lay the groundwork for a Protestant Reformed Church in Florida.

I've just noticed that some of the bulletins in my reserve box are beginning to turn a little yellow. Perhaps I ought to do a little box cleaning.

How about this, from a September bulletin from First Church? The highlight of the annual church picnic was, of all things, an *ox roast*. Cooked all day, on a turning spit!

And from a *June* bulletin of Hull, we learn that the annual 4th of July picnic was a joint affair, including all three of our Protestant Reformed Churches in that area.

One more, yet. An announcement from an October, Southeast bulletin, indicates the formation of a new society — a *Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society*. With that, the announcement continued, "we will have a society in this church for every teenager and adult. Let everyone resolve to join with the society of his choice, and then resolve to faithfully attend."

I shouldn't neglect my box . . . obviously. D. D.