

# The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## Editorials

## Editor's Notes

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Our agent for Australasia has had a change of address which should be noted by our readers "down under." His address is now: W. van Rij, 59 Kent Lodge Avenue, Christchurch 4, New Zealand.

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Our Business Manager informed me that included with this issue will be a green insert with a repeat of the combination book and subscription offers which appeared earlier. Response has been very encouraging.

This will be the last opportunity this year to take advantage of these very special bargains. Remember, too, that these will make excellent Christmas gifts. Send in your order promptly!

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We call your attention to the reappearance in this issue of the department *In His Fear*, under the editorship of Rev. Dale H. Kuiper. He begins with treatment of a timely subject. Look it up, and see for yourself!

## Should OPs and RPs Unite? (2)

## CORRESPONDENCE AND REPLY

From the Rev. John J. Mitchell, Editor of *The Presbyterian Guardian*, published by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, I received the following letter in reaction to my recent editorial (Sept. 15 issue) on this

subject:

Dear Professor Hoeksema:

It is certainly enlightening to read another's reaction to what one has written. Your editorial, "Should OPs



and RPs Unite" was indeed interesting in showing how an outsider views our affairs.

There are, of course, some matters on which your judgment differs from ours. For example: The "Declaratory Statement" of the Bible Presbyterian Church, which you quote, is not Arminian. The first article is clearly in accord with the Westminster Confession of Faith, and is the traditional doctrine of Presbyterian churches. In brief, both OPs and RPs, as well as Bible Presbyterians, would agree that the offer of salvation is freely extended to all men, is sufficient for the sins of all men, but is applied only to the elect who repent and believe under the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. This is the position set forth in *The Free Offer of the Gospel* by Murray and Stonehouse.

Nor do I agree that "an ecclesiastical marriage should be transacted either with complete enthusiasm or not at all." This is not of the same order as a marriage between two individuals. We are not free to deal with Christ's church on our own emotional bases. If we are one in faith and practice (which of course is the crucial question here), then we ought to be one in organizational matters also. Our hesitancy with respect to the Christian Reformed Church is due precisely to our questions about doctrinal agreement. And the hesitations we still may feel toward the R.P. Church are also in that area. If they can be cleared satisfactorily, then there should be union — and it should be with enthusiasm for the work of Christ's church.

I agree with you that "Christian liberty" remains one of the more basic problem areas, though there has been real progress there. On the matter of eschatological views, neither the O.P. nor the R.P. Church has an official position; there is, we would prefer to say, freedom in this area rather than "neutrality." Dispensationalism is, of course, quite another matter; neither church officially allows for that.

In sum, I would judge that few if any of us are concerned about the millennial question, so long as no one is agitating for his view to be the only tolerated one. Probably also the question of "Christian liberty" is not the problem it once was, though it could again become an issue. At least, I do not see either of these, given the evidence available concerning the opinions of office-bearers in both denominations about them, as sufficient to bar a merger.

But it is with the matter of alleged Arminianism that I am most concerned. I do not at all agree with you that the Murray-Stonehouse booklet, or the "treatment of Dr. Clark in by-gone years," indicates any weakness at all in the O.P.C. over against Arminianism. The basic question then and now is simply whether or not God makes a sincere offer to any and all men when he says, "Whosoever will may come," or, "Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

It is not Arminian to insist that there is a sincere and free offer of salvation from God; in fact, that there is such an offer will become part of the condemnation of those who refuse to come to the light. It is Arminian to say that grace is given to all, or that God has a redemptive love for all, or that all men are naturally able to respond to God's free offer. It is unPresbyterian to say to a mixed audience that "God loves you." It is not unPresbyterian to say to such a group, "God promises salvation to each and everyone here who will repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." That is a fact, and thanks be to God that he sends forth his Spirit into the hearts of his elect that they might be "made willing and able freely to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered" in the gospel (*Larger Catechism*, Q. 67).

Thank you again for your "outsider's" review; it is appreciated. And your concern for the future of these Presbyterian churches is also much appreciated. I hope these comments of mine may give further light into the state of our affairs and beliefs.

Cordially in Christ,  
(signed) John J. Mitchell

PS: I would be gratified if you could publish this letter in *The Standard Bearer*. More knowledge, in both directions, of PRs, OPs, and RPs could be of mutual help to us all. But you are the editor!

J.J.M.

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**Reply.** First of all, a hearty word of thanks to the Rev. Mitchell for his cordial and interesting and enlightening letter. I gladly publish it; and I agree, too, that "More knowledge, in both directions, of PRs, OPs, and RPs could be of mutual help to us all." I appreciate especially the frankness with which Editor Mitchell writes, and I hope that this can be the beginning of a friendly discussion. In a private letter, in which I requested a bit more information, I have suggested to the Rev. Mitchell that it would be nice if the *Presbyterian Guardian* would also carry our discussion, although I realize that the *Presbyterian Guardian* might have problems doing this because of lack of space and due to the fact that it is not published as frequently as our magazine.

In the second place, in this part of my reply I want to concentrate, first of all, on certain areas of substantial agreement between the Rev. Mitchell and myself, in order then to pin-point the areas in which we apparently do not see eye to eye. Later I expect to write in some detail on those points on which we disagree.

What are those areas of substantial agreement?

In the first place, I believe we are agreed about the matter of transacting an ecclesiastical marriage with enthusiasm. By my reference to enthusiasm I surely



did not intend to suggest that we should deal with Christ's church *on our own emotional bases*. (Incidentally, I don't believe that to be true of the marriage between two individuals either.) I agree that there should be unity in faith and practice. I agree that this is indeed the crucial question. And I believe that exactly where there is such unity in faith and practice, an ecclesiastical marriage can be and ought to be consummated with complete enthusiasm.

In the second place, the Rev. Mitchell evidently agrees with me that such a reason for enthusiastic marriage is not yet there. For he writes of "hesitancy" exactly in some areas regarding faith and practice. I have a question here. Perhaps Editor Mitchell can clarify this. Is the 1972 decision of the O.P. General Assembly to be understood as only a conditional approval of the Basis of Union? And is it still theoretically possible that the next Assembly will not be satisfied as to the improvements made in the statement and might therefore reject it? And is it not, therefore a bit premature to draw up a Plan of Union before there is assurance of agreement on the Basis of Union?

*In the third place, I am in agreement as to the hesitancy of the O.P. Church with respect to questions of doctrinal agreement with the Christian Reformed Church.* I commend the O.P. Church for its insistence that these questions be satisfactorily answered. Having followed the OPC-CRC discussions in as far as they were made public, I am aware that they involved in part the issues of the so-called "Dekker Case." Although I shall discuss the matter of the "offer of the gospel" later, I would remind Rev. Mitchell that the Arminianism of the "Dekker Case" and the inability of the CRC to cope with it are rooted historically in the Christian Reformed doctrine of the "well-meant offer." And I would also caution that the OPC should be as careful and insistent with respect to true unity with the RPC as with the CRC.

In the fourth place, I believe that Editor Mitchell and I are in agreement that there is no unity in the area of eschatology, specifically with respect to premillennialism. Apparently we are not agreed as to the importance of this lack of unity. About this later.

In the fifth place, I believe we are agreed that the matter of "Christian liberty" between the two

denominations is not completely settled, even to the extent that it "could again become an issue." I have a question here. Why does not the Basis of Union deal frankly with this matter? I have the impression — and I stand to be corrected — that the Preamble of the Basis of Union *skirts* this issue rather than deal with it directly. And in my opinion, this can only give rise to "hesitancy."

In the sixth place, I agree with Rev. Mitchell that "It is not unPresbyterian to say to such a group (a mixed audience), 'God promises salvation to each and everyone here who will repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.'" But I hasten to add: 1) That this is not the same as an offer. 2) That even as to the form of its words it is a promise, which is by no means the same as an offer. 3) That it is a *particular* promise, i.e., "to each and everyone here who will repent and believe." 4) That, therefore, this is nothing but the thoroughly Presbyterian and Reformed doctrine of the general proclamation of a particular promise.

In the seventh place, I am also in agreement that it is Arminian to say that grace is given to all, or that God has a redemptive love for all, and that it is "unPresbyterian to say to a mixed audience that 'God loves you.'"

For the rest, there are, I think, some substantial areas of disagreement. Let me mention them:

1) The Basis of Union speaks of "neutrality" in eschatological views. Rev. Mitchell prefers to speak of "freedom." For my part, I do not believe that there is room under the Presbyterian confessions for premillennialism, not even for the non-dispensationalist type. Moreover, especially in our times, when eschatology is again on the forefront in theology, I believe that there should be unity in faith on this matter.

2) We are evidently at variance on the matter of Arminianism, both with respect to the Bible Presbyterian "Declaratory Statement" and with respect to the so-called Clark Case and the booklet, "The Free Offer of the Gospel."

To both of these matters I hope to give some detailed attention in future issues of our magazine.

Once again, thank you, Rev. Mitchell, for writing. And: call again!





## Meditation

# Blessing The Lord

*Rev. M. Schipper*

*"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah."*

*Psalm 68:19.*

There is nothing in this text which would indicate that the psalmist had in mind a special day of thanksgiving — a day in which the church of Christ would assemble to bless the Lord for the benefits He so graciously bestowed on us as evidenced in an abundant harvest. Fact of the matter is, the text, on the very surface of it, leaves the impression that the psalmist conceived of each day as a thanksgiving day. And so it ought to be.

We are not interested at this point in discussing the propriety or impropriety of a special Thanksgiving Day, except to say that we believe it to be in the realm of consistency to continue our annual Thanksgiving Day so long as we also continue to keep our annual Day of Prayer. Consistency demands that if we gather in our houses of prayer to ask the Lord's blessing upon the seed that is planted, it would be the height of ingratitude not to gather in those same houses of prayer after the harvest has been gathered to give thanks unto the Lord for having heard our prayer. But it should be abundantly clear to all that neither prayer for God's blessing, nor thanksgiving for His blessings should be limited only to a day. As suggested above, the psalmist by implication suggests that every day ought to be a thanksgiving day, because daily the Lord loadeth us with benefits.

Moreover, it ought also to be observed that the psalmist looked upon those things he calls daily benefits only as they are related to our salvation. He does not exhort us to bless the Lord merely because we receive an abundance of benefits. Rather he sees all that with which the Lord loadeth us as benefits only because he sees the Lord making all things to be subservient to our salvation. Very plainly the implication is that the abundance of things we receive of the Lord are no benefits at all unless they are related to our salvation.

With all this in mind, let us consider, first of all, what it means to bless the Lord.

The object of blessing is the Lord!

And the Lord, in our text, is He Who is Our Ruler, Master, Possessor, and Defender. Here is not an instance where the term "Lord" should be translated "Jehovah," as the case so often is in the Old Testament Scriptures. But the term used in the text and

throughout the Psalm, is ADONAI, meaning, Lord. It is evidently, then, the intention of the Psalmist to point to God as the most excellent One, Who must be submissively and reverently addressed, as well as humbly served and adored.

Blessed be the Lord!

The God of our salvation!

Here God the Lord is looked upon as the Strong One, the Almighty. Whose is all power, might, and dominion. Striking, it is, that no less than thirty times God is so named in this Psalm. The psalmist begins by saying: "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him." A little later he says: "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." And the psalmist closes the Psalm with: "Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. O, God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God."

That He is the God of our salvation, means that He is the God of Jesus. And Jesus is Jehovah, Who alone saves. This mighty God of our salvation came down in the Person of Jesus, Who assumed our nature in which He saved us.

Blessed be the Lord, Who is the God of our salvation!

He Who is in Himself the most blessed One! Who needs not be worshipped by men's hands as though He needed anything. The All-Sufficient God is He. Who is blessed apart from any blessing that may be ascribed to Him. Fact is that the translators have added to the text the copulative verb "be," which appears in italics in our King James version, indicating that it does not appear in the original text. So that we may translate "Blessed the Lord, Who daily loadeth us." And this would imply that the Lord is blessed in Himself. That God is blessed means that He is the good God, the All-Sufficient One; Who is praise-worthy because of His goodness. All of His attributes are indicative of His blessedness.

Just because of His blessedness, He is to be blessed!

When we bless the Lord, the ever blessed God of our salvation, it is that act whereby we humbly bow before



Him and then point to Him as our Benefactor. One who blesses the Lord is deeply conscious of his own unworthiness, of his own insignificance. To bless Him is to say from the heart that we are nothing, and He is all. To bless the Lord is to acknowledge that we are empty, and that He, Who is the sole fountain of all goodness, must fill us. It means that we acknowledge that we can never remunerate Him, that we are most unworthy of the least of His benefits. It means that we are nothing, and have nothing of ourselves, but that all our fulness is of Him alone. And this is not a matter of a moment, or of a special day, but it is the purpose of creation, of recreation, of the continual preservation of all things, unto all eternity — that God may be blessed.

Blessed be the Lord!

Who daily loadeth us with benefits!

The term “benefits” also appears in italics in the King James version, which means that the original text has simply: “day by day he loadeth us.” The Revised Version has: “Day by day he beareth to (or for) us.” Both of these translations are acceptable. Both fit nicely with the preceding verse, where the psalmist declares: “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” The apostle Paul offers us a commentary on this verse in his letter to the Ephesians (4:8): “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” Here he is no doubt speaking of Christ Jesus, Who had received gifts intended for men in His glorious ascension. Christ gives these gifts which He received unto men.

This is the reason why the Lord should be blessed!

Daily He loadeth us, or beareth to us, benefits!

Oh, how many are the benefits He lavishly bestows upon us!

Like refreshing water that flows from an artesian well to the thirsty traveler. He slakes his thirst, yet the waters keep on flowing. They never stop. So the benefits continually flow unto the children of God. There is land, more than they can use. There is air, more than they can breathe. There is water, more than they can drink. There is light, more than they need. When they are cold, He clothes and shelters them from the blast of winter. When they are tired, He gives His beloved rest. Never are the righteous forsaken, nor is his seed begging bread. In our affluent times it becomes so evident that He gives us not only our bare necessities, but riches besides.

But as we suggested above, most likely the psalmist was not even thinking of these material gifts. He undoubtedly had in mind the spiritual gifts. That is why he hastens to add: “The God of our salvation.”

It appears that we could miss all the material things we mentioned, and still we would have abundance. Think of Lazarus who lay at the foot of the rich man’s table. Or, did you think that here was a case where the

poor child of God could not sing: “He lavishes daily upon me His benefits?”

Understand well, shall there be a Thanksgiving Day, a day in which we bless the God of our salvation, it must be true that the rich and poor alike, that is, of God’s people, shall be able to bless the Lord and sing: “Bless the Lord, Who daily loadeth us with benefits.” And they should together sing, because God is the God of their salvation.

Thanksgiving and blessing is not a national virtue, nor is it an activity of all men without distinction.

All men may receive rain and sunshine, bread and water in abundance. God, in His providence, gives an abundant harvest to the wicked as well as to the righteous. Sometimes, as was the case with Asaph (Psalm 73), the Lord gives more to the wicked than He does to the righteous. But the Lord does not give unto the wicked His grace and salvation. Therefore the wicked with all of his abundance receives no benefits. Therefore also the wicked do not, nor can they bless the Lord. Without grace it is impossible to bless the Lord. Oh, indeed, the wicked can rejoice in things; but in their prosperity the favor of God is not upon them. His face is against them that do evil. He is angry with the wicked every day. In their prosperity He sets their feet upon slippery places to cast them down to destruction. The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord. How shall they give thanks who taste not the Lord’s favor? How shall they give thanks who hold the truth under in unrighteousness, who care not for the Lord’s glory?

Shall there be anyone to bless the Lord, that one must first be blessed!

These are they who are addressed by the psalmist. They are they who in principle have tasted the Lord’s salvation.

On bended knee they humbly confess their own unworthiness of any of Jehovah’s benefits. With a deep sense of humility they acknowledge that the Lord is their Master and Sovereign. They point away from themselves to their Benefactor Who makes all things, prosperity and poverty, health and sickness, life and death, work together for their salvation. And in the center of all the lovingkindnesses of their Lord they see Jesus, the God of their salvation blessing them with gifts from on high.

Their Jesus, Who came to them of the Father, to assume their nature and to take upon Himself the curse that was due to them, and bear it all away before the tribunal of the righteous and holy God. Their Jesus, Whom God raised from the dead, because He was righteous, and had merited righteousness for all His people given Him of the Father. Him God raised unto the highest heavens and gave gifts unto Him, in order that He in turn might lade us with all His benefits. That Jesus Who pours out into our hearts the grace of God whereby they in turn may respond, exclaiming



that He is blessed forevermore, Who is, indeed, the  
 God of our salvation.  
 Blessed be the Lord!

The God of our salvation!  
 Amen, and amen!

## Question Box

# About The Elder Son

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

From a Michigan reader I received the following inquiry:

"I have this question concerning the Lord's parable of the prodigal son. Recently I heard this parable interpreted to mean that the elder son, who remained at home, was lost because he did not accept his father's invitation to go into the feast, which was interpreted to mean the church. Also that the younger son was the only saved one because he returned to the father. Would you please answer in the *Standard Bearer*, which we as a family enjoy so much because of its Reformed teachings."

### REPLY

First of all, thank you for that encouraging last line of your letter. You can pay the *Standard Bearer* no higher compliment than that!

In the second place, let the reader look up the text of this parable in Luke 15:11-32. Because of its length, I will not quote the entire parable, but only refer to the text as necessary, assuming that the reader has his Bible open to the passage.

In the third place, I think it is important to pay careful attention to the *occasion* of this parable (as of all three parables in this chapter). That occasion is found in vss. 1 and 2: "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." The fact that the publicans and sinners came to hear Jesus was enough to make the Pharisees and scribes, self-righteous as they were, grumble and criticize. And to this all of these parables constitute Jesus' answer, each time from a different point of view. Briefly, I would say that the purpose of the parable of the prodigal son is to picture the beauty of forgiving love and the joy of a forgiven soul on the dark background of cold, legalistic, sham obedience.

As to the interpretation suggested by my questioner, I have the following comments:

1) There is but one point on which I agree, namely, that the younger son in the parable represents a sinner who is saved, while the elder son represents one who is lost. I hasten to add, however, that this is *as such* not the point of the parable.

2) The younger son does not represent one who is saved *because* he repented. Repentance (return to the Father) is never the *cause* of salvation. One is saved because of Christ's atonement and because of God's work of grace in him, and *in the way of repentance*. In fact, we may say that the younger son's resolve to arise and go unto his father was due to the drawing power of the father's love and was motivated by the conviction of his father's love. Thus it is also in spiritual reality.

3) The feast in the parable does not represent the church, nor is the elder son lost *because* he did not accept his father's invitation to join the feast. In the parable the element of the feast simply serves to represent the idea of *rejoicing*, of joy over the return of the lost son. In this joy the elder son did not join, thereby manifesting his own wrong attitude and relation to his father as well as to his younger brother. Nor does the parable intend to teach that God *invites* scribes and Pharisees to rejoice over the repentance of publicans and sinners, much less *invites* them into the church. The fact of matter is that the scribes and Pharisees, who are represented by the elder son, *were* church members and considered themselves to be "the cream of the crop."

All of the above, however, does not say very much of a positive nature as to the meaning of the parable. Hence, I will try to explain briefly.

We all recognize at once that the picture of this elder son is a very doleful, dismal, gloomy picture. He is a cold, grumbling, servile character. And his unattractive character stands out the more because of the contrast with the younger son and the contrast with the joy that is inside the house as this elder son returns from the field.

The chief question seems to be: who is that elder son? Whom does he represent? And many answers have been attempted. According to some, he is one of those wicked Pharisees on account of whom Jesus was speaking this parable. We sense at once that there is something about the elder son which points to the Pharisees. But what about some elements in the parable, such as "I never transgressed any of thy commandments," and, "Son, thou art ever with me,



and all that I have is thine," if Jesus has in view the Pharisees? We can readily understand that without further definition these elements are hardly intelligible as part of the picture of a wicked Pharisee, a "whitewashed sepulchre."

Others find in the elder son a picture of the Jew, in distinction from the picture of the Gentile in the younger son. But there is no direct reference to these two in the parable or in the context. The context shows rather plainly that the difference has to do with the publicans and Pharisees.

Others have even attempted to make of the elder son a faithful covenant child. However, the elder son does not acknowledge his returned brother; and he does not want to enter into the joy of his father. This, therefore, can hardly be.

Almost desperately, some have referred the elder

son to the world of angels. Apart from any other objections, however, the Lord Jesus always pictures the angels as rejoicing, while the elder son's grumbling dissatisfaction over the reception of the younger son is his chief characteristic in the parable.

I believe that the elder son is the Pharisee, indeed. But he is the Pharisee as he himself conceived himself to be, that is: the ideal man of Phariseism, who had obeyed to the last jot and tittle. He is the picture of the perfect son of the law — something like the rich young ruler in his own estimation, who said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." And by means of this part of the parable the Lord Jesus brings into sharp focus the dismal features of such an "ideal son of the law" in distinction from the beauty of the repenting sinner.

(to be continued)

## All Around Us

# More On Evangelism Thrust

Prof. H. Hanko

More than once in these columns we have discussed the so-called "Key '73" program which, in the Christian Reformed Church, is called "Evangelism Thrust." We have discussed and criticized the entire program and written a report on the book "Who In The World?" which is intended to serve as guidelines for participation in this program.

In the October, 1972 issue of *Outlook*, Rev. Heerema discusses a brochure entitled "Called To Serve" which is produced by the Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church and is intended to be used by all the congregations which participate in the Evangelism Thrust Program. In his article, Rev. Heerema charges that the book is not simply a "strategy for evangelism" as it claims to be, but is a "strategy for the *remaking of the Christian Reformed Church*" (The emphasis is his.)

This is a serious charge. We are aware of the fact that the book "Who In The World?" is indeed a call to alter the entire structure of the Church; but that book was an unofficial publication. Here is a pamphlet which is official. It has the backing of and is published by a Synodical Committee. Does this book do this too?

Rev. Heerema asserts in his article that "Called To Serve" is based upon "Who In The World?" and follows the same general pattern. He makes various quotes from the brochure to prove his point and insists that the entire brochure goes beyond the Synodical

decision which brought the Christian Reformed Church into the "Key '73" program. This decision reads: "that 'each denomination' conduct the program 'in keeping with the principles and practices of the denomination.'" It is Heerema's contention that this brochure violates this Synodical decision.

We obtained the booklet to check up for ourselves whether or not this all was true. We are convinced that it is and that Heerema is completely correct in his allegations. If the Christian Reformed Church follows this booklet, the entire denomination will be completely changed in its structure, so that it will no longer resemble in any essential way the institutional form which it now has.

There are, I think, particularly three areas in which this is true.

Before we enter into them a bit more in detail, it might be wise to make the general observation that, in some respects, this is a crafty book. Nowhere does the brochure explicitly call for radical change of any kind. There is no single passage which one can quote and which can serve as proof that Heerema's contention is true. The book rather contents itself with asking questions which call into one's mind doubts about the present form of institutional life in the Church and which suggest radical alternatives. Or, abandoning questions, the book will draw up a list of alternatives to present practices — alternatives which also would require a fundamental change in the Church — and will



ask the reader to make a choice between these alternatives. Perhaps some quotes from the book will demonstrate what is meant.

The first area in which the book suggests radical change is in the *content* of the preaching. This is not really so surprising, for, even apart from the "Evangelism Thrust" program, there have been radical changes in the content of the preaching for many years; and indeed, the Church has discussed various problems in connection with the content of the preaching on different occasions. (Cf. e.g., the controversies over the question of the universal love of God and general atonement.) Nevertheless, this book makes a considerable point of this matter. On page 9 we read:

From Genesis through Revelation, is the *central* message good news or bad news? . . .

What of condemnation, judgment, hell? Surely the Bible mentions a dark side . . . But is that dark side the message which we are to deliver? . . .

1. Would you agree with this statement?

"The bad news isn't news at all; it is just a description of the mess man is in, of what man has done with himself. The good news is news; it is God's announcement of what He has done — something lost man would not know if it were not announced by God Himself. Until man hears about a way out, he cannot afford to admit his sin."

It seems clear that the point here is that the preaching must never speak of judgment and God's wrath against sin. But what then is to be done with the statement of the Heidelberg Catechism? ". . . according to the command of Christ, it is declared and publicly testified . . . to all unbelievers, and such as do not sincerely repent, that they stand exposed to the wrath of God, and eternal condemnation, so long as they are unconverted: according to which testimony of the gospel, God will judge them, both in this, and in the life to come."

Or again, the cross of Christ is defined in these words:

Jesus died to bring men out of the tombs. He rose and sent His Spirit to bring men out of the prison cells of loneliness into the freedom of life in communion." (p. 25)

We could quote more. But the point is that this is a very superficial and incorrect presentation of the gospel. There is no mention anywhere in the book of such important doctrines as sovereign predestination, vicarious atonement, the application of the blessings of salvation, etc. In fact, the book is decidedly Arminian when it writes concerning faith:

Faith is believing by opening one's life to Christ — so that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (p. 27)

Where in all this are the glorious doctrines of sovereign grace? They simply do not exist.

The second area in which radical change is

recommended is in the method of bringing the gospel. It is true that the brochure lists preaching as "*one* form of teaching"; (p. 21) but it strongly suggests that the Church's calling is much broader than that, and even talks about more effective ways of "communicating the gospel." This is partly because an altogether inadequate definition is given of preaching. The Scriptures make it very clear that preaching is the authoritative proclamation of the Word of God by one who is called to be an ambassador of Christ by Christ Himself. The book (p. 21) defines preaching as "solemn, public declaration" and "an urging to change one's ways, a summons to faith and action." But the book goes on to say: (p. 23)

1. We remember 20% of what we hear.

We remember 40% of what we hear and see illustrated.

We remember 60% of what we hear, see illustrated, discuss, and we remember 80% of what we hear, see illustrated, discuss and do.

If the church wanted to make communication of the gospel more effective, how could the above findings of psychology be applied to such activities of the church as:

a. preaching?

b. societies, study groups?

c. catechism, Sunday School?

2. The idea of building each other up suggests a lot of dialogue — of sharing personal experiences and problems — of listening to others, etc. Do you think that your church community provides opportunity where people can share honestly their problems and questions?

3. If I had to choose an experience for a person whom I wanted to strongly influence, I would choose the following:

a. Have him hear a good sermon or lecture on the subject.

b. Have him hear a good sermon or lecture on the subject and then have a discussion about it.

c. Have him sit down with a small group of people who all believe the way I want him to be influenced to believe.

d. Have a private talk with him.

e. A combination of the above.

So, according to this book, psychology is going to tell us how to "communicate the gospel," and the Word of God has nothing any more to say about this.

In the third area of change the booklet talks especially about the changes which are necessary in the institutional life of the Church to make the gospel effective in the community.

It asks first of all what worship is. It answers this by using two key words: "celebration" and "edification." Now while these are no doubt important parts of worship, why is it that the book presents these as an exhaustive list? Surely, all Scripture speaks of the purpose of the worship services as being above all the



*praise of God.* Nothing is as important as this.

But with this kind of explanation of worship, one gets conclusions which are also bound to be wrong. The booklet says: (p. 39)

Summary. Our concern has been to answer the question: What is the assembly for? Our answer is: for celebration and edification. Now we may anticipate the next question: What activities in the assembly will best accomplish those purposes? If the best activities are engaged in to accomplish these purposes, then we may be confident that the church will be made ready for a life of obedient and joyful worship.

So you have this:

- c. Evaluate the following possibilities for planning our assemblies: (by which is meant worship services)
  - 1) A one-hour assembly for celebration and edification for everyone.
  - 2) An assembly for everyone except the very young who do not understand what is happening and are often hard to control for an hour in the pew.
  - 3) A nursery for the very young, an assembly for children through age twelve, and another assembly for all others.
  - 4) Everyone attends all the assemblies, but the first Sunday of each month is designed for children, the second for youth, the third for the middle-aged, and the fourth for the elderly.

After a discussion of the important place the sermon has occupied in the worship service since the time of the Reformation, a long series of questions is asked all of which are particularly geared to cast doubts on the importance and effectiveness of the sermon in modern worship services. Obviously, in this book, the sermon is suspect.

Turning to the institute itself in its offices, etc. the following paragraphs are quoted almost at random:

Based on your study of how things went in the early church, decide which of the following statements would most likely have been made by one of its members:

a. "Well, now, let's see. Where can we fit him into our present structure and organization? We should be able to find a job for him somewhere. Are there any vacancies?"

b. "The Holy Spirit is using George to bring neighbors into the church. How can we serve George and others who have this gift? How can we change our structure to better respond to this working of the Spirit?" (p. 50)

Notice first what God did *not* give us. He did not give us a chart for the administrative setup of the

church. Although he gave offices in the church, He did not give us detailed job descriptions. For instance, nowhere in the New Testament is the office of deacon described; but there are strict requirements for the people who are to hold this office. (p. 51)

What would your church do if one of your lay members was found to be doing effective preaching in a "storefront church"?

Many strange things are happening these days. The Holy Spirit seems to be using unusual methods. Give some examples which you have read about. How do you judge them? By where they meet? By how they are dressed? By their order of worship? By the beat of their music? (p. 52)

What about your church? Are its structures continually being revised to meet the needs of the church and the world? What are the needs? (p. 54)

An artist was commissioned to capture on one canvas a contemporary picture which best communicated what the church was meant to be in this world. He painted six pictures, all of which were very good, and he now presents them to you for your choice:

1. A family, neatly dressed, walking up the steps of a church, with its high steeple pointing to the heavens.
2. A soldier in shining armor, carrying a cross, leading a charge against evil-looking men, striking them down with his flashing sword.
3. A high pulpit upon which is lying an open Bible, gold-edged, with a red marker lying in it. Behind the pulpit is a stained-glass window.
4. Against the background of people hurrying by on the sidewalk, a man, towel over his shoulder, cleaning the wounds and sores on the feet of a poorly-clad person.
5. A congregation made up of young and old, singing enthusiastically as the sun's rays slant in to the auditorium.
6. A young man on a busy street corner, open Bible in hand, earnestly talking to several individuals who appear to be listening attentively to his words.

Now you choose *one* . . . (p. 58)

And so we could go on. Rev. Heerema writes that if this booklet is followed, the Christian Reformed Church will go in an entirely different direction. We agree. It will go in a direction entirely opposite the direction which the Scriptures mark out. It will cease to be the Church of Christ. It will no longer manifest Christ's body in any respect in the world. This is serious. But one gets the impression that the authors and publishers of this booklet know this very well. What we cannot understand is that Heerema concludes his article with the words: "In a final word let it be said that the congregation of which the writer is pastor is participating in Evangelism Thrust and is using "Called To Serve, with emendations."



## From Holy Writ

# Pure and Undeiled Religion (3)

*Rev. Robert D. Decker*

*chap. 1:2-4, (continued)*

"My brethren" James writes. There is the affection of the love of God in this address, "My brothers." The inspired writer means to identify himself with the saints in the dispersion. He wants them to understand that he knows what they are experiencing in the divers temptations they encounter. They must be assured that the admonition of these verses and the sharp rebukes of the letter generally are meant for their eternal good. James writes out of the love of God for the brothers scattered abroad.

They must count it pure joy when they fall into divers temptations "knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." Here's the reason why they must count it all joy when they fall into temptations. By these their faith is tried and that tried faith produces patience in them.

Faith is the living bond that unites the child of God with his Savior. By faith we live in and out of Jesus Christ even as the branches live in the vine (John 15:1ff.) Through that living link all of the blessings of salvation merited by Christ become ours. Consciously, by faith, we know God as our gracious Father for Jesus' sake. He is the God of our salvation Who loved us eternally, gave us to Christ, and Who will love us forever. And, knowing God thus we are assured of salvation, victory, and everlasting life. Now then, this we must know, not just as some cold fact, but by the knowledge of experience, that the trying of our faith works patience.

God, in other words, uses the divers temptations to try our faith, and this is why we must count those temptations all joy. No, God does not tempt us. The very thought of that is blasphemy. God is the "Father of lights" Who gives every good and perfect gift, and Who cannot be tempted with evil, and Who tempteth no man. A man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. (cf. vss. 13-17) But God is God! He is Sovereign over all creatures and Satan is, for all his demonic power, but a creature. God causes all things to work for our salvation — even the temptations of the devil. The supreme example of this in the Scriptures is Job. Satan could not touch him apart from God.

What the text is saying then is that God uses the temptations of Satan for the trying of our faith. That term "trying" means to test out, or to prove. Now, God does not try our faith, test it out, to determine whether or not it is genuine. God's gift of faith is always genuine. Rather the idea of trying is that God purifies our faith; He gets rid of the impure elements by means of the fire of temptations. How we need just that! Our conscious believing, our knowledge and

convictions, our obedience, our striving after the Kingdom of Heaven; all of the activity of our faith is always mixed with the imperfections of the sin of our old nature. Often we are weak and faltering and so we need to be tried. And, when we fall into divers temptations and as a result have to fight and struggle and pray and suffer, we are driven to a deeper knowledge of God and a stronger confidence in His mercies. In the battle against Satan we learn not to rely on ourselves but to cling to Jesus and trust in our God. We look forward with growing hope to the glory that will be revealed in us at the return of the Saviour.

Still more, the trying of our faith works patience. It works that; i.e., it works out or accomplishes patience. A tried faith achieves a wonderful fruit, Patience. Patience is endurance, it's the "staying power" of the Christian. The word means to remain under and obviously implies suffering. This does not mean that we simply bear the burden of many temptations, or stoically, passively submit to whatever the Lord's way may be. Patience is not the attitude, "I might as well bear with it — whatever will be, will be, I can't do anything about it anyway." Patience is that virtue of the tried faith of the Christian which enables him to stand firmly in the battle of faith over against the host of temptations of the Evil One. It is that power by which we do not succumb to the evil. It's the strength which prevents us from faltering along the way. Or again, it's the power of faith by which we never lose hope, but press on in the struggle as more than conquerors through Him that loved us. In patience we face the world and the devil bravely and courageously with all our trust in the Almighty God of our salvation.

How do we experience the joy of temptations? Verse four supplies the answer: "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." "But . . .", the Lord knows we need admonition at this point! He knows our frame and He remembers that we are dust (Psalm 103). We made the point in the previous article that this is a difficult word to receive. To "count it all joy in divers temptations" is not easy. Not only so, this is an impossible Word for us. Exactly because of our sinful natures we do not count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations. We do one of two things and both are sinful, either we complain or we yield. Seldom are we bravely, joyfully bearing our crosses and in self-denial following Jesus. Our inclination is to avoid the offence of the cross by compromising the faith. So the Lord says: "let patience have her perfect work."



The adjective “perfect” is derived from the noun which means end, goal, purpose. The thought conveyed, then, is that we are to allow patience to work through in us to its goal. What James is saying is: “remain steadfast in the faith; stand in all the divers temptations, do not compromise or yield, no matter how narrow the way, severe the suffering, count everything loss for Christ’s sake.” Let patience have her complete work in you.

In that way the purpose of God is reached with us. The text expresses it thus: “in order that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” God wants us to be perfect: that is, complete, fully matured spiritually, molded perfectly into the image of Christ, conformed to His Son in the fullest sense. And entire this is a further explanation of “Perfect.” The word means complete in all its parts. No virtue of the grace of salvation must be missing. “Wanting nothing” expresses the same thought negatively. “In nothing being left behind” is the literal translation. By allowing patience her perfect work in us, we reach the goal of perfection in every respect. We attain to perfect knowledge, perfect confidence, perfect obedience, perfect praise, perfect joy.

We never reach that on this side of the grave. But we are on the way. The life of the child of God is a steady progressing toward that goal of perfection which is glory — life in the presence of God. That is what God is working in us through the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Count it all joy, then, brother, when you fall into many temptations. The trying of your faith works patience. Let patience have her complete work in you, in order that you may be fully matured and complete in every grace and in nothing being left behind. That is glory, glory indeed.

*chapter 1; verses 5-8; “Praying In Faith For Wisdom”:*

If we are going to hear and do this word and consider it pure joy when we fall into divers temptations we will need the wisdom of God. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to

all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” Wisdom is precisely what we need and precisely what we lack. “If any of you lack wisdom . . .” is a conditional construction in which the truth stated in the “if clause” is assumed. Paraphrasing we would put it this way; “if any of you lack wisdom, and you all lack exactly that.” In this light we understand the relationship between the thought of these verses with the preceding. The point is very simply this: we cannot count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations apart from the wisdom of God. And this is what we lack; we come behind, we are inferior in the wisdom of God. So, James says, ask of God! But be sure you ask in faith, nothing wavering. A wavering or doubleminded man must not think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. He is unstable in all his ways.

Before delving into the riches of these verses, we should understand that there is a profound spiritual truth here to which we do well to pay attention. If we are unhappy as God’s children and find ourselves confused and distressed, perhaps even deeply depressed; there can be only one reason. We lack the wisdom of God. When all the searching for answers is over and all the struggling to find reasons is ended, the fact that we lack God’s wisdom remains the deepest cause of our distressful situation. In their deepest roots man’s problems are always spiritual. They originate in sin, not just sin in general, but in specific sins. And when God’s people find no joy in their earthly pilgrimage, and grieve rather than sing amid the conflict, it’s invariably because they come behind in the wisdom of God. And they come behind in the wisdom of God because they are not “asking of God!” Or, if they are asking of God they are not doing so in faith — they are asking, but wavering as a doubleminded man. God’s people would experience a lot less heartache and a lot more genuine happiness were they to learn this lesson.

## ***Contending for the Faith***

# **The Doctrine of Atonement (Reformation Period)**

*Rev. H. Veldman*

How detailed and thorough the fathers are in their rejection and repudiation of the Arminian error! In this Second Head of the Canons they not only set forth the truth of the atonement positively, but not less than seven lengthy articles are devoted by them in their rejection of this heresy in the section of the

Canons called: The Rejection of Errors. This heresy of Arminianism must be completely throttled and stamped out in the hearts and minds of the people and church of the Lord. Is this a lesson for us? Does it not teach us that we, too, must be zealous and very thorough in our zeal and determination to fight the



teaching and heresy of the Remonstrant? Fact is, this pernicious teaching is also with us today.

In our preceding article we were calling attention to Article III of the second part of Head II of our Canons, in which the fathers set forth the error of the Remonstrants and their repudiation of it. They call attention to the fact that the Arminians taught that our Lord Jesus Christ merited neither salvation itself nor faith for anyone. And they also taught that what happened upon the cross was that Christ merited for the Father the authority or will to deal with man again in whatever manner He wished. Of course, God could simply have left all men in their sin. But now Christ merits for the Father the authority or will to deal again with man in whatever manner He wished. The Lord could now prescribe new conditions, upon the fulfillment of which man would receive eternal life and be saved. What this new condition is, is not set forth in this article. And the idea is that the obedience to these conditions would then again depend upon the free will of man.

How, now, do the fathers answer this heresy of the Arminians? Now we must bear in mind that this teaching of the Remonstrants was diametrically opposed to the Reformed truth. The Reformed truth teaches that Christ certainly merited salvation through His satisfaction upon the cross, and this only for His own. According to the Arminian, Christ did not merit salvation for anyone, but only the authority and will of the Father to deal again with the sinner and to prescribe new conditions for that sinner. Christ made something possible for the Father. Did He make it possible for the Father to give salvation unto His own? This the Remonstrant would not say. No, Christ made it possible for the Father to have dealings again with the sinner. Does this speak of salvation? Not at all! These dealings are of such a nature that now the Father can again confront the sinner with conditions which he must fulfill in order to be saved. But the Reformed truth teaches very emphatically that Christ merited salvation for His own through His satisfaction upon the cross of Calvary. In the second place, the Reformed truth also teaches that Christ also merited for them faith, whereby they become partakers of that salvation. This is clearly stated in Article VIII of Head II of the Canons, and we quote: "For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation." And, thirdly, the Reformed truth also taught that in time He also surely bestows that faith and that salvation.

How, now, in Article III, do the fathers characterize the teaching of the Arminians? First, they declare that the Remonstrants adjudge contemptuously of the

death of Christ. Imagine: the fathers of Dordt declare that the Remonstrants speak contemptuously of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ! This is exactly the charge which the Arminians hurled at the Reformed fathers. They contended that the fathers of Dordt spoke contemptuously of the death of Christ. You see, the fathers taught that Christ died only for the elect, that Christ, therefore, died only for some of the human race. The Arminians taught that Christ died for the whole human race. And the Arminians accused the fathers, therefore, of belittling the death of Christ. How much richer, they declared, is their conception of the cross of Calvary! But the fathers do not hesitate to hurl this charge into the face and teeth of the Remonstrants. And how correct they are! According to the Arminian, all that Christ merited upon the cross was the authority and will of the Father to have dealings with the sinner. But, according to the Remonstrant, then it could very well come to pass that no one would be saved by the death of Christ, and that Christ would have suffered in vain. Now I would like to call attention to the fact that, in the light of the view of the Remonstrant, Christ certainly died in vain to a very large extent. Does he not teach that Christ died for the whole human race, that it was His desire to merit salvation and life for every man, head for head? And must not also he admit that not all men are saved, that, in comparison with those who perish, only a few are saved? Is it then not true that, with respect to all those who perish, Christ died in vain for them? Hence, how much of that precious blood of the Lamb of Calvary was spilled in vain! But this is not all. The Arminian teaches a salvation of the sinner which is dependent upon the will of the sinner. The Arminian cannot possibly know who will be saved. Christ has merely merited for the Father the authority to offer salvation to the sinner. Does not, then, the possibility exist, as far as the Remonstrant is concerned, that no sinner will accept this proffered salvation? How true is the charge of the fathers of Dordt that, according to the Arminian presentation, it could come to pass that no one is actually saved by the death of Christ. And this is certainly a contemptuous speaking with respect to the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the fathers of Dordt declare that by this error the Arminians reject and deny the foremost benefit of the death of Christ, namely, salvation itself. How true is this charge of our fathers! The Arminians did not teach that Christ merited salvation by His death upon the cross. They did not teach that Christ merited for the Father the right to give salvation upon the sinner. They taught that Christ merely merited for the Father the right and authority to deal again with the sinner, to prescribe new conditions unto his salvation. Of course, the Arminians were compelled to say this. They could not teach that Christ actually merited salvation for His own. Then, of course, all



those for whom He died would also actually have to be saved. So, the Arminians reject and deny the foremost benefit of the death of Christ, namely, salvation itself. Of course, there are also other benefits of this death of Christ. Faith is also a benefit of this death of our Lord Jesus Christ. All the benefits of salvation flow forth from the cross of Calvary. But salvation is the foremost benefit. And the Scriptures certainly teach that Christ merited salvation by His suffering and dying upon the cross of Calvary. Does not the Word of God speak of the death of the cross as a redemption, as in 1 Pet. 1:18, 19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." To redeem means: to buy with a price. God's people have been redeemed by the blood of Calvary. They have been purchased out of all the power of sin and of the devil. This is simply a fact. It is for this reason that the apostle Peter speaks of this blood of the cross as the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And notice what we read in Heb. 10:10, 14: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." This passage certainly speaks for itself. How true it is that Christ merited salvation for His own by His death upon the cross of Calvary; and how true it is that the Arminians reject and deny this foremost benefit of the death of Christ!

And finally, the Arminians by their doctrine again bring the Pelagian error out of hell. Strong language? Yes. But it is so true! Pelagianism is the error that teaches the free will of the sinner. Christ did not merit salvation for men, only the authority and will of the Father to deal again with the sinner. This means that the sinner's salvation is dependent upon his free will. He is not saved because Christ died for him, but only because he chooses to accept the salvation that is offered to him. And the fathers say that this error is brought again out of hell. Hell is the source of the lie. The devil is the liar from the beginning. The truth is from above. The lie is from below. And we must not

hesitate to say this. We must not soft-pedal these departures from the truth. Pelagianism and Arminianism are heresies that have their origin below, in him who is the liar from the beginning. And they who teach these false and pernicious doctrines are called in the Word of God wolves in sheep's clothing, ravening wolves, desperately hungry wolves, wolves who would devour and destroy the church of the living God. Never grant them a place within the church of the Lord.

#### *Article IV*

Who teach: That the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist that we by faith, in as much as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace. For these contradict the Scriptures: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood," Rom. 3:24, 25. And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole church.

We understand that the phrase, "but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith," should read: "but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of the perfect obedience of the law."

In this article of the Rejection of Errors, the Remonstrants are presenting what the condition is upon which God will bestow life and salvation. In Article III the Arminians declare that Christ by His death upon the cross merited for the Father the authority and will to deal again with the sinner, to prescribe new conditions for that sinner unto his salvation. But they did not state as yet what those conditions are. Now the fathers of Dordt tell us what the condition is upon which God will bestow life and salvation. To this we plan to call attention in our following article.

## *The Strength of Youth*

# **Divorce and Remarriage (2)**

*Rev. J. Kortering*

In our search for a Biblical understanding of divorce and remarriage we continue our investigation of the position taken in past generations.

#### **TEACHING OF JOHN CALVIN**

Calvin was prolific with the pen. It is not our intent to give a thorough historical presentation of what he



had to say on this subject. Rather, we should give a representative quote.

Calvin, over and again, emphasized the sanctity of marriage. This he spells out in connection with the wickedness of divorce. In his commentaries on the gospels, Matt. 19:1-12, he states:

Now Christ assumes as an admitted principle that at the beginning God *joined the male to the female*, so that the two made an entire man; and therefore he who *divorces his wife* tears from him, as it were the half of himself. But nature does not allow any man to tear in pieces his own body . . . .

And if the institution of marriage is to be reckoned an inviolable law, it follows that whatever swerves from it does not arise from its pure nature, but from the depravity of man . . . .

For it is not in the power of a man to dissolve the engagement of marriage which the Lord wishes to remain inviolate; and so the woman who occupies the bed of a lawful wife is a concubine.

Then Calvin deals with the important "exception" text, Matt. 19:9, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication and shall marry another committeth adultery, and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

On this 9th verse, Calvin has the following to say:

But an exception is added: for the woman, by *fornication*, cuts herself off, as a rotten member from her husband, and sets him at liberty. Those who search for other reasons ought justly to be set at nought, because they choose to be wise above the heavenly teacher.

But the exception which Christ states appears to be superfluous. For, if the adulteress deserves to be punished with death, what purpose does it serve to talk of divorces? But as it was the duty of the husband to prosecute his wife for adultery, in order to purge his house from infamy, whatever might be the result, the husband who convicts his wife of uncleanness is here freed by Christ from the bond. It is even possible that, among a corrupt and degenerate people, this crime remained to a great extent unpunished; as, in our own day, the wicked forbearance of magistrates makes it necessary for husbands to put away unchaste wives, because adulterers are not punished. It must also be observed that the right belongs equally and mutually to both sides, as there is a mutual and equal obligation to fidelity. For, though in other matters the husband holds the superiority, as to the marriage bed, the wife has an equal right; for he is not the lord of his body; and therefore when by committing adultery, he has dissolved the marriage, the wife is set at liberty.

John Calvin also takes the position that adultery broke the marriage and that upon divorce, the innocent spouse was free to remarry. The "except for fornication" of Matt. 19:9 excluded a remarriage resulting from a divorce on the grounds of adultery. He says:

This clause has been very ill explained by many

commentators; for they have thought that generally and without exception celibacy is enjoined in all cases when a divorce has taken place; and therefore if a husband should put away an adulteress, both would be laid under the necessity of remaining unmarried. As if this liberty of divorce meant only not to lie with his wife; as if Christ did not evidently grant permission in this case to do what the Jews were wont indiscriminately to do at their pleasure . . . . Christ condemns as an adulterer the man *who shall marry a wife that has been divorced*, this is undoubtedly restricted to unlawful and frivolous divorces. In like manner Paul enjoins those who have been so dismissed to remain unmarried or to be reconciled to their husbands (1 Cor. 7:11), that is because quarrels and differences do not dissolve a marriage . . . . Mark intended to show that our Lord condemned the corruption which was at that time universal, that, after voluntary divorces, they entered on both sides into new marriages and therefore he makes no mention of adultery.

That this is the position of Calvin, is borne out by a set of marriage ordinances issued by the Council of Geneva about 1547 under the influence of Calvin. These are included in the *Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the time of Calvin*, a book edited by Philip Hughes.

For what reasons a marriage can be rescinded. If a husband accuses his wife of adultery and he proves it by sufficient witnesses or evidences and demands to be separated by divorce, it shall be granted and thereafter he shall be able to marry again, if he so wishes. Moreover, while he should be exhorted to pardon his wife, yet one has no right to compel him to do so against his will.

Although in ancient times the right of the wife was not equal with that of the husband where divorce was concerned, yet since, as the Apostle says, the obligation is mutual and reciprocal regarding the intercourse of the bed, and since in this the wife is not more subject to the husband than the husband is to the wife, if a man is convicted of adultery and his wife demands to be separated from him, this shall be granted to her also, provided it proves impossible by good counsel to reconcile them to each other. If, however, the wife should fall into adultery through the evident fault of the husband, or the husband through the fault of the wife, in such a way that they are both to blame, or if there should be proof of some fraud perpetrated with a view to obtaining a divorce, then they shall not be permitted to demand it.

That last sentence is most interesting. The church has debated the so called "innocent party" in a divorce and their right of remarriage over and over again. Is there such a thing as an innocent party? It would seem that the untenable position of one guilty and the other innocent, and idea basic to the adultery-dissolution divorce-remarriage idea, is evident here. Does not adultery or any disruption in marriage involve the sins of both marriage partners and therefore require



the need of mutual repentance and forgiveness, but not a *dissolution* of the marriage. More on this later.

### THE REFORMED CHURCHES

One looks in vain for a statement in the Reformed confessions on the place of divorce in the life of the church and whether divorced persons may remarry. Even Lord's Day 41 of the Heidelberg Catechism, in dealing with the 7th commandment, gives no direction. The Church Order gives no specifics on this either.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647 gives counsel on this subject. We read in Chapter 24 of *Marriage and Divorce*.

III. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry who are able with judgment to give their consent. Yet, it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. And therefore, such as profess the true reformed religion should not marry with infidels, Papists, or other idolaters: neither should such as are godly, be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies.

V. Adultery or fornication, committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce, and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.

VI. Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments, unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage; yet nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage, wherein a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it, not left to their own wills, and discretion in their own case.

The texts for proof of the above position are Matt. 1:18-20, Matt. 5:31,32, Matt. 19:9, and Rom. 7:2,3. We will treat these passages a little later.

The Christian Reformed Churches agree that there is a place for divorce and remarriage within the church.

In the past many years they took the position that the innocent party might remarry, if the spouse committed adultery. As recently as 1956, however, they went far beyond that and said that the remarried guilty party might remain married if they confess their sins even if their ground for divorce was not adultery, or their own adultery.

1. No substantial and conclusive Scriptural evidence has been produced to establish the thesis that parties remarried after being divorced on the ground of their own adultery, or divorced on nonbiblical grounds are living in continual adultery.

2. No substantial and conclusive Scriptural evidence has been produced to warrant the demand that a person remarried after being divorced on the ground of his own adultery or divorced on non-biblical grounds, must in order to prove the sincerity of his repentance, cease living in the ordinary marriage relationship with his present spouse.

Three more resolutions were added, giving warning to consistories that they guard the sanctity of marriage and secure genuine repentance in such cases.

In contrast to much of what we have quoted, we now refer to a decision taken by Classis West of our churches in 1963. This quotation is only part of the decision, but it is sufficient.

Also in this verse (Matt. 19:9) Jesus does not make fornication a legitimate ground for remarriage after divorce. This is evident from many texts which clearly state that any violation of the marriage bond must be endured and that only death can break it, e.g. Mark 10:11, Luke 16:18, and Romans 7:1-3. Jesus' argument here is that the marriage bond can never be dissolved except by death; that fornication is the only ground on the basis of which a man may put away his wife, but that this putting away of his wife is only separation, not a dissolution of the marriage bond. Thus remarriage is always adultery when the former spouse is still living.

In order to see the correctness of this position, we must show the error of the opposing view and consider the Scriptural soundness of this one.

This will have to wait until our next article, D.V.

## In His Fear

# Addressing God In Prayer

Rev. D. H. Kuiper

"God, you're the greatest."

"God, . . . you're a cool cat."

"Hello, Dad."

The above words are not mine. The first were spoken by a grade school student at a local Christian school program. The second quote, taken from a

young people's magazine, comes from a poem by a high school student. The last formed the address in a congregational prayer by a minister in a Des Moines



church. All occurred within the context of the "Reformed community." These samples, which have come to my attention this past year, will serve to point to the seriousness of the "you-thou" controversy. At stake is one's conception of God and the attitude one takes in prayer to God.

The "you-thou" controversy is one which is engaging parents, teachers, and ministers increasingly. Parents are concerned because their children are being instructed in the day schools by those who prefer to refer to the Deity with the pronouns *you* and *your*. Some teachers become involved when they insist on such words as *thy*, *thou*, and *thine* in their classrooms. The controversy naturally spills over into the area of music, since song is also a vehicle of speaking to and about God. There seem to be a few who are adamant on one side or the other, while the majority doesn't seem to think it matters much one way or the other. Some ministers even use "you" and "thou" in their public prayers, either to show how tolerant they can be or how difficult it is to make the transition. It is our conviction that this is a serious matter and that those who are in a position to give leadership and instruction had better be correct. Does not James warn in the opening words of his third chapter that men ought not strive for the position of master and teacher, knowing that they shall receive the stricter judgement? Those who lead others have a grave responsibility. Those who instruct covenant children, whose tendency is to believe and trust, have the highest responsibility of all.

The reason for introducing familiarity into prayer is usually stated along these lines: God is invisible, the concept of God is so abstract, that it is difficult to get it across to little children. By referring to God in common, down-to-earth language we can make Him *real* in the child's mind. Then He will not seem so far away, so abstract, and so unapproachable. Further, It is often stated that God and Christ ought to be such a part of our lives that we integrate Their Names into our vocabularies in a very natural way; to use *thee*, *thou* *thy*, and *thine* is rather superficial and awkward. Before we get into the actual arguments that ought to be considered, we can note here that when we make the above reasons the matter of our concern, we busy ourselves with something that is really God's work. God does not leave Himself without witness, also in respect to little children. Our attempts to make God real and comprehensible, no matter what language we use, will not succeed except that faith believes that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. God testifies in the hearts of His children, young and old, and this Spirit-wrought testimony breaks through all barriers and abstractions.

It must be conceded that such words as *thee* and *thou* do not carry the force of inspired authority. Some languages make a distinction between familiar and polite pronouns; the one to be used with one's

peers, the other in reference to various dignitaries, strangers who might be dignitaries, and the Godhead. For example, the Dutch has the familiar *jou* and the polite *U* and the German has *du* and *Sie*. If one turns to the original Biblical languages, however, he finds that the Hebrew and the Greek do not provide for such a distinction. So that the dispute is not actually between the usage of sacred language and modern usage, but between the usage of Old and Middle English of four centuries past and twentieth century practice (more especially language patterns of the last half of the twentieth century). The version of the Bible authorized by King James in 1611 reflected the usage of that day, and thus we find the words *thee-thou-thine* when the Godhead is addressed. In fact, these words are also used when one man speaks to another in the King James Version.

Nevertheless, it is our conviction that *today* we ought to preserve the distinction when we address God. As the centuries rolled by since the time of Shakespeare, the English language changed, and we are left only with common pronouns in our daily usage. But for some reason one exception prevailed; as all this time went by and language became more secularized and familiar, the words *thee-thou-thine* survived, and the use of them in respect to God persisted! This is a very good thing! And the reason for the survival of this practice surely is that the God who directed all that history is pleased by the distinction.

The heart of the controversy, after all, is our conception of God. The issues revolve about the points of Who God is, what is our relation to Him, and how are we to use His Names. The point is that we ought to employ every safeguard that we do not become guilty of breaking the third commandment by dragging the Name of God off the high pedestal where it belongs and making it common and profane. The danger is never that we honor God too highly or that we esteem Him too much, but the danger is always that we refuse to honor Him by treating the living God as just another being. Before we know it, we begin to think that God is altogether such an one as ourselves (Ps. 50:21). Is that not the greatest blasphemy and the worst profanity?

Let all those who want to make God seem *real* and *close* to children read Isaiah 40, verses 12-31. And let them read these verses to the children who come under their instruction. What power and wisdom is here revealed! What transcendence and glory! "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding." (Is. 40:28) If the power of such revelation does not send redeemed man looking for ways to exalt the Name of God and to lift it on high far above every other name, then perhaps man ought to ask himself the question whether he really knows



God. It is no coincidence that this over-familiarity is pushed the harder in those circles where God's sovereignty is only given lip service, and where salvation is pictured as a co-operative venture of God and man. But notice the first part of Isaiah 40: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Those beautiful words, which everyone seems to want to emphasize, are true only because the rest of the chapter is true. There is comfort for Jerusalem because the Lord is omnipotent!

It is a question whether God hears a prayer which is not uttered in the consciousness of the transcendence of God and the unworthiness of man. In the forty-fifth Lord's Day the question is asked, "What are the requisites of that prayer which is acceptable to God and which He will hear?" The answer is: "First, that we from the heart pray to the one true God only, who hath manifested himself in His word, for all things He hath commanded us to ask of Him; secondly, that we rightly and thoroughly know our need and our misery, that so we may deeply humble ourselves in the

presence of His divine majesty; thirdly, that we be fully persuaded that He, notwithstanding that *we are unworthy of it*, will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as He has promised us in His word." The Heidelberg Catechism removes all questions.

The quotations at the beginning of this article are sad. You will notice an increase in the degree of profanity as you pass from one to another. As was explained, the age of the individual also increased with each example. This is the result of modern education in the area of prayer. Does it make God seem *real and close*? Does it enable little children to understand God better? Does it result in true godliness? It ought to be clear that it fails miserably. It ought also to be clear that once a person sets out along lines which stress familiarity, there is no telling where he will stop. We might be shocked by these examples, and hopefully we are; but we ought not to pretend that this is as bad as it will get. The end point is contempt, absolute contempt of God!

May God keep us from all trends which result in the dishonor of His great Name. And may we continue to use that form of address which makes clear distinction between Creator-Redeemer and man.

## Annual Reports

Reformed Free Publishing Association  
Secretary's Report

Mr. Chairman, Members of the R.F.P.A., and Friends:

It is my duty as secretary to report to you tonight on the principal activities which have occurred throughout the past year in connection with the publishing of the *Standard Bearer*.

The Board met at the prescribed times to conduct its business and to hear the Business Manager's reports, which were always lively and interesting. Invariably the letters which he read at these meetings showed gratitude for the contents of our publication and also encouragement to continue in this, the Lord's work.

The Board also decided to give our Business Manager \$500.00 per year as a token gift for his labors in behalf of the *Standard Bearer*.

At our May meeting, the Board granted the request of the Synodical Committee for Correspondence with Foreign Churches for \$1000.00 to help pay for the publishing of a *Critique of the RES*, a booklet prepared by Rev. Sang Chan Lee, in the Korean language. This booklet was to be distributed to churches of the Hapdong Presbyterian denomination in Korea.

From our Business Manager's pen we quote the

following: "Several innovations were instigated by your Board during the past year in order to increase our subscription list. First, an introductory offer labelled "10 for 2" was introduced to our readers. By means of advertisements in our paper and in other periodicals, it was announced that the *Standard Bearer* could be obtained by new subscribers for six months (10 issues) for only \$2.00. To date almost 200 potential new subscribers have responded to this offer. Truly amazing! One member of our Protestant Reformed Churches submitted and paid for 32 new subscribers to our offer. A subscriber belonging to the Christian Reformed Church submitted and paid for 12 new potential subscribers. Response has been received from just about all of the 50 states of our country — including Alaska and Hawaii; several from Canada and the Netherlands. Surely, the Lord has blessed us in this endeavor. Secondly, this "10 for 2" offer was also extended to our readers in Australasia. Included were New Zealand, New South Wales (Australia), Tasmania, etc. Twenty-three new subscribers reached out to take advantage of receiving the *Standard Bearer* by this means. Thirdly, in conjunction with our Permanent



Publication Committee, new and regular subscribers will be able to obtain books published by our R.F.P.A. at a reduced price. Watch for further details in forthcoming issues of our magazine."

At this time we gratefully acknowledge the financial gifts from individuals, societies, and congregations, and solicit your continued support.

A special word of thanks is due Mr. Gerrit Pipe for his faithful assistance in the mailing department. Needless to say, we really rely on our Business Manager's keen attention and ability to expedite matters pertinent to our publication.

Retirees this year will be the Messrs. Wm. De

Kraker, Arnold Dykstra, and undersigned.

In conclusion, brethren, it is evident from the foregoing that the *Standard Bearer* is being sent far and wide and that it is also being read and appreciated by those not in our denomination. Now, as we stand at the threshold of another year of publishing the *Standard Bearer*, we see it as a wonderful calling, a glorious privilege, and a serious responsibility. Let us indeed be thankful to God for our faithful Editor-in-Chief and Department Editors, for the dedication and zeal with which they write. May the Lord continue to bless them in their labors.

G. Bol, Sec'y

### Treasurer's Report

BALANCE ON HAND SEPT. 1, 1971	6,448.78
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#### Receipts:

Subscriptions	6,436.01	
Membership	102.00	
Gifts	6,883.25	
Advertising	204.00	
Bound Volumes	636.25	
10 for two offer	350.25	
Miscellaneous	244.48	
Interest Earned	60.12	
Receipts for the year		14,916.36
Total Receipts		21,365.14

#### Disbursements:

Wobbema Printing Co.	5,445.75	
National Correct Color Service	1,214.00	
Photo Composition Service	5,470.00	
Postage	390.00	
Holland Book Binding	361.25	
G. Pipe (Traveling Expense)	115.00	
H. Vander Wal (Business Manager) —		
(500.00 token gift 672.59 postage & supplies)	1,172.59	
Correspondence Committee (Korea Material)	1,000.00	
Advertising	66.61	
Miscellaneous	31.49	
Disbursements for the year		15,266.69

BALANCE ON HAND SEPT. 1, 1972	6,098.45
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#### Gifts:

Protestant Reformed Churches		Hull	215.23
Doon	112.07	Kalamazoo	35.81
Edgerton	69.66	Loveland	81.38
First	794.89	Randolph	71.76
Forbes	33.70	South East	391.48
Holland	95.30	South Holland	784.09
Hope	1,244.21	South West	46.91
Hudsonville	712.27	Church Undetermined	62.48



*Societies*

Eastern Ladies League	86.40
First Ladies Society	50.00
First Mens Society	30.00
Hope Choral Society	101.88
Hope Mr. & Mrs. Society	25.00

*Total Gifts*

Churches	4,751.24
Societies	293.28
Individuals gifts	1,838.73
	<u>6,883.25</u>

C. Kuiper, Treasurer

*The Signs of the Times***The Enemy Within***Rev. G. Van Baren*

The title may seem a bit pretentious. It could certainly be used in various different senses.

I am concerned particularly in the attempt of Satan to infiltrate our very homes in order to instruct in the lie. We are, perhaps, not too aware of his attempt. Nor are we always aware of the fact that as the time of the end approaches, Satan will increasingly try to speak to us. His time is short — and he knows that. He, therefore, works frantically in order to undermine or destroy (if such were possible) the faith of the saints.

One striking sign of the end of the age is the fact that Satan through the beasts of Revelation 13, speaks. We read in Revelation 13:5,6: "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." Of the second beast we read: (Rev. 13:11) "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." In harmony with the above is the revelation in Daniel (7:8,11,20).

My intent in this article is to point out that in many ways that *speech* of these passages can be heard today. We must be aware of this and beware it. Our eyes are often blind to this; our ears are sometimes dull of hearing. Ought we not to see and hear that these passages of Scripture are even now being fulfilled? Surely, the passages of Revelation 13 and Daniel 7 have not yet been fulfilled. The kingdom of the antichrist has not yet been established. The speaking of the beasts, then, has not yet been heard. Yet much of this same sort of speaking is heard today. Do you recognize the speech of the antichrists? Scripture declares: "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). We ought to guard against his speech which is presented to deceive.

We can see already how that at the end-time the

antichrist can readily speak to all the peoples of the earth. It is this speech which can and does reach into our very homes. In that sense, I speak of the "enemy within."

The means of modern communication, the mass media, have for the most part been taken over by the world and are used by them to set forth their evil thoughts and desires. We must recognize this and be on our guard against it. The enemy within seeks to undermine — and to a certain extent, we can see the sad consequences in our own homes. I am concerned most about the abuse of television, but the other means of communication can not be ignored: radio, the printed page, the use of film, etc. The world, Satan, and finally the antichrist can reach into our very homes to tell us what to think, what to seek, what to say, how to dress. Are you aware what the enemy within seeks to do to you and your family? I would remind you of a few dangers.

**BLASPHEMY**

One noteworthy mark of the speech of the beasts of Revelation 13 is blasphemy. There is blasphemy against God, His Name, His tabernacle, and His people. How extensive this blasphemy already is! Whether on television, radio, or the printed page, it is obvious that there is nothing "sacred" to man. God's Name is used in vain. His Church is mocked. His Word is often quoted but scorned. Man knows no bounds in his evil desire to denounce all that which is spiritual. Trouble is, all this blasphemy enters directly into our homes. We have almost become immune to its terribleness. It is not unusual to hear children of God even mouth some of these same blasphemies which pour forth into the homes. Our children watch it and read it. Nothing seems too terrible anymore. No wonder children grow up without any sense of the awfulness of all of this! They have almost become hardened to the awful blasphemies so common today. And when the end does come, very



few will be shocked at the blasphemies of the beasts of Revelation. How much place have we given to the devil in our homes?

### LUST

Lust would be the evil, inordinate desire for that which is forbidden in the Word of God. It is seeking the things of the flesh. This may be related to the realm of "sex," in which there is no regard to the marriage bond. This may be related to the realm of the material, which one sets his heart on the things of the earth.

Now Satan from the beginning has sought to instill lust in man! Already to Eve in Paradise, he brought to her attention the desirability of the tree of knowledge of good and evil — in spite of the Word God had spoken. Eve desired and ate of the forbidden fruit.

The evil of lusting for the things of the flesh is constantly before us through the mass media. The common attempt to arouse sexual lusts ought to be obvious to all. Advertising implies often sexuality related to the material. Usually a new car will be presented with a scantily attired woman in or near it. The desirability of less restraint in the marriage relationship is suggested. The dramas of men, the written stories, the advertising — all these present the evil thoughts of the world. And all these come flooding into our homes.

And there is the gross materialism of our day. Through the various media, one is encouraged to set his heart on earthly things. The appeal of better homes, nicer cars, fashionable clothes, clever gadgets is set forth. Increasingly, it seems impossible to remember that the things of this earth pass away. Our desires, our thoughts, are directed towards the earthly. The advertising, the conversations, of men, these all remind of the pleasures of the material. The speech of the world is heard in our homes. We listen; we hear — and are influenced so much by this all. Are not our desires directed towards the very thing the voice of the world presents? How hard to remember: "Give no place to the devil!"

### SEARED CONSCIENCES

With all that which enters our homes, it is no wonder that the conscience seems to be almost hardened to what is and what is not sin. News reports consistently present the atrocious, evil, disastrous, corrupt. This is the news. Adultery is presented as a common-place thing. The details of the latest robbery and murder are reported in gruesome detail. The rise in the crime rate is considered almost acceptable. In some cases, one can avidly watch the latest television drama. One becomes wound up in what is presented. One becomes almost sympathetic toward the hero — no matter what his sin. God's laws are not regarded as absolute. Man in his pretense can glorify the violation of God's law. All this is presented in our homes. The

devil finds somewhat of a place.

And no wonder then that sin does not appear so terrible anymore. No wonder that whole denominations can alter historic stands and adopt positions of this world contrary to God's Word. What else can they do when the majority of the members simply accept as proper that which God's laws condemn? I think specifically now of altered positions on movie attendance; of altered positions on abortion; of altered positions on marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

No wonder that one finds "Christian" parents cheating on their income tax forms. No wonder that one finds "Christian" workers stealing from their employers — either a stealing of time or of material objects. No wonder that "Christian" children can appropriate that which belongs to another without any sense of guilt, it would seem. No wonder that lying can be done as though there is nothing wrong in it. Satan has spoken often — seeking to convince that sin is not sin. He has entered into our homes with his lies; we have listened far too much.

### WORLDLY PHILOSOPHIES

What is particularly disturbing in the "voice" of the world which enters our homes is the evil philosophy which is presented — and accepted almost without question. There is the idea of "peace" and "unity" which is presented. I have observed this in children's television programs, including that oft-approved "Sesame Street." One can so quickly speak of the "good" programs and "good" articles. Yet a "good" program such as Sesame Street repeatedly emphasizes the unity and oneness of man and the harmony which must exist between them — all without the cross. What are children, who repeatedly hear this in their youth, going to believe as they grow up? I suggest that much of this is built-in instruction by the voice of this world to teach our precious children that unity and oneness and peace are possible without Christ. Why are our children at times even now advocates of "peace" such as the world seeks? Why do they use the "peace sign"? Why do they wear such signs on their clothing? Has not the "voice" of the world to an extent affected them?

Have we also not been affected by the "voice" which encourages materialism? Do we not place great emphasis upon our material possessions? Are we not insistent upon the latest fashions? Do we not want the latest of the labor-saving devices? How much have we not also been influenced by the "voice" which enters our homes? We minimize the reality of this influence only to our own spiritual hurt.

And does not the "voice" within our homes train us to listen to what man has to say? The repetition of man's thoughts and ideas flooding into our homes seeks to condition us to hear more and more of the evil philosophies of this world.



## USE OF TIME

Perhaps, one could point out the waste of time in connection with the mass media of our day. How many do not spend far more time reading their daily newspaper than they do reading and studying Scripture? How many have no time for study of society lessons or catechism or Sunday school – yet spend hours in front of television? How many have no time or desire to hear our own “Reformed Witness Hour” – yet have time to hear the godless songs of man on radio? How much precious time do we waste –

because of the “voice” which enters our homes? How much place has there been found for the devil?

I do not advocate the removal of these “mass media.” Such would be virtually impossible. But saints of God had better be aware of the attempts of the world and of Satan to influence our thinking and undermine our faith. Use good inventions to the glory of God, but beware the voice of the beasts which even now is being heard. For thus we live as those who know that the “Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:5).

## Book Reviews

### The Ground of Certainty

*THE GROUND OF CERTAINTY*, by Donald Bloesch; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970; 212 pp., \$3.25 (paper). (Reviewed by J. Huiskens)

Dr. Donald Bloesch is currently professor of theology at the Dubuque Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. The cover of the book calls attention to other works of Bloesch, but this is my first contact with any of his writings.

Every book has a purpose, a moving force or urgency for its being written, and this book is no exception. Its *raison d'être* is stated by Bloesch in the “Foreword”:

In this book we sharply diverge from much traditional thinking on the relation between theology and philosophy and suggest an alternative that is solidly anchored in biblical faith. Instead of seeing this relation in terms of synthesis or correlation or even simple subordination, we call for the conversion and transformation of philosophical meanings in the light of the biblical revelation.

In light of the current trends in philosophy of religion and the continued emphasis upon natural theology, Bloesch's purpose is a worthy one. And, I must agree, Bloesch does attempt to do exactly as he says. He distinguishes between philosophy and theology on the basis of one's beginnings – either in reason of faith – and he strongly holds that reason is the obedient servant of faith. He strongly condemns the current trends in philosophy of religion and looks askance at natural theology. Truth for him is revealed, and only in this revelation is truth to be found. In this respect, the book certainly met its objective.

The book, however, has basic disappointments. While Bloesch calls for the separation of philosophy

and theology, in the course of the book he eventually joins them on the basis of common grace. His purpose is not straightforwardly to condemn the erroneous position of the philosopher, but his purpose is to understand and transform (p.104). Theologians and philosophers have a commonness in sin, but they also have a commonness in their yearning for the truth that redeems. This yearning is, of course, the result of the general operation of the Holy Spirit upon mankind, the work of common grace. And, says Bloesch, this doctrine of common grace is essential to his theology (p. 23).

Furthermore, just as disappointing is Bloesch's failure to articulate clearly his theological stance and his theological concepts. Particularly disturbing is his failure to delineate his concept of Scripture. Biblical revelation, he says, is the ground of certainty; but he does little more than tell us that this revelation has an objective and a subjective pole. Because of this lack of articulation, I found myself substituting my own concepts and then, of course, the book and the thought is no longer Bloesch's, but my own, which ought not to be.

Generally, I found myself at the apex of agreement or at the nadir of disappointment when reading this book. Certainly his basic approach is right, but I take issue with his theology.

I would certainly recommend this book to anyone interested in the age-old debate concerning the relationship between philosophy and theology, with a particular recommendation to teachers, ministers, seminary and college students. This book would certainly lend itself to much discussion and could serve as a basis for a seminar on this topic. Bloesch's analysis of the encounter between faith and reason throughout history is reason enough to read the book, but I would urge further discussion of this subject particularly amongst those in education.



*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The Ladies Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. John Moelker, in the death of her husband,

MR. JOHN MOELKER.

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:8).

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.  
Mrs. D. Meulenberg, Sec'y.

*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The Consistory of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Isabel, South Dakota extends its sincere sympathy to one of its fellow members, Elder Hiram Streyle, in the recent death of his wife

MRS. HIRAM STREYLE.

May the bereaved be comforted in the Word of God found in Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Rev. R. G. Miersma, Pres.  
Mr. Milton Collman, Clerk

*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The Adult Bible Class of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its heartfelt sympathy to two of its members, Mr. and Mrs. Erne Miedema in the loss of their son

DOUGLAS ERNE MIEDEMA

whom the Lord called home very suddenly on October 7, 1972 at the age of 21. May they together with their family be comforted by the word of God as found in Psalm 145:17, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works."

A. Karsemeyer, Pres.  
N. Van Overloop, Sec'y.

*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The members of the Men's Society of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church of Wyoming, Michigan, express their sincere sympathy to Mrs. A. Talsma in the death of her husband,

ALBERT TALSMAN.

May our covenant God comfort her by His Word and Spirit. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21.)

The Men's Soc'y. of the  
Southwest Prot. Ref. Church.  
Rev. H. Veldman, Pres.  
Jay Boone, Sec'y.

*RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY*

The Ladies' Society and the Men's Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express their sympathy to Mr. & Mrs. P. A. Poortenga, Mr. & Mrs. R. Hoving, Mr. & Mrs. E. Medema, Mr. & Mrs. D. Haak in the Passing of their mother and mother-in-law

MRS. JENNIE IPEMA

who was taken into eternal rest on Sunday, October 15, 1972.

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." (Ps. 116:7-8.)

Rev. R. Decker, President  
Mrs. John Holleman, Secretary  
Mrs. Jack Lenting, Secretary

*IN MEMORIAM*

MRS. JENNIE IPEMA

Our comfort is, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21B

On the 15th of October in the year of our Lord, 1972, it pleased our covenant God to remove out of our midst at the age of 73 years our beloved Mother and Grandmother,

Mr. and Mrs. Peter A. Poortenga  
Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Ipema  
Mrs. Henrietta Quinliven  
Mr. and Mrs. James Triezenberg  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry P. Ipema  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hoving  
Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Medema  
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Haak  
39 grandchildren 23 great-grandchildren

*ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT*

On November 18, 1972, the Lord willing, our parents,

MR. AND MRS. DAVID MEULENBERG

will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, their children, do thank and praise our covenant God for our years together, and for using them to instruct us in the fear of His name. That they may continue to experience the Lord's blessing in the remainder of their earthly pilgrimage is our prayer.

Their loving children:  
David and Bonnie Moelker  
Betty Meulenberg  
Larry and Judy Meulenberg  
Barbara Meulenberg  
Jonathon Meulenberg  
and their granddaughter.



## News From Our Churches

*October 31, 1972*

At the installation of now Rev. W. Bekkering, Rev. R. Decker read the Form, and Prof. H.C. Hoeksema led the service. After the service a lunch was served in the church basement. In Randolph's bulletin of the following Sabbath, Rev. Bekkering and family expressed thanks to "the congregation for all the kindness shown them in the past few weeks, the improvements made in the parsonage, the food shower, and the fine lunch the ladies served Friday night." Even from this distance, the mutual joy and satisfaction experienced in that congregation is, I

think, readily discernible from a couple of bulletin announcements.

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Those of you who receive the "Studies in Bible Doctrine" from the Lynden congregation have no doubt noticed, on the back side of the most recent issue, the invitation to "listen to our new radio program, 'Christian Dialogue.'" The notice went on to explain that "this is an open line discussion program with live response from the audience by means of the telephone. 9:30 P.M. every Saturday evening on KARI radio, AM, Blaine, Washington." D.D.

750 Jefferson Ave.  
Loveland, Colo. 80537  
October 21, 1972

### *Report of the Fall, 1972 Meeting of Classis West*

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Hull, Iowa on October 11. This meeting of Classis had been postponed from September 6, so that Classis could examine all of the candidates who might accept calls in Classis West. Twelve elders and eight ministers from the churches in Classis West attended. Three ministers from Classis East were also present at the Classis to witness and approve the examination of the candidates, in accordance with Article 4 of the Church Order: "the examination both of doctrine and life . . . shall be conducted by the Classis . . . and . . . shall take place in the presence of three delegates of synod from the nearest classes." Rev. Dale H. Kuiper presided at this meeting of Classis.

The Classical Committee of Classis West presented to Classis the request of the Randolph, Wisconsin consistory that Classis examine the candidate who had accepted their call, Wayne Bekkering, and the request of the Redlands, California consistory that Classis examine the candidate who had accepted their call, Marvin Kamps. This peremptory (decisive) examination of candidates constituted the bulk of Classis' work. In accordance with the decisions pertaining to Article 4 of the Church Order, Classis examined Mr. Bekkering and Mr. Kamps in dogmatics, practical qualifications, knowledge of Scripture, knowledge of the confessions,

and controversy. Mr. Bekkering preached his required sermon before the delegates of Classis in a special worship service of the Hull congregation, the evening of October 10. His text was Proverbs 3:5. Mr. Kamps preached on Psalm 11:5 in the presence of the Classis. With the concurrence of the delegates ad examina, Classis approved the examination of both candidates and advised Randolph and Redlands to proceed with their ordination. Both candidates signed the Formula of Subscription, after it was read aloud to them by the president of Classis. Mr. Bekkering was to be ordained on October 13, and Mr. Kamps, on October 15.

The Classis rejoiced with the vacant churches in the satisfying of their need for a faithful pastor and gave thanks to God Who gave our churches these men for the ministry of the gospel. It was Classis' prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ bless these young men and make their work fruitful.

Only one congregation in Classis West remains vacant, the Ebenezer Protestant Reformed Church of Forbes, North Dakota. This church requested and received classical appointments according to the following schedule: Oct. 22 - Kortering; Nov. 5 - Miersma; Nov. 19 - Moore; Dec. 3 - Lanting; Dec. 17 - Kortering; Jan. 7 - Miersma; Jan. 21 - Moore; Feb. 4, 11 - Kuiper; March 4 - Lanting.

The next meeting of Classis West will be held in South Holland, Illinois on March 7, 1973, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk  
Classis West