

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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The RES, The GKN, And The WCC- Fizzle!

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Walking in The Old Ways

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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Meditation

The Hope of God's Children

Rev. M. Schipper

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." — I John 3: 2,3.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons (or, the children) of God."

Thus the apostle begins to unfold what lies in the astounding fact that we have been born of God. We, who by nature are nothing but poor sinners, we have been born of God Who is righteous!

And make no mistake about it! When the apostle writes, "Behold," he is using no mere interjection, but an imperative. He means to say: "Be sure that you take a very good look at it, that you consider very

seriously this great love of God. And when he says, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us," he is reflecting both on the quality and the quantity of this love.

What glorious, sublime love!

If you see it aright, you will sink down in humble adoration and awesome wonder before it. It is beyond comprehension. And the marvel of it is, that neither we ourselves nor any one else in the world can find in us anything that could in any wise have called forth such love. It is a love which freely and sovereignly has

been bestowed and given to us. Therefore also the very nature of that love is that it remains; it abides forever.

That we should be called sons (or better, children) of God!

To be called children of God implies, of course, that we are after Him Who is the Only Begotten of the Father, Who is the Son. Implied also is the truth of spiritual adoption. For you understand God has but one Son. Shall God have any other children, they must be obtained through the legal process of adoption. Also implied in this truth is the fact that we as God's children in a creaturely measure partake of His life, glory, and love. That God calls us His children implies a certain fellowship between the Father and us; which the world cannot know. And it cannot know this because it does not know the Father.

In our text the apostle further develops this marvelous truth by setting forth the following facts: We are the children of God NOW. It does not yet appear what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. That if this is our expectation, then we will be walking in sanctification.

Really the apostle is speaking of: The Hope of God's Children!

Pay close attention, first of all, to the rich contents of this hope!

What is it that the children of God hope for? What is it that they expect and constantly long for more than anything else? Is it perhaps that they may be completely delivered from sin and death, from the suffering of this present time, from the devilish howling of this present evil world? Oh, indeed, this constitutes a part of his longing; and of this there can be no question. Yet this is all so negative. There is something much more positive to the Christian's hope. And that is that he may be near unto God, and be like Him!

And when we say this, let us be very careful that we do not understand this in the sense of essential likeness. You remember that in the beginning, when the devil approached our first parents in the temptation, he posited the idea that should they transgress the divine commandment by eating of the forbidden tree, they would be as God? Having denied the very Word of God which had forewarned them that in the way of transgression they would surely die, the devil then said unto Eve: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God knowing good and evil." Besides the implication suggesting that God had a sinister purpose in forbidding the eating of the fruit of the tree, this statement also implies that man would become God in the way of transgression. Here we have not only a clear indication of the essence of the devil's own sin and fall, namely, pride (see in this connection I Timothy 3:6); but at the same time an indication of

the true nature of sin. Sin, beloved, not only of our first parents, but all sin, has as its basic element the will to be as God. And that means, to be God's equal. And it follows that if it were possible to be God's equal, God would no longer be God. Man would be his own god. He would be sovereign. He would sit on the throne, while God would be dethroned. But to be as God in this sense is nothing more than the devil's lie.

God only is essentially God!

He only has being in Himself. He is the being that must bring forth all other beings and sustain them, or they cannot continue to be. Never could it ever be possible that the creature becomes the Creator, or man becomes God.

Man must remain forever creature! Less than nothing, in comparison with Him Who is God alone. Forever there remains an impassable gap between God and man. Though it is true that God becomes man in the incarnation, He never lost His essential nature as God, nor did the human nature become divine. Very carefully the Word of God teaches that the two natures are never mixed or interchanged. As the church has always believed and expressed it: in the incarnation the unity of Person in two natures existed, which is unmixed, unchanged, undivided, and inseparable. Again, we say, nay, God says, that He ever and alone is God.

To be like unto God, therefore, can mean only in a creaturely sense. Man was created in the beginning in this sense in the image and likeness of God. And that meant that in a creaturely way man resembled God and reflected His image. This image man lost completely. Fact of the matter is that after the fall man took on the image of the devil. In the place of true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, came wilful ignorance, according to which man held the truth under in unrighteousness; an unrighteousness according to which man in wilful disobedience transgresses all of God's commandments; and unholiness, according to which man is inclined to all evil and incapable of doing any good. Oh, indeed, man did not become another creature. He remained a man and image bearer; but he bore the image of his master, the devil.

And here is the wonder of grace, and of the eternal love of God – God would have children! Children, too, that would reflect in their creaturely way His likeness!

Glorious prospect!

To which, of course, must be added the glory of the new creation! A creation that, negatively expressed, shall be delivered from all sin, misery, and death; and, positively, reflecting the very glory of God. Wherein righteousness shall dwell. And in the very center of which shall be the glorious God with His glorified children. Children, in whom God shall behold His own image, as it has been given unto them by His Son, Who is the exact and essential image of the Father.

This is the highest good!

This is the object of the Christian's hope!

Hope here, and throughout the Word of God, is that grace in the children of God that expects and therefore longs for the unseen. According to it, they wait for something in the full confidence that they shall attain to it. Hope is realized in them now as a certain tension, a drawing power that pulls them ever closer to the object of their hope — when they shall be like unto God!

When He is manifested! That is, the God of our salvation in the face of Jesus! Whom we see now, as in a darkened glass in the Scriptures; but Whom we shall see then face to face. When He shall be manifested, that is, when He shall break through the clouds of our present time, yea, when He shall come on the clouds and every eye shall see Him as He is.

This hope of God's children is a certified possession! Already principally true!

For *now* are we the children of God! It is a present reality!

Not only have we been juridically adopted, and the adoption papers have been written with a pen of blood, the blood of God's only Begotten Son our Lord. But we have also already been spiritually born again by the Spirit of regeneration. Not only are we declared to be the children of God now in the legal sense of that term; but we are already the children of God by the new birth. Born we are from above. Oh, indeed, it does not yet appear what we shall be, for none of us can possibly know all the implications of the final glory of the children of God. But this we know, that now, even while we are in the present world and we still dwell in this sinful flesh, that right now we are the children of God. Were this not true, we could never hope. The fact that we hope is the evidence that we are the children of God now. And it is the very nature and activity of the hope in them to long with confidence for the moment when, in body and soul, they shall be like God.

But this we know . . . !

And that knowledge, how great and wonderful it is!

Not only has God known all His children in love from before the foundation of the world, but He was pleased to reveal to them that knowledge; and in such a way that they also know, with the certain knowledge of faith, that they are the children of God.

Oh, indeed, there may be moments when sin seems to have the upper hand over us, and doubts may rise up in the soul whether it is true that we are the children of God. But those doubts are our infirmities. Doubt never speaks the language of faith. Faith says, "In spite of all my weaknesses, sins, and

short-comings, I believe nevertheless, on the basis of Christ's work for me, in me, and through me, that I am a child of God."

It is also true that this knowledge we have while we look through a darkened glass. That is, we cannot yet see ourselves as standing actually before the face of God and reflecting His likeness. Because Christ is not yet manifested, we have to look at ourselves in the mirror of His Word. But looking into that mirror, as the apostle Paul expressed it, "we are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

What sanctifying influence this must have on our lives!

So the text also expresses it: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

This can only mean that when we are the children of God, children of hope, then we will walk like that, even now. It means that everything in us as we now appear in the world that smacks of darkness, we hate. Every inclination to sin, every motion of our corrupt flesh, we will despise, and crucify, — put it to death. Purification, it should be remembered, is the link between the present and the future, between what we are now and what we shall be.

The only way sonship blossoms into perfect likeness is purification!

And Christ, God manifested in the flesh, is the standard!

Pure as He is pure we must be, and we must become!

This purification, you understand, is not our work. Not so is it, that God would like us to become His children, and now we must see to it that we become His children. Nor is it so that God would like very much that we should look like Him, and so we must see to it that we change. Oh, no! Salvation is of the Lord, from beginning to end!

We are the children of God! Don't change that to read: We must become such children!

God has redeemed us, and we therefore live and walk as children of God. And God saves us unto the uttermost. The good work He has begun in us, He finishes it unto the end. But He does it in such a way that we hate what He hates, we crucify what He ordered dead, we love what He loves, we long for what He has promised. We work out what He works in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Hope is not a cold expectation!

It is a living, vibrant activity in the child of God, that moves him to walk in the way of sanctification, without which no man shall see the Lord.

No one is so intolerant as a liberal advocating CHANGE in the name of tolerance.

Editorials

Editor's Notes

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Correction. A rather serious mistake crept into one of my editorials in the October 1 issue. The last sentence in the first full paragraph in column 2 on page 7 should read: Does he not know that long before they returned to the CRC, we predicted that they would do so *not* because of a doctrine of particular grace that could not be preached, but because of a doctrine of grace which was principally Arminian, on account of which De Wolf was disciplined and for which his group left the PRC?

Question Box. I beg the patience of a couple of questioners who have already waited for some time. In the next issue Question Box will appear, D.V.

Theological School Building. Your editor takes this opportunity to join with Prof. Hanko (see his Convocation Address) in expressing gratitude for the overwhelming response, thus far, to the Fund Drive. At

this time we have no further progress report, except for one item. Recently our Building Fund Treasurer reported to me that he received a contribution of \$500.00 from a sister who is not a member of our denomination and who does not live in the vicinity of a Prot. Ref. Church, but who loves the truth which we preach and teach. Gifts of this kind carry with them their own, special message of support and encouragement; and, needless to say, they are welcome! For any who may be of a similar mind, here is the address: Theological School Building Fund, c/o Mr. R. H. Teitsma, 1659 Shangrai La Dr., S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49508.

It is not too late to take advantage of the combination book-and-subscription offers which appeared in the September 15 issue. Responses have begun to trickle in. Check the green sheet in the September 15 issue for these bargains!

The RES, The GKN, And The WCC-- Fizzle!

Judging from the Agenda of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, Sydney, Australia, 1972, one might expect that there would be some ecclesiastical fireworks on an ecumenical scale. For, as we shall see, there were before the RES some serious challenges to the right of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* of the Netherlands to membership in the RES. These challenges were based in part on the doctrinal liberalism which has swept the GKN like an irresistible tide, and in part on the fact that the *Gereformeerde Kerken* are members of the World Council of Churches.

Judging, however, from the decision taken on this matter by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod when it met in Sydney during August, the fireworks never got off the ground. True, the *RES News Exchange* speaks in its report (Special Issue, Sept. 5, 1972) about the RES passing a "crisis in membership."

But the decision is a complete "fizzle" — like fireworks which fail to detonate. In fact, as we shall see, a reading of the decision fails to indicate that there even was a crisis. For the decision fails completely to face any issues whatsoever.

Challenges

The *RES News Exchange* mentions the fact that there were six communications which had placed this matter on the agenda. Of these six, three appear in the printed Agenda; and these three alone are serious enough to have precipitated a crisis. Let us look at these communications. I shall not comment on them in detail, though various remarks could be made about them. But I shall let these communications speak for themselves, so that the reader can see just how clearly and simply the issues were brought before the RES.

The Reformed Churches of New Zealand took the following decision:

That the following motion be conveyed to the Interim-Committee of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod to be acted on at the 1972 meeting of the R.E.S.:

a. That the Reformed Ecumenical Synod consider whether the resolutions adopted by the Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in Nederland, in its meeting of 5 November 1970, regarding the teachings of Dr. H. M. Kuitert and others, who share his convictions, do not conflict with the requirements for membership as set out in Art. IV of the Rules and Standing Orders of

the R.E.S. (or art. V of the Constitution, should it be adopted), and

b. that the Synod should it find that there is conflict, request the Gereformeerde Kerken to withdraw from the R.E.S. or alternately make provisions for the exclusion of these Churches from the membership of the R.E.S. in order that a situation in which the basis of the R.E.S. becomes ambiguous be avoided.

We may note that the above resolution does not ask for definitive action. It asks only for *consideration* of the question whether the GKN are in conflict with Article IV of the Rules and Standing Orders of the RES, though it may be granted that it surely suggests that there is ground for suspicion. And it makes a *conditional* request for termination of membership: "... should it find that there is conflict. . . ." Hence, the resolution is a weak one; but it does indeed bring up the issue.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church brought two communications to the RES on this matter of membership, especially the membership of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. (We may note, incidentally, that the issue of membership in the World Council of Churches involves not only the GKN, but also the Reformed Churches of Ceylon and of Indonesia.) The first communication (*Agenda*, p. 107) from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is as follows:

May 20, 1971

To the Reformed Ecumenical Synod
Meeting in Sydney, Australia 1972
c/o Dr. Paul G. Schrottenboer
General Secretary

BRETHREN:

The Thirty-seventh General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, meeting in Portland, Oregon, July 6-10, 1970 determined by vote of the Assembly to submit the following Overture to the 1972 Synod of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod:

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

Cordially yours in Jesus Christ,
Robert E. Nicholas
Stated Clerk

This Overture is very forthright and to the point. It requests the RES to take a stand, and that, too, an

unequivocal stand. My only criticism of this overture is that it is too lenient in proposing that churches which are members of the W.C.C. be given two years to make up their minds. I call this "too lenient" in the light of the fact that this question of W.C.C. membership has been before the RES previously more than once. In 1968 the RES-Amsterdam decided "that Synod reaffirms the advice which previous Synods have given to member churches 'not to join the W.C.C. in the present situation.' " (cf. Articles 95, 105) Nevertheless, this Overture of the OPC is a solid one.

From the same denomination came a more extensive communication dealing specifically with the question whether the *Gereformeerde Kerken* are faithful to their confessional commitment and are in harmony with the confessional Basis of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. This, too, is a sound and forthright communication. It mentions specific deviations of the Dutch Churches. If the RES had forthrightly faced up to the matters mentioned in this communication, it might have accomplished something worthwhile. We quote this Communication No. 7 in its entirety (*Agenda*, pp. 130-132), and we urge the reader to pay careful attention to it:

August 21, 1971

The Reformed Ecumenical Synod
The Rev. Paul G. Schrottenboer, General Secretary
1677 Gentian Drive, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49508

FATHERS AND BRETHREN:

The Thirty-eighth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, meeting May 24-29, 1971, in Wilmington, Delaware, determined to address the Reformed Ecumenical Synod as follows:

In view of the deviations from the apostolic teaching cited in the letter from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands dated April 6, 1971 and appended hereto, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church respectfully requests the Reformed Ecumenical Synod to determine whether the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands does, in fact, substantiate its contention that it still maintains its confessional commitment and thus submits to the authority of Christ through his Word. In making such a request, we call the attention of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod to the statements concerning this matter in the Rules and Standing Orders of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod to which all member churches are committed. The section on membership indicates that all denominations of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod "profess and maintain the Reformed Faith" and "therefore subscribe to the Basis as expressed in Article II" of said document. And the Basis itself states as "a fundamental requisite" that Reformed Churches stress "the headship of Christ and the marks of the true Church: the pure preaching of the Gospel, the Scriptural administration of the Sacraments, and

the faithful exercise of discipline." It is difficult for us to understand how the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands can on the one hand declare that Dr. H. M. Kuitert's "negation of the historicity of the fall of man" is not in agreement with the confessional statement of the Scriptural truth which "must also be maintained as authoritative by the church as having importance for the proclamation of the Gospel" and then on the other hand proceed to resolve that "the unity of the confession of the church is not (niet) so much threatened that special decisions would be necessary."

The Assembly further determined that a copy of this letter be sent to each member church in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod.

Your brethren in Christ,
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Richard A. Baker, Stated Clerk

Attachment

April 6, 1971

The General Synod of the
Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
c/o Rev. K. J. Schaafsma,
Prof. v. Bemmelenlaan 1a
Utrecht-5, The Netherlands

Esteemed Brethren:

The General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church instructed its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to communicate with your Synod providing examples of the serious differences between our two churches and indicating further our continued conviction that the difficulties of the sister-church relationship require this termination.

This action was prompted in part by your gracious letter to us in response to our indication of intention to end the sister-church relationship. In particular, we noticed that you indicated that you were aware only of our difference with reference to the World Council of Churches, and stated that no other objections have reached you. The following items are an attempt to provide examples of those serious differences.

1. The World Council of Churches — The action of the Thirty-second General Assembly, 1965 (*Minutes*, pp. 93-100) in response to your earlier decisions, now put into action by your application for membership.

2. Women in the Teaching or Ruling Office — The action of the Thirty-fourth General Assembly, 1967 (*Minutes*, pp. 100-102) in response to your report *The Place of Women in the Ministry of the Church*, which views of yours have now been put into practice by the admission of women to this office.

3. The decision that the declaration of the special general synod held in Assen from January 26 to March 17, 1926 respecting the interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3 is no longer in force in the churches. It was an overture on this matter which served as the occasion for the decision of the Thirty-sixth General

Assembly, 1969 (*Minutes* pp. 104 and 112) to indicate its intention of bringing to an end the sister-church relationship between our two churches.

4. The Doctrine of Scripture — Exception has been taken by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to the declaration of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of Potchefstroom (1958) (See especially, *The Acts and Reports of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, 1968*, pp. 60-307f), stating that your Synod cannot itself provide that which the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of Grand Rapids, 1963 asks for because of "a number of questions concerning the scope and nature of this authority which are still very much in discussion." (p. 308). The communication from your Synod refers to several writings of your professors on the Scriptures which seem to us to contain repudiation of the historic Reformed view of the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures. The Thirty-Seventh General Assembly, 1970 (*Minutes*, pp. 123ff.) has asked your Synod to clarify its original objection and has at the same time briefly declared our own commitment.

These are examples that can be officially documented from actions of our Assemblies. In addition the Christian Reformed Church in North America has specified more in length and in detail these serious differences. Acts of Synod, Christian Reformed Church in North America, 1970 Art. 99, pp. 50-53.

A more recent example is the declaration of your General Synod of Sneek, November 5, 1970, concerning the letters of protests against Dr. H. M. Kuitert's views in Genesis 1-3 and Romans 5.

The Synod acknowledged Dr. Kuitert's "denial of the historicity of the fall into sin, as man's turning away from God at the beginning of human history" and at the same time declared "that the unity of the confession of the church is not (niet) so much threatened that special decisions would be necessary." The Synod acknowledged that one had denied the apostolic teaching but then took no disciplinary action. We regard this as a serious failure to follow the Scriptural demand that the church must discipline those who deny the apostolic teaching.

For the sake of the cause of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray that you will heed the admonition of your sister churches throughout the world and thus demonstrate that you are truly catholic and reformed in your subjection to the Lord and his Word.

Fraternally yours,
The Orthodox Presbyterian Church
per The Committee on Ecumenicity
and Interchurch Relations
LeRoy B. Oliver, Chairman

For the rest, I do not know what other communications were on the docket of the RES concerning this matter. I do know that the Christian Reformed Synod of 1972 gave instructions to their delegates to the RES on this matter. In Article 46

(*Acts*, 1972, p. 61) the following was adopted:

4. That synod counsel our delegates to the RES to oppose any definitive action by the RES re termination of the membership of the Gereformeerde Kerken at RES Australia 1972.

Grounds:

a. The situation is still in flux in the churches of the Gereformeerde Kerken, and the matter is being dealt with by the Synod of Dordrecht (1971-1972).

b. An evaluation of trends cannot be completed until it is clear which trends will prevail and which positions will finally be adopted.

The contrast between this decision and that of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church can hardly be missed. Moreover, one has to be blind in order to think that the above Christian Reformed motion is true. Certainly, the situation is not "in flux" as far as the World Council is concerned in the GKN. They have made up their mind long ago; and they did so in flagrant disregard of the warning of the RES itself. Nor is it difficult to evaluate trends in the GKN: all the trends are plainly liberal. And besides, positions have already been adopted one after the other. About the only difficulty there is with respect to the GKN is that of keeping up with the rapid changes which are taking place.

RES Decision

As we mentioned, the decision of the RES is reported by Dr. Paul Schrottenboer in the *RES News Exchange* of September 5. In this report, the decision is introduced by the following comments:

Seldom if ever since the RES was established in 1946 has there been such a thorough and basic discussion on qualifications for membership as was held in Sydney in connection with the developments within the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Six communications had placed the matter on the agenda and some had called in question whether the Reformed Churches still qualified for membership.

In the discussions within the advisory committee which included representatives of the churches which had sent the communications as well as the Dutch Churches, the issues were thoroughly explained and considerable clarification and some drawing together of minds was reached. Although the advisory committee submitted two reports, neither report suggested that the Dutch church be placed before the ultimatum of withdrawing from the WCC or becoming ineligible for continued membership in the RES.

And then follows the decision on this matter:

The RES welcomes the concern of member churches in the spiritual welfare of, and theological developments within other member churches, since the unity of the body of Christ, the witness of the RES in the world, and the Scriptural truth that the welfare of the body depends upon the welfare of

every member of that body, demand an abiding interest in one another's wellbeing.

As an advisory ecumenical body the RES itself is concerned with 'the spiritual welfare and the Scriptural government of the Churches.' Certainly this includes the duty to encourage and admonish member churches where matters of concern to other member churches are involved.

The RES expresses its deep concern about the theological views of Dr. H. M. Kuitert and some other theologians, and accepts the assurance of the delegates of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands that their churches are giving their serious and continuing attention to these views. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands are assured of the prayers of the other member churches in these days.

The RES also takes note of the fact that correspondence between the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and at least some of the churches that have expressed their concern in overtures and communications, is being continued. (RES NE 9/5/72)

COMMENTS

This decision I described as a "fizzle." A complete failure! A disappointment!

Please do not misunderstand my figure. It is not that I desired fireworks in the sense of controversy and an ecclesiastical explosion at Sydney merely out of a delight in such things. There is always a distasteful aspect to such controversy and a sad aspect, certainly, to any ecclesiastical explosion — even though ecclesiastical controversy and explosions may be both necessary and salutary.

But this is not my point in using the figure of a "fizzle."

Fireworks are supposed to *produce*. Any boy knows that when you light the fuse on a "cherry bomb," you wait a few seconds in tense expectation for it to go "ka-boom!" If you light the fuse, and that fuse sputters and sizzles and finally goes out, and no explosion comes, then you have ... a "fizzle." The "cherry bomb" did not produce as it was supposed to produce. And a "fizzle" is, of course, a disappointment, a big let-down. Or if you light a rocket and send it whistling into the air, you expect it to explode in a brilliant and vari-colored star-burst. But when the fuse is lit, and the rocket whistles into the air, and all you behold is darkness — then you have a "fizzle," witnessed by the disappointed "aw's" of those watching the display.

Well, that is what happened at the RES — Sydney.

From all over the world the delegates of many denominations — doctors of theology, ministers, elders — gathered in the land "down under" in the interest of Reformed ecumenism, according to their own avowals.

There was a matter of great importance laid before

them. It concerned the largest and most influential of the member churches of the RES, one of their own sisters. Regardless now of whether the charges were true — and they were, of course — sisters of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, fellow members in the family of the RES, were saying (with documentation) that their sister was erring spiritually. Moreover, the matter was one of the utmost importance. Not only did it concern the flouting by the GKN of a repeated warning sounded by the RES, but it also concerned the very foundation, the very confessional *Basis* of the RES.

Here was a golden opportunity for the RES to produce!

Here was a crucial point at which the RES could show that it is indeed interested in, vitally concerned about, being REFORMED, and genuinely interested in helping all its member churches to be Reformed and to practice genuinely Reformed ecumenism.

Should not the RES have called to the GKN loudly and unequivocally and unambiguously: “Repent! Return from the unholy way of liberal error in which you are walking”? Should not the RES have sounded to the GKN with respect to her membership in the W.C.C. the prophet’s word of warning and reproof to Jehoshaphat, “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord”? Should not the RES have done exactly what the overture of the OPC asked, namely, to warn the *Gereformeerde Kerken* that two cannot walk together, except they be agreed?

Or if — God forbid — the RES was of a mind that the *Gereformeerde Kerken* were not guilty of serious error and misconduct and that the serious charges made against them were unjust, should they not have expressed this?

But what did they express?

Substantially, nothing!

The decision is a fizzle!

The mountain labored, and brought forth a mouse!

Not even the advisory committee dared suggest that the RES stand behind its own previous warnings against membership in the W.C.C.

And the decision itself has no substance. It is nothing but an aggregation of bland truisms and pious mouthings.

“The RES welcomes the concern. . . .” Well, one would hope so! If not, why should there be any RES? But if the RES “welcomes” the concern of member churches, where is the evidence of that welcome? Did not the OPC express such concern very definitely and concretely? And how does this decision evince welcome of that concern — concretely now? Well, frankly now, by ignoring it and by not even giving the OPC a specific answer to its communications.

“As an advisory ecumenical body the RES itself is concerned. . . .” Again, where is the concrete evidence of this concern?

The RES is even able to decide that “Certainly this includes the duty to encourage and admonish member churches where matters of concern to other member churches are involved.” Notice, by the way, that bland “matters of concern.” There is no reference to heresy, no reference to departure from the confessions, no reference to break-down of doctrinal discipline, no reference to the forming of ungodly alliances with unbelieving churches. But if the RES knows so well that this concern includes “the duty to encourage and admonish member churches,” where is the word of encouragement and/or admonition, pray tell? It is nowhere to be found in this decision!

“The RES expresses its deep concern about the theological views of Dr. H.M. Kuitert and some other theologians. . . .” What is the nature of that concern? And why speak of “theological views” instead of heresy? Is the RES in doubt about this? And why single out Dr. Kuitert and some theologians? Is it not much greater cause of concern that the Dutch Synod has failed to exercise any kind of doctrinal discipline? Why not mention the *Gereformeerde Kerken* and their official decisions? Why not express concern about the reversal of Assen, about the Laodicean decision of Sneek, about the repudiation of reprobation, about the replacement of the Formula of Subscription — all official decisions of the GKN?

“. . . and accepts the assurance of the delegates (of the GKN) that their churches are giving their serious and continuing attention to these views.” Translated, this means that the RES is satisfied with the manner in which the GKN are handling affairs by the method of dialogue and failure to take definitive and disciplinary action.

“The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands are assured of the prayers of the other member churches in these days.” What kind of prayers? Prayers for what? That the churches may repent of all their evil deeds? That they may be delivered from their false teachers? That they may have grace to return to the Reformed faith which they have forsaken? That they may put off the unequal yoke with the W.C.C.? You see, God is not mocked! Nor is He fooled by pious words about prayers! And wicked prayers are an abomination to Him. If prayers are to be offered for the GKN in the present situation, they certainly must be prayers for repentance and reformation!

Finally, “The RES also takes note of the fact that correspondence . . . is being continued.” Now there is a decision worthy of an ecumenical synod! Men must travel thousands of miles at an expense of thousands of dollars to take note of continuing correspondence when the very Basis of the RES is threatened and flouted? By all means, make a ponderous pronouncement about on-going correspondence, but say nothing about important issues, and especially not about anything offensive to the GKN!

What a fizzle!

And how do you explain it?

Partly, I suppose, from the fact that the Christian Reformed delegates must have persuaded many to follow the counsel of their Synod not to take any definitive action with the respect to the membership of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.

Partly, it seems, from the fact that the RES has learned some lessons from the GKN about how to conduct a synodical meeting without exercising any kind of doctrinal discipline. The language of this RES decision reminds me, at least, of the ecclesiastical style

of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.

And as far as the W.C.C. is concerned, partly, I think, from the fact that the RES itself, through its Interim Committee, is playing a highly dangerous game of consultations with W.C.C. leadership.

But it will be interesting to learn whether those denominations which brought overtures to the RES about these matters will now be satisfied. I can hardly imagine that possibility. But then, it seems to me, they will as denominations have to take a stand as to *their own* continuing membership in the RES.

Time will tell.

Convocation Address

Walking In The Old Ways

Prof. H. Hanko

(Note: the following is approximately the speech delivered at the Convocation of the Protestant Reformed Theological School on September 6, 1972.)

It is with a deep sense of gratitude to God that we begin a new year of school work in our Seminary. God has made another year of school work possible. He has given us a large number of new students who, this year, begin their pre-seminary training in our school. And there is evidence of concern for and interest in our Seminary on the part of our people both by the large crowd which is gathered here tonight and by the excellent response to our recent drive for a new Seminary building. All these things are evidences and tokens of God's favor towards us and reason for gratitude.

The thought arises at a time like this that we do not begin a new year of school, so to speak, in a vacuum. Other Seminaries throughout this land and abroad also begin at this time of the year a new year of school work. Especially in the light of the fact that we are, relatively speaking, rather small and, by any standards of measurement, insignificant, what justification do we have for opening a Seminary of our own?

There are various answers to this question which could be given. But there is one aspect to which I wish especially to call your attention this evening.

Perhaps what characterizes our times more than anything else is an incessant and sometimes even raucous clamor for change filling the ecclesiastical air. The password of those advocating change is "relevance." The church, it is said, must be relevant to the times, for only in this way will the Church be able to speak intelligently and effectively to our modern age. And so, the call for change touches upon every

aspect of ecclesiastical life. Changes are introduced in the theology of the Church and are sought in the Confessions of the Church. Changes are made in the liturgy of the Church — both in the manner of the worship of God and in the liturgical forms. Changes are suggested for the calling of the Church as she goes about seeking to be effective in today's world. And, to meet these changes, changes are also made in the work of the Seminaries — in the curriculum and in the instruction which is given.

I find particularly appropriate the Word of God as it appears in Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."

Jeremiah was called to prophesy in Judah during evil days. Judah had departed from the ways of Jehovah. The text suggests very strongly that also among the people of Judah the cry for change was in the air. Judah had wearied of the old ways and the nation was looking for something new. The old ceremonies of the law had become an obnoxious burden and the complaint was made that the worship of God according to the old ways was no longer meaningful. These ways of worship were conducive to formal lip service and stifling of any genuine worship of the heart. These ways were unattractive to the youth of the nation and no longer attracted them to the temple. New ways of worship and new methods of expressing the faith of the Church had to be discovered if the

nation was to be relevant to the youth and to the heathen surrounding Canaan. And so the nation had struck out into new paths, experimenting and blazing new trails through uncharted lands, attempting to find different paths to walk in their worship and faith.

To them the Word of God came with force and power: "Stop! Stop walking in the way you are going. Pause for a moment and consider what you are doing. Take inventory and examine the course you have chosen to follow. Inquire concerning the ancient paths. Learn anew of them. And, having learned of them, walk in them."

Obviously, the text uses a figure of speech. It is a figure of speech which is quite common to Scripture. The text describes the life of the people of Judah in terms of a "way" and a "path." The former word is more or less a general word which is often used to describe either the whole of man's life or one particular aspect of it. It defines man's life or an aspect of it in terms of a journey which begins at a certain time and continues on until death. Here this general word "way" is used to describe that aspect of man's life which is particularly characterized by his worship of God.

The latter word, "path," denotes rather a well-trodden and deeply worn path clearly marked because many people have walked that same way in times past.

The latter word is of particular concern to us. This "path" is defined in the text by the word "ancient." It is called "ancient" for various reasons. In the first place, the word "ancient" literally means "eternal." And the word suggests that this path is above all marked by God. It is the path prescribed by God from all eternity which God defines that His people may walk in it. Secondly, it is called "ancient" because it is not a new path, recently discovered or made, but it is, as a matter of fact, very, very old. And, thirdly, it is called "ancient" because many people have walked that way before. This is why it is so well-worn and so deeply beaten.

No doubt, this is also why the text calls this path "good." It is good because it has been defined by God Himself; and many, having walked this path, have found it good.

There is no doubt about the reference as far as the nation of Judah was concerned. These paths were the ways prescribed by the Law of God which was given to Israel through Moses, God's servant. The body of Mosaic legislation prescribed precisely for the nation of Israel how Israel was to walk as God's people in a way pleasing to Him. It described particularly the whole way of the worship of God in the temple with the ceremonies and types which set Israel apart from all the nations under heaven.

Nevertheless, these paths were essentially defined by the promise of the coming of Christ. That promise

shone through all the prescriptions of the law; and in the hope of that promise Israel and Judah were called to walk.

In these paths Israel had walked in ancient times.

There is a comparison here to our own life which we ought not to overlook. The ancient paths for us are still the paths prescribed by God Himself and expressive of His will for us. These paths are clearly and unmistakably defined in God's infallible Word. They define the fundamental principles which govern all our life and conduct. They define the truth which is the content of our confession. They define the manner of our worship of God both as individuals and as Church. They define all our life and walk in the world as we are called to be children of our Father in heaven.

But these paths are also ancient because we have spiritual fathers who have walked in these ways before us. Today, too, the path is well-defined because it has been trodden down by the feet of countless thousands who have come this way before. They are therefore the paths of our Confessions and liturgical forms drawn up in ancient times, defining the ways in which our fathers have walked.

The command which came to Judah is very sharp and contains even an awful indictment. Judah had begun to walk in new paths — uncharted and unmarked — experimenting with new forms of worship and new theologies. But, the text suggests, Judah had *forgotten* the ancient ways. This is quite obviously the implication of the command: "Ask for the old paths." Such asking presupposes that there was a need to know. And this could only be because the ancient paths had been forgotten.

This is usually the way it goes. It is true, of course, that the longer one pursues new paths, the more he forgets the ancient paths. But the fact remains that the clamor for change, the incessant appeal for something new most often arises out of appalling ignorance of the ancient ways. There is something ironical about this. Those who shout the loudest for changes in theology and worship scarcely know what the ancient paths are. The plea for change arises out of ignorance of both Scripture and the Confessions of the Church.

Judah had forgotten the old paths. This was reminiscent of the days of the judges when a generation arose which knew not the Lord nor the wonderful works He had performed for Israel. It was an echo of Hosea's bitter complaint: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." These were the days when Josiah and his workers found the book of the law in the temple, and no one in the whole of Judah even recognized what it was.

To this Judah comes the command: "Stop in the ways you are going! Look about you. Take inventory. Examine the matter of your way. And inquire concerning the ancient paths. And once you have learned of these paths, walk in *them*!"

No less does this command come to the church world of today – and, to us tonight.

We may be thankful that the clamor for change has not yet found a ready ear among us. But the danger is always there. And we must be on our guard. There are always those advocating change, and their arguments can sound very persuasive. Besides, who will deny that the new and untried always has its own unique appeal?

Nevertheless, the calling comes to all of us here tonight to inquire concerning the ancient ways. That implies, first of all, a constant searching of the Scriptures to learn the will of Jehovah God: for the ancient ways are His prescription for us. But it implies also a thorough acquaintance with our Confessions and Liturgical Forms. These are the ways that are of old. They are hallowed by the feet of countless thousands who have gone this way before. They are not ways different from the ways described by the Scriptures. They are the ways of Scripture itself, marked by our fathers as the way the church is called to walk. Over the centuries, since the time of the apostles, the saints of Jehovah have trodden these paths until they are hard-packed, well-trodden paths, clearly visible for all who want to see. And they are paths even upon which much blood has fallen: for those who have walked this way heretofore have done so at the price of their lives.

We who are called to engage in the work of instruction solemnly pledge to you all that we shall heed this admonition and command. We shall, in humble dependence upon God and by the power of His grace, inquire into the ancient ways and walk in them.

But I take this opportunity also to press home upon you who are studying in our school this same truth. Some of you will be studying part of the time in local colleges. You may be sure that you will meet with this clamor for change. You may be sure, too, that the arguments will sound sometimes persuasive and convincing. You may be sure that the temptation will be strong to change your theology, your Confession, your way of worship in the name of relevance. I urge upon you this truth of God's Word. It is Jehovah God Who commands it. "Thus saith Jehovah. . . . Inquire concerning the ancient ways, where is the good way, and walk therein." Let the Word of God be your rule and guide always. Honor the paths which your fathers have trod. For the paths they have marked out are

paths given to them by the Spirit of Christ always present in the Church.

But no less does this command come to all of us. It is said sometimes, and correctly, that when heresy comes into the Church it usually comes from the top down. I.e., it comes from the Seminaries and schools. And from there it filters down into all levels of Church life. I do not mean to dispute this. But we must not forget that the opposite also is true. No Seminary can be any stronger than the Church which cherishes it, loves it, supports it, and prays for it. That is true of our Seminary too.

What was Judah's response to this command? Coldly they said: "We will not walk therein." They would not even stop in the way they were going. They would not even pause to consider their way. They would not inquire concerning the ancient paths. They were indifferent and profane. How characteristic of our own times!

But in these "new ways" there is no rest.

There is something terrible about this. But it is also paradoxical. New ways are never satisfying. They never bring peace. They never have an end. Always the one who sets his feet upon these ways is driven on by the restless desire for something else, something new again. The new, once tried, becomes old and stale. Its attractiveness is soon gone and its allurements soon turned to ashes. And so, to tickle the fancy, to satiate the craven lust for that which was new, yet other new ways must be devised and new paths explored. And to this there is no end. There can be no end, for the wrath of God abides on those who depart from his Word. The new is always old.

But, the opposite is also true: the old is always new. The ancient paths are always new paths, and they remain such. They are new because they are the paths of God. To the hungry and thirsty heart of the child of God, they are never old. To the guilt-burdened soul they can be nothing but new – every time he walks in them. For they are the paths of God and His Christ. They are the paths of the age-old and yet ever-new truths of the Scriptures. And they never cease to thrill anew the hearts and souls of God's people though he should walk in them all his life.

In these ways God's people find rest for their souls. "Our souls can find no rest," Augustine said, "till they rest in thee."

There are those who speak of a "less absolute antithesis." "Less absolute" is obviously not absolute at all, but relative. And "relative" and "antithesis" are contradictory terms. Those who use such terminology actually mean "synthesis."

From Holy Writ

Pure And Undeiled Religion (2)

An Exposition of the Epistle of James

Rev. Robert D. Decker

Verse 1, James, a slave of God . . . (continued)

James, the slave of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, addresses the Word to "the twelve tribes scattered abroad." A better translation would be: "to the twelve tribes which are in the dispersion." There are two possible interpretations of this. Some take it to mean literally the Jews who had been converted and were now dispersed throughout the world. Others understand this to be a reference to "spiritual Israel," children of God of both Jew and Gentile. The former explanation is no doubt correct for several reasons. There is frequent reference to Old Testament examples: not only to saints such as Abraham, Rahab, Elijah, Job; but also to such things as the early and latter rain, the husbandman, the synagogue. There is the absence of any reference to the many problems encountered by the church when the Gentiles were called into the fellowship of the body of Christ — problems concerning circumcision, for example. Finally, the fact that the readers are described as being "in the dispersion" strongly argues for our position. These are no doubt the Jewish Christians who were forced to flee Jerusalem as a result of the persecution which followed upon Stephen's martyrdom (cf. Acts 8 & 9).

This, of course, does not mean the Letter has no significance for us today. There is no cleavage between Jew and Gentile; all are one in Christ. And, the eternal Word of God speaks to the church in every age. Still more, the dispersed Jewish Christians picture vividly the Church of Jesus Christ scattered throughout the world, the "elect strangers" to whom the inspired Apostle Peter writes, (I Peter 1:1, ff.) who are "born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undeiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. . . ." These are *in* but not *of* the world of sin. Therefore they are hated, persecuted; friends of God, and thus enemies of the world. To these, the Jewish Christians in the dispersion in the first century, and to the believers dispersed in the world today comes the Word of God through His slave, James.

That word is very simply, "greeting." The word really means "rejoice, be glad." It was a form of wishing one happiness. Now, this is not just the wish of James for the church but the living Word of God. God

is saying to believers in the dispersion, "greeting, rejoice, or be glad." And, when God Who "speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast," says, "rejoice," we rejoice! His Word is a powerful, creative, life-giving and life-changing Word; it fills us with the joy of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Verses 2-4, "The Joy of Temptations" . . .

With that brief introductory greeting James gets right down to the first need of the saints of God scattered throughout the world. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

What are these "divers temptations"? We should understand that James means the temptations of the devil. Some commentators would translate "divers trials," pointing to verse 13, where the Scripture clearly states that God tempts no man. Besides, those of this opinion argue that Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." How then could the scriptures admonish God's children to count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations? In order to understand clearly the meaning of the text it is well that we pay attention to the distinction between temptations and trials. While the means may often be the same, temptations are not the same as trials. They are different, first, as to their source. Temptations always come from Satan and never come from God (cf. vs. 13); while trials always come from God and never from the devil. The motive of the two differs. Satan, that old deceiver, tempts us because he hates us; and he hates us because he hates God. Because he hated God and desired the destruction of God's cause, the devil tempted our first parents (Gen. 3). The devil has been busy doing the same ever after. God, however, tries His people because He loves them in Christ and desires that they enjoy the blessings of salvation. Thirdly, trials and temptations differ as to their goal. The devil's goal in tempting us is to cause us to sin. His purpose is to destroy us and ultimately to destroy God's cause. God tries us, on the other hand, to save us. His purpose is always to draw us into deeper fellowship with Himself.

James is saying here that we are to count it all joy not when we fall into divers *trials*, but most

emphatically when we fall into divers temptations. When the devil tempts you, count it all joy. That this is true will become evident as we proceed to listen to what the Spirit says to the Church in these verses.

These temptations are said to be *divers*. This word means of all sorts of colors or many different shades. Very simply, then, the temptations of the Evil One are of a host of different forms and variations. All of them, contrary often to appearance, are vicious attempts on the part of Satan to destroy us. Today the devil is busy using the wealth and ease of the world to tempt. His aim is to get us all wrapped up in what the Bible calls in Hebrews 11, "the pleasures and treasures of Egypt." Cunningly the devil works, tempting us one step at a time; gradually our spiritual senses become dulled, and we become lax and apathetic. The end of the process is reached when our entire life is consumed by things earthly, so that the focus of our living becomes the job, the beautiful home, the vacation, the ball game, or whatever, while the affairs of Church and Kingdom become secondary. We worship on Sunday but have no time for Bible study. If there is time left over we may squeeze a few moments to work for evangelism or attend an occasional society meeting or work for the Christian School. Satan bombards us with enticements which appeal to our sinful flesh. He uses the means of television, radio, and printed page to hold before us the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes, making it almost impossible to shield our children and bring them up in the fear of God.

The Tempter also appears on the pulpit and in the classroom through false preachers and teachers. Very subtly he chips away at the truth of the Word of God. He calms the uneasy by assuring them that these preachers and teachers are sincerely pursuing the truth. After all, the sixteenth century creeds cannot possibly speak to the needs of the Church in the twentieth century. The Church must keep on reforming, and there must be freedom for theologians to discuss and develop our understanding of the truth.

And when all else fails, Satan will scorn and ridicule and even kill the faithful. The history of God's Church from the very beginning (witness the murder of Abel) testifies to this in the clearest of terms.

Thus the slaves of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, scattered abroad in the world, fall into divers temptations. Note: James does not say we are to put ourselves into divers temptations. Always we are to flee temptations, and never are we to seek tempting situations. We are instructed precisely for this reason to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us

from evil." But, we do fall into temptations; i.e., we fall among divers temptations, or into the midst of divers temptations. That's bound to be, merely because we are the slaves of God in the dispersion. Through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ we have been taken out of the misery of sin and translated into the Kingdom of God. Hence we are in, but not of, the world of sin. We are already raised up to newness of life by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore our citizenship is in heaven, whence also we look for the Savior (cf. Romans 6, Philippians 3). What the Scripture is saying, then, is: when because you live by faith out of Jesus Christ and seek the Kingdom of heaven as God's slaves, when you fight the battle of faith against Satan, the world, and your own sinful flesh, when, as a result of that, you find yourselves in the midst of divers temptations, and the way is very narrow, and you suffer for Jesus' sake, what must your attitude be? How must you regard this?

The answer is: "Count it all joy"! We are to consider or judge those divers temptations into which we fall all joy, i.e., pure or unmixed joy.

That is a difficult Word to receive! If the Scripture admonished us to *bear* those temptations, submit or be resigned to them, we could understand it. Or if James had said we are to trust in the Lord Who will never suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, we would not find it so difficult. If the Word here were that we should be thankful even in temptations because someday we will be in glory, we would understand. Or if we were reminded of reasons to be joyful even in our sorrows, we would understand. While all this is true enough, the text goes a step farther and exhorts us to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations. Count it all joy that you have to battle the devil on so many fronts and in so many ways. When you have to struggle against the Evil One day in and day out and you grow weary as it becomes increasingly difficult to be faithful, count it all joy. Consider it all joy when you are scorned because you refuse to compromise the faith. There is in all of this absolutely no reason for grief. The divers temptations which result in the great struggle of the Christian and in his suffering for Christ's sake are reason for great, unmixed, whole joy. As difficult as that may be to understand, that is the Word of God. And the Scriptures are full of this; Matthew 5, Romans 5, I Peter 1 and 4 and many other passages all speak of essentially the same truth.

(to be continued)

The Standard Bearer's witness goes to many overseas addresses; your continued generous support will help expand this witness.

Studies in Election

Its Resistance

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

15. *Its Resistance, (Continued)*

We continue with our examination of an article which appeared about six years ago in *The Chimes*, published by students of Calvin College. The article put down the doctrines of predestination, election and reprobation as "harmful." To go on, the article avers, "There is no such thing as heresy." Then it is added, "There are only Christians and non-Christians." Are not non-Christians, who either consciously or unconsciously reject the Christian faith, to the extent that they do reject it, involved in heresy? Deny there is such a thing as heresy, and you may as well deny there is such a thing as darkness. There is no black and white. Everything is gray. This is a denial of the antithesis, and so, really, a denial there is such a thing as truth. For heresy is always antithetically posed to the truth. The next step would be to deny that there is such a thing as Reformed Truth. But it is Reformed to call the false church heretical (Belgic Conf., Art. 29). It is Reformed to call Pelagianism a poisonous, proud heresy (Canons I.R.IV; II.R.III,IV: III-IV, 10; V.R.VII, IX: Belgic Conf. XV, XXXVI), Socinianism wicked (C.II.R.IV), Anabaptism a heresy (BC XVIII), and Epicureanism and Manicheism error (ibid., XII, XIII). It is Reformed to put down as heretics the Jews, Mohammedans, Marcionites, Sabellians and Arians (ibid., IX). It is not only un-Reformed, it is anti-Reformed; in fact, it is devilish to paint the Reformed doctrine of predestination as an opiate of Satan, or as Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism and Turcism (Canons, Conclusion). But the contention, "There is no such thing as heresy" is, on the part of "insolent sophists a pretext for violently assailing and vilifying the doctrine of the Reformed churches" (ibid.).

This they do in the remark, "When one sees how Christian Reformed people multiply the Ten Commandments into thousands, proscribing everything from a glass of whiskey to a Sabbath swim, one wonders what has become of the truth that was to have made us free." Here lurks a latent hatred for the Ten Commandments which springs out of a secret longing to be free to sin undisciplined and uncondemned, a secret longing for the "new morality" (the old immorality in sophisticated disguise) and the "God-is-dead" fad. Vocation-doubters insult the Reformed churches which confess "the calling wherewith ye were called" and the "liberty wherewith

Christ hath made us free." The reality of "the truth shall make you free" is a freedom *in* the truth, not freedom *from* the truth.

Then we have this: "We say we believe the Spirit in us, but we close the canon with Paul. Did the outpouring of God's grace end with Paul, or are we afraid of what the Spirit might say in the Twentieth century?" More vilification of Reformed doctrine! But we do not close the canon with Paul; we close it with John. As for the canonical Scriptures, "we receive all these books, and these only as a sufficient and only rule of faith and life," (Belgic Conf., V, VII). We are not afraid of what the Spirit might say in the twentieth century, for we know that He "witnesseth in our hearts that the canonical Scriptures and they only are from God, that the *evidence* of this they carry in *themselves*, and that the very *blind* can perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling" (ibid., V).

With deep chagrin this snippety editorial hopes an infinite chasm will be added to the already vast gap between yesterday's Christian and today's. There must be not only no living *in* the past, but neither any living *from* the past. Here is a "gap theory" *toto coelo* different from the bizarre "gap theory" of Dispensationalism. For Modernism reveals its underlying severance from the true church. The false church hates anything that smacks of "orthodoxy," as if *that* were a sort of "spiritual virginity" hardly worth protecting. The false church is the harlot church which wants to be free to commit physical and spiritual fornication with the daughters of men and the sons of Belial. That church which has turned "Modernist" is certainly a false church. Isn't there a real, dangerous trend that many of the Reformed churches are going in that direction? and isn't it a fact that some of them have "arrived"?

Let us consider another line of resistance to this truth. God is the only one with a sovereignly free will. Has He not the right to exert it as He pleases, to do what He will with His own, to predetermine the destiny of all His creatures? But proud, self-assertive, would-be autonomous man objects to this. By nature a rebel, he pickets the Lord, carrying his little placard, "God is unfair!" This because God hath mercy on whom He will and whom He will He hardeneth. He reasons that God should create all men equal, and give everyone the same opportunities for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as well as for salvation. It is

partiality to show mercy to one and severity to another. It is partiality to bring one man into the world into the midst of poverty, while another is born amidst riches. There should be equality. But the demand for equality originates not with equity, but with inferiority. It is the inferior mind which cannot escape thinking, "People have no right being different; it's not democratic." But it should be obvious that the creation did not come about democratically. Will anyone, for that reason, be so absurd to reject it? The universe is here to stay. Let the wise man be heard who said, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, 'Why hast Thou made me thus?' Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (Rom. 9:20f).

The mystery of God's sovereignty will be plainer to God's people when they understand that "God is light" as well as "God is love." He is a just God *and* a Savior, holy as well as gracious. Both of these aspects of the truth as seen in predestination. In the election of His people, God reveals the riches of His grace. In the reprobation of the rest, God proves His holiness and justice.

Who will maintain that God owes all men without exception eternal salvation? If He does, then He must also owe them all earthly prosperity. For argument from the greater to the lesser is conclusive. If God, to be perfectly just, must provide for the salvation of all men, so He is bound to make equal provision for man's material welfare. But men have neither equal temporal or spiritual opportunities, no, not in this world where God is indisputable Sovereign. Does this, then, make Him unjust? The devil himself is not that much of a fool to suggest it, except to a *cul de sac* brain with "I'm-as-good-as-you-are" thinking. The providences of God are inscrutable and mysterious, unquestionably so. But these impenetrable mysteries reveal not the injustice of the Almighty, but the superficiality of finite understanding. The God of predestination and providence everywhere reveals His infinite attributes of eternity, immensity, incomprehensibility, immutability, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, truth and love. Boundless comfort it is to know that all things happen, not by chance, but by the fatherly hand of Him in whom all such infinite glories inherently shine.

Objectors to divine election never fail to protest that it destroys man's responsibility. If God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, as the Westminster Confession puts it, if His decree fixes every event in history (Ac. 2:22, 23; 4:27f), and settles the destiny of every man, then all human responsibility is destroyed,

and man becomes a stock (a log) and a (concrete) block. So the Arminian contention runs, also insisting that man's will must be free to choose good or to choose evil, otherwise man's moral agency is destroyed. That is why the greater masses of people, led on by their popular prophets, conclude that ultimately man, not God, decides eternal destiny. What is wrong with this objection is that it does not understand two things, responsibility and free will. It presumes that responsibility is limited by ability. Nothing could be more erroneous. Ability is not the measure of responsibility. Man's responsibility was in no way lowered by his fall. The fall left him with very much less ability, than before, but with no less responsibility. In fact, since the fall, man has even more responsibility. Now he is responsible for his sins. But responsibility is one thing and free will is another. His responsibility is increased, since the fall; but his free will is not as free as it was before the fall. Now the will of fallen man is free only in the direction of sin. While there is a notable increase in his responsibility, there is, at the same time, a fatal decrease in his ability. Fallen man suffers total moral impotency, and so a total moral and spiritual inability. Yet he is still as fully responsible as sinless Adam was in the state of rectitude. The idea that his responsibility before God is only according to the ability he has as now a totally depraved sinner is a philosophical dream. The dream interpreted is that the more wholly incapable of any good a man is and becomes, the less responsible he is and becomes. No wonder, then, with this dream deeply ingrained in the mind of man, that today the criminal is set free and the good man is punished. But the law of God dispels such a dream. Every man is answerable to *it*, in thought, word and act, and that personally, perpetually and perfectly.

The spiritual and moral inability of now fallen man does not cancel or annul his responsibility. Actually, the more incapable he becomes of doing any good, the guiltier he becomes, and, with the increase of his guilt, the increase of his responsibility. We are informed of sinners "that cannot cease from sin," the reason being that they are sinners "having eyes full of adultery" (2 Pet. 2:14). It is bad that they are not able to quit sin. It is worse that they cannot because (the eyes of) their minds are full of sin. Their inability cannot excuse them, since it only makes their sin worse, worse in the sense of greater and guiltier. Yet though they "cannot cease from sin," their responsibility to do so remains, even increases, for all men are commanded to "cease to do evil," to "learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16f), to "awake to righteousness and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:34). Argument from impotency, inability and incapability cannot stand in the face of these commands.

Wanted: church members with singleness of heart and singleness of purpose.

The Strength of Youth

Divorce and Remarriage (1)

Rev. J. Kortering

The problem of divorce and subsequent remarriage is becoming a subject of serious discussion amongst our young people. This is understandable. Strained or even broken marriages are becoming more frequent, thereby bringing the problem into the passionate consideration of people who are directly involved in such a sad state of marriage. Anyone personally involved in the breakdown of a marriage, or closely related to someone who is, quite naturally discusses the question of divorce and remarriage in a serious manner. Is divorce, as the dissolution of marriage, unscriptural? Does an innocent person, who is married to a terrible spouse, have to live all his life alone if separated from his or her spouse? Is that what the Bible requires? Besides this, one quickly learns that our churches' stand on divorce and remarriage is certainly the minority stand; and one has little difficulty finding historical support to justify divorce and remarriage if one's spouse commits adultery. To face these issues, we should proceed carefully and thoroughly.

AN INCREASING PROBLEM

Two factors stand out in showing that the breakdown of marriage is increasing. The first deals with the number of marriages that end up in the divorce courts. Last year about 600,000 divorces were granted in the United States. This produces the appalling statistic that approximately one out of every three marriages ends in divorce. The second factor is that this is taking place at an increasing rate. From the United Press report: "The divorce rate in the United States climbed sharply in the 1960s, the Census Bureau said in a survey Monday . . . the increase was 33 percent over 1960." In the year 1970, the rate jumped 40 percent in California. It will not do for us simply to shrug this off and say, "That's the world." Indeed it is, but the church is still in that world; and what happens in this world has a direct bearing upon marriage within the church. We can see this evidence amongst us already.

Cold statistics do not spell out the problem fully. Last year one million two hundred thousand husbands and wives parted ways. The scars of failure, the din of battle, the brawling, beating, screaming, daggered stares, are deeply embedded in the hearts and minds of each one. There are no victors in divorce, only losers. Between opposing forces one finds the bruised and battered lives of children. To some they become chattel to be considered in the bartering for the

settlement. To others they are the inevitable cast-offs of people who have never learned to love. Separation and divorce is deeply sad.

WHOM DO YOU BLAME?

Liberalization of laws pertaining to the dissolution of marriage is becoming more commonplace. California has led the way in 1970; we quote from a United Press release, March 10, 1971, "Under a liberalized law effective Jan. 1, 1970, the word, 'divorce' was dropped in favor of, 'dissolution of marriage.' The traditional grounds of adultery and cruelty were abolished — except in cases where child custody is an issue. The new law requires only that the judge be convinced there are 'irreconcilable differences,' with specifics not required." With this new approach it is not necessary to establish guilt or innocence. There is no lawsuit, one spouse bringing a court action against another. Both decide they can't make the marriage work and appear before the court to get it dissolved. They work out a mutual settlement and are free to find another spouse. It is easy to see how this appeals to married people who are having difficulty and greatly contributes to the breakup of many marriages.

We should ask a deeper question: why are these laws changing? It is disturbing to the conscientious Christian to observe that what was once considered wrong is now so often considered right. This is true in the area of Sunday observance, public nudity, drugs, pornography, abortion, obscenity, etc. Our courts take a lenient position on many issues that should demand immediate condemnation. This also applies to easy divorces and other legal procedures that terminate marriage. Why is this happening before our very eyes? In our country, the judicial system reflects the character and temperament of the majority of citizens. Judicial decrees are expressions of the mores of the people. Moral values change, so the courts change. They have to keep up with the times. This is not right, of course. Situation ethics produces relativism in morals, simply because it is not founded upon the ethics of Scripture, which never change. This should remind us as Christian young people that our evil generation will produce evil laws and will allow the citizens to do things which are immoral and contrary to God's Holy Word. A sexually depraved age clamors for the removal of every vestige of righteousness which serves as an obstacle to the pursuit of their evil

pleasure. If marriage is such an obstacle, marriage has to go!

We intimate that the church today has to take its share of the blame in the breakdown of marriage. Books are written and periodicals are filled with a defense of divorce as the only way out of a bad marriage. Most will counsel that every effort must be put forth to save the marriage, but if this fails, we have to accept the inevitable and learn to live with it. Thus a book entitled *Marriage Counseling, a Manual for Ministers*, by J. K. Morris, states:

Divorce is a crisis for the persons involved in it. Following a divorce many adjustments must be made. If children are involved they too face many problems of adjustment. If the parties to a divorce belong to the minister-counselor's church and both continue to attend that church, there will occur some strained and embarrassing situations. It often happens that one of the divorced persons may transfer to another church, especially if they live in a city where there are several churches of their denomination. In other cases a church of another denomination may be chosen.

This is just one of the many problems caused by divorce. The minister-counselor must try to help the divorced to continue his religious life and to find a congenial church home where he feels he can worship and be active.

Much depends also on the congregation involved. Here we would hope to see the church as a redemptive agent working cooperatively with the minister in helping the divorced adjust.

The point is that divorce is not condemned, not considered a great evil, but accepted as the lesser of two evils and therefore to be dealt with in "love."

GLEANINGS FROM HISTORY

In general, we can observe that the leaders of the church and also official church pronouncements have taken the position that divorce may be granted upon the grounds of adultery. By divorce they mean the complete dissolution of marriage and not "separation of bed and board." Such a dissolved marriage allows the marriage partner, who has not committed adultery, to marry someone else.

Augustine, the great church father, expressed hesitation and doubt on this matter. He writes:

And in the expressions of the divine word, it is so obscure whether he, who has the unquestionable right of putting away an adulterous wife, ought to be accounted an adulterer for taking another that, as far as I can see, in this case any person may make a pardonable mistake. *Treatise, de fide et operibus*, quoted in the book *Divorce and Remarriage* by G. Duty.

Martin Luther, the reformer, expresses it more boldly:

But I marvel even more that the Romanists do not allow remarriage of a man separated from his wife by

divorce but compel him to remain single. Christ permitted divorce in case of fornication and compelled no one to remain single; and Paul preferred us to marry rather than to burn, and seemed quite prepared to grant that a man may marry another woman in place of the one he has repudiated, *Reformation Writing of Martin Luther*, by Woolf.

Feelings entered a great deal into the teachings of Luther on this subject. To illustrate this we have recorded the incident of the landgrave, Philip of Hesse, who was given in marriage to the daughter of Duke George. In those days romantic love was not considered in the least, and this marriage resulted in a miserable marriage for both. We quote from *Here I Stand*, by Bainton:

There were several ways in which his difficulty could have been solved. If he had remained a Catholic, he might have been able to secure an annulment on the grounds of some defect in the marriage; but since he had become a Lutheran, he could expect no consideration from the pope. Nor would Luther permit recourse to the Catholic device. A second solution would have been divorce and remarriage. A great many Protestant bodies in the present day would countenance this method, particularly since Philip had been subjected in his youth to a loveless match. But Luther at this point interpreted the gospels rightly and held to the Word of Christ as reported by Matthew that divorce is permissible only for adultery. But Luther did feel that there should be some remedy, and he discovered it by a reversion to the mores of the Old Testament patriarchs, who had practiced bigamy and even polygamy, without any manifestation of divine displeasure. Philip was given assurance that he might in good conscience take a second wife.

This was, of course, contrary to the law; and it necessitated secrecy. Soon it leaked out, and Luther's final comment was said to be, "If anyone thereafter should practice bigamy, let the Devil give him a bath in the abyss of hell." This shows that a complete Biblical conception of divorce and remarriage was not thought through by Luther.

Our forefather John Calvin also took the position that adultery dissolved the marriage, and that a person could immediately divorce his or her spouse and be entitled to right of remarriage.

We have some quotations on this which will have to wait until next time.

Why do we spend time with these quotations since they contradict the position of our churches? The reason is not to undermine the teaching of the Scriptures as maintained in our churches. Rather the reason is two-fold. We should search out the best line of reasoning which sets forth the divorce-remarriage position, in order that we can deal with it. It helps one understand his own position better if he has spent some time with the opposing view. This we hope to do. The second reason is that we have lessons to learn from

history. Our forefathers were not infallible men, though many of them were giants in the faith. Their weakness becomes evident when weighed in the balance with their strength. It is not first of all what opinions a man may have on any subject; rather must all truth be tested by the only source of truth, the

Word of God.

As we do this, we trust that we may have the conviction that the Bible allows for separation in marriage only when adultery has been committed, but forbids the dissolution of marriage in any circumstance.

Signs of the Times

The "Sexual Revolution"

Rev. G. Van Baren

Much has been written about the "sexual revolution." Evidences of it have been repeatedly pointed out. There is a greater freeness with "love" and marriage. There is the display of the human body. There is greater permissiveness with respect to sexual deviations. And have you glanced over the magazine racks lately? Both the cover pictures and the titillating titles leave nothing to the imagination. The same may be said of both movie and television.

Very simply stated, there is nothing that can shame man anymore.

We, perhaps, do not notice much of what has been taking place. The transformation covers quite a number of years. The change is gradual. We tell ourselves that history shows repeatedly periods of licentiousness — and what we see today will soon pass as one more silly fad of sinful man. We may even convince ourselves that there is something good in the current "revolution." We are rid of the prudery of the earlier generations. We can now speak more freely of sex; we can be less concerned with dress (or lack of it), than our forefathers were.

I would not maintain, as some have, that this "sexual revolution" is part of a dark communistic plot to undermine our society. Nor would I want to suggest that our age is entirely unique. But I do want to emphasize that we are seeing one more of the signs of the end of this age. We ought to recognize this.

The new revolution

The "new revolution" involves the rapidly changing attitude toward "sex." There is the pre-marital sort — when the bond of marriage has little or no significance. There is the post-marital sort — when infidelity is commonplace and divorce takes place in one of every three marriage unions.

We read of churches, even, established to administer to homosexual members. We hear of increasing laxity with regard to punishment of all such sins: both in state and in church.

One can read, almost without becoming shocked anymore, of the trend toward nudity. According to a recent report in *Time*, this has become rather commonplace in Europe. They write, "So far, however, only nudity has reached epidemic proportions. The monokini, which first appeared in St. Tropez two years ago has spread this year to the beaches of tonier Antibes. . . ." (*Time*, Aug. 28, 1972). One has only to visit our own beaches to recognize that in this country we are not very far from the above either.

Dress is designed today to provoke lustful thoughts and desires. Often the schools today are forced to adopt dress codes to regulate the matter of dress to a degree. This has become true even in some of our own schools. (Such is not, as some might suppose, an infringement upon our "Christian liberty," but is rather a sad commentary upon the fact that we have not always learned to use "Christian liberty" aright. Paul warns concerning this in Gal. 5:13, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.")

And all of this current lust of man is glorified in book, magazine, radio, television, and movie. People "devour" all of this. Over a period of time, it does not appear even all that wrong.

The sad consequences of this are so obvious that even the world takes note of it. One consequence is "the spiraling rate of pregnancies among unmarried girls. . . . Per thousand teen-agers, the number of illegitimate births has risen from 8.3 in 1940 to 19.8 in 1972. Of an estimated 1,500,000 abortions performed in the U.S. in 1971, it is believed that close to a third were performed on teen-agers." (*Time*, Aug. 21, 1972) Nor is this all. *The Presbyterian Journal*, in an article entitled, "The Sexual Jungle," (Aug. 16, 1972), states, "Venereal diseases are now classified as endemic — a step beyond the epidemic stage. Over 1,700,000 cases

of gonorrhea were reported in 1970 by the American Social Health Association. Syphilis, far more serious, attacked 80,000 sexual violators last year. And the ASHA says doctors report only 12-19% of the infectious syphilis cases they treat and 11-17% of the gonorrhea cases. The editor of the *American Journal of Psychiatry* says premarital sex has 'greatly increased the number of young people in mental hospitals'"

Much more could be quoted. But perhaps this is enough to show that one does not, with impunity, violate God's laws. Reports indicate not only physical, but also mental and spiritual consequences for those who follow this path of "revolt." The "new" morality still has the old consequences.

The Testimony of Scripture

The "sexual revolution" began, in fact, at the time of the fall of Adam. Before the fall, Scripture states: "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:25). Sinful, lustful thoughts did not cross their minds. These two dwelt in the state of perfectness. The fact of their nakedness was not itself sin.

But immediately upon disobedience to God's command, man's entire position changed. That which had been pristine and beautiful, now became the occasion for shame. We read in Genesis 3:7, "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Adam later hid himself because of his nakedness (Gen. 3:10).

Also, nakedness became associated with idolatry. For when Israel made the golden calf in the wilderness, we read in Exodus 32:25, "And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:). . . ." Adultery, too, has repeatedly in history been associated with the worship of idols. When Israel departed from their God, these sought both the idols and the adulteries of the heathen about them.

Nor has the situation basically changed today. The more man places his trust in present-day idols (science, medicine, wealth, learning, etc.), the more he boasts in his "new" morality, the more also is seen his lewdness: nakedness, adulteries, and all manner of evil acts. These go hand-in-hand. When man denies God, he seeks to do that which is most offensive to Him. And God, in His wrath, punishes man by giving him over to all of this corruption to his temporal and eternal condemnation.

But Scripture also indicates that children of God can learn from all of this. First, Scripture emphasizes that the adulteries and the nakedness of man is not only sin, but itself is the *sign* of man's great sinfulness. We read, for instance, of that "lukewarm" church of Laodicea in Rev. 3:17, "Because thou sayest, I am

rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

It is God Himself Who exposes the shame of the sinfulness of man by exposing his nakedness. God threatens Judah in Ezekiel 16:36-37, "Thus saith the Lord God; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness." See also passages as: Nahum 3:5; Is. 20:2-4; Ezek. 23:29.

Finally, we must remember that the growing sexual perversions of man represent at the same time God's judgment upon the wicked. God gives over the wicked unto the very lusts which they crave. Rom. 1:26-27, "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet." God is obviously so judging the world today in giving men over to vile affections.

Another Sign of the Times

It seems to me that any discerning Christian must recognize that what we see going on about us is another clear sign of the end. Yes, these perversions were present throughout history since Adam's fall. But never before has this corruption so pervaded the whole earth by means of mass media as we see this today. Christ reminded His disciples that iniquity would abound as a sign of the end (Matt. 24:12). Peter too, in reminding of the indications of the end, states, "But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; . . . having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin. . . . For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error" (II Pet. 2:12, 14, 18).

Do you see the sign? Do you see it as you pick up that magazine? As you listen to the radio? As you watch your television?

Beware lest we assume the attitude that all our forefathers were prudes, and that we are of the more enlightened and intelligent generation. Beware of that ever present danger of attempting to imitate the world in all of its lusts. We are sometimes inclined to do that.

We desire to see how close we can come to the practices of the world. Let us in no way seek to be one with them in their godless corruption. Let us in no way imitate them, nor enjoy their godless walk.

On the contrary, children of the light, dress and act with proper and spiritual modesty. Children of the light take care lest they be found "naked" before the eyes of the Judge of heaven and earth. These

understand well that they must be "covered" — covered with the garments of light and white which are the righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord (Rev. 16:15).

And, clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, these look up, for they know that "the Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5).

Contending for the Faith

The Doctrine of Atonement (Reformation Period)

H. Veldman

How important is the doctrine of Limited or Particular Atonement! How true it is that the doctrine of Particular Atonement and the doctrine of Sovereign Predestination are inseparably connected. The history of the development of doctrine verifies this. Gottschalk died in 868 or 869 A.D. while in prison after an imprisonment of twenty years. Of him we read that, in reliance upon the grace of God, he also offered to undergo the fiery ordeal before the king, the bishops and monks, to step successively into four cauldrons of boiling water, oil, fat and pitch, and then to walk through a blazing pile, but nobody could be found to accept the challenge. This man, of noble Saxon parentage, strong convictions, and heroic courage, revived the Augustinian theory of Divine Predestination. Schaff, in his *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. IV, 524-525, writes as follows, and we quote:

The relation of the Roman church to Augustine in regard to predestination is similar to that which the Lutheran church holds to Luther. The Reformer held the most extreme view in divine predestination, and in his book on the Slavery of the Human Will, against Erasmus, he went further than Augustine before him and Calvin after him (Mind you, this is Schaff speaking. H.V.); yet notwithstanding his commanding genius and authority, his view was virtually disowned, and gave way to the compromise of the Formula of Concord, which teaches both an absolute election of believers, and a sincere call of *all* sinners to repentance. The Calvinistic Confessions, with more logical consistency, teach an absolute predestination as a necessary sequence of Divine omnipotence and omniscience, but confine it, like Augustine, to the limits of the infralapsarian scheme, with an express exclusion of God from the authorship of sin. Supralapsarianism, however, also had its advocates as a theological opinion. In the Roman church, the Augustinian system was revived by the Jansenists, but only to be condemned.

Gottschalk maintained the doctrine of double predestination, as applying not only to the elect but also to the reprobates. He boldly professed his belief in this two-fold predestination, to life and to death. There were those who did not mind speaking of a divine decree of election, but they rejected the idea of a divine decree of reprobation. Of course, we know that these doctrines either stand or fall together. To maintain the doctrine of divine election surely implies that the Lord ordained only some unto eternal life and therefore did not ordain all men unto life eternal; on the other hand, to teach that the Lord did not reprobate implies a denial of the Scriptural doctrine of divine election. Gottschalk maintained the Scriptural doctrine of a double predestination. And he also maintained the doctrine of a particular atonement. He emphasized that the Son of God died only for the elect. He measured the extent of the purpose by the extent of the effect. God is absolutely unchangeable, and His will must be fulfilled. What does not happen, can not have been intended by Him. The fact that all men are not saved must mean that the Lord could not have intended the salvation of all men. The opponents of Gottschalk, rejecting his view on divine predestination, maintained that God would have all men be saved and that the Son of God died for all men.

The fathers of Dordt, we have seen, were also very conscious of the importance of the particular atonement of the cross. They not only set forth this truth, positively, in the Second Head of Doctrine of the Canons, but they also devote several articles to the refutation of the Arminian doctrine of a universal atonement. Indeed, we must not only be positive in our proclamation of the truth, but we must also be distinctive; we must not only set forth the truth, but we must also do all within our power to expose the lie and denial of the truths of the Word of God.

In our preceding article, we were busy with Article II of the Rejection of Errors of Head II of the Canons of Dordt. Whereas the fathers taught that Christ died as the Head of the covenant and of God's covenant people, the Arminians wanted none of this and taught that the death of the Son of God only made salvation again possible for all men. And the fathers of Dordt refute this error with an appeal to the Scriptures, calling attention to the truth that Christ has become the Surety and Mediator of a better covenant.

We will now call attention to Article III of this Rejection of Errors. This article reads as follows:

Who teach: That Christ by His satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for anyone, nor faith, whereby this satisfaction of Christ unto salvation is effectually appropriated; but that He merited for the Father only the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as He might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man, so that it therefore might have come to pass that either none or all should fulfill these conditions. For these adjudge too contemptuously of the death of Christ, do in no wise acknowledge the most important fruit or benefit thereby gained, and bring again out of hell the Pelagian error.

We must bear in mind that the fathers of Dordt are speaking in this article. The Arminians are not speaking here. I suppose that the Arminians would tell you that they do not conceive of the death of Christ as saving none. In this article the fathers of Dordt declare that the Arminians teach us the possibility that none, because of failure to fulfill the conditions required for a sinner to be saved through the blood of the cross, would be saved. How terrible! Imagine, Jesus suffering and dying for the whole human race and for every man, and failing to save a single sinner! And, yet, this is surely and precisely the teaching of the Arminian. Besides, notice, please, that the fathers call the teaching of the Arminians an error that has its origin in hell. Strong language? Yes. But it is true! One does not hear this language too often in our present day and age. Today Arminianism and Pelagianism are condoned, generally openly preached and taught. Today people will tell you that people err in good faith, that they mean well, have no evil intentions. But our fathers must have nothing of this. They tell us in this article that Pelagianism is a heresy that has its origin in hell. And the apostle John warns the church of God not to receive those teachers of heresy into their homes. Let us look a little more closely into this third article of the Rejection of Errors of the Second Head of our Canons.

First of all, according to this article, the Arminians taught that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ merited neither salvation itself for anyone nor faith. They were compelled to teach this. We must bear in mind that they believed in a universal atonement, that Christ died

for all men and for every man, head for head. They believed in a universal love of God, a love of God for everybody, that God would have everybody be saved. They believed in the free will of the sinner, that the sinner must will to be saved. Of course, a sinner must believe and will to be saved, but the Arminians taught that his salvation depended upon this free will, that the Lord could save a sinner only if and after he willed, consented to be saved. Christ, therefore, died for those who would believe, and this means that a sinner's faith is not a fruit of the cross, but that it stands outside of the cross.

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, the Lord was under no obligation whatever to enter into any dealing with the sinner whatever. Man had been created good and in the image of the Lord. And he had voluntarily and wilfully deprived himself and all his descendants of salvation and fellowship with God. God, now, could simply leave 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. Christ opened the way of the Father to do this by His death upon the cross. The Lord could 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.

One may well ask the question: how is it possible for the death of Christ, as understood by the Arminian in the universal sense of the word, to merit for the Father this authority or will to deal again with the sinner? How can the preaching of the cross of Calvary, if understood in this universal sense, possibly serve as the basis for any preaching of the gospel as it generally occurs in our present day and age? How can this death of Christ possibly *merit* this for the Father? Fact is, as far as the Arminian presentation of the cross is concerned, Christ did not merit anything. According to this conception of the cross nothing happened upon Calvary. The Arminian preacher may tell his audience that the Lord offers salvation to all who hear the gospel. But the simple truth is that he really has no salvation to offer to his hearers. How true it is that a universal death of Christ merited no salvation whatever. This means that Christ, dying for all men and every man, head for head, also died for those who perish. He surely did not pay for their sins, for had He died atoningly, then surely they would be saved. None can possibly perish for whom Christ died and paid for his iniquities. But this surely means that the suffering and death of Christ does not bear an atoning character. He did not pay for any sin. The cross of Calvary accomplished nothing. How, then, can a death of our Lord Jesus Christ, which actually merited nothing, merit anything for the

Father? Also in this respect the Arminian simply does not speak the truth.

Of course, the Arminian was compelled to speak as he did and teach that Christ by His death merited for the Father the authority or will to deal again with the sinner. According to him, Christ died for all men. He did not actually merit salvation and faith for all men. Then all men would have to be saved. But he must say something about the cross. If Christ did not actually accomplish salvation by His death upon the cross, He at least merited the possibility of salvation. He at least

opened the way for the Father to deal with the sinner. And so he taught that Christ earned for the Father the authority or will to show unto the sinner how he can be saved. Of course, this salvation of the sinner depends upon his free will. The Lord may now prescribe new conditions, but it is man who must fulfill these conditions. This is the Arminian presentation of the cross, also universally taught today. To this, the Lord willing, we will return in our following article. Then we will note how our fathers answer this conception of the Remonstrants.

Book Reviews

The Old Testament, Its Claims And Its Critics

THE OLD TESTAMENT, ITS CLAIMS AND ITS CRITICS, by Oswald T. Allis; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company; 509 pages, \$9.95 (Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema)

Any work by Oswald T. Allis, the outstanding Presbyterian scholar of the Old Testament, is worthy of a place in the library of ministers and theological students. This is emphatically true of this major Old Testament work, which is undoubtedly the culmination and fruit of much labor and study by what the dust jacket of this book calls "one of the most erudite Old Testament scholars of our generation, who has been engaged for many years in the interpretation and defense of the Old Testament portion of the Holy Scriptures."

This is a work in the field of Old Testament Introduction. The main contents of this book is a series of lectures by the author which were delivered in 1952 at Fuller Theological Seminary. The author tells

us that in this volume said lectures are presented in considerably expanded and revised form. The first five chapters of the book – and the titles will indicate the contents – are as follows:

1. The Old Testament from Within – Its Facts and Its Doctrines
2. The Old Testament from Within – Its Literary Form
3. The Old Testament from Without
4. The Old Testament and Its Critics
5. Comparing the Incomparable

To this reviewer, the sixth chapter, on chronology, which was not included in the original series of lectures, is very informative and helpful. Personally, because of my interest in this particular subject, I found it one of the best.

While this book will require any reader to put on his thinking cap, its readership need not be limited to ministers and theological students. But especially to ministers and theological students, and most especially to those who have a special interest in Old Testament studies, I recommend this book highly.

Written In Blood

WRITTEN IN BLOOD, A Devotional Bible Study of the Blood of Christ, by Robert E. Coleman; Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1972; 128 pp.; cloth, \$3.50, Paper, \$1.50. (reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The blurb which accompanied this book reads: "A devotional and scholarly study of references to blood in the Bible. Explains the symbolic and historical reasons for the emphasis of the blood of Christ in the Christian faith."

This book makes interesting and valuable devotional

reading. It studies all the references to "blood" in the Scriptures with the purpose of pointing to the significance of the sacrifice of blood by Christ. It includes worthwhile material on the Old Testament Sacrifices and Passover Feast as these point to and are fulfilled by Christ.

The exegesis is not always acceptable and the book would be more valuable if the idea of the atonement were described in more detail. But we recommend this book to all who enjoy devotional literature.

News From Our Churches

From the September 24 bulletin of First Church comes the following news concerning our missionary:

"Rev. G. Lubbers reports from Jamaica that he has again begun teaching students: in English, the Canons of Dordt, and Church History. He opened school with a devotional on Ps. 78:1-8. He continues also to preach in the churches. At present Rev. C. Hanko is working with him for a period of three weeks. We pray God's continued blessing upon them in these labors of kingdom work."

The students of Loveland Protestant Reformed School had an unscheduled day of vacation recently. According to Loveland's bulletin, "vandals broke into our school Friday evening and made a mess of the classrooms. For this reason, school is canceled tomorrow. The Board asks that all who can help, come out to school tomorrow to clean up the rooms."

On Wednesday evening, September 27, the congregation of First Church commemorated "with Rev. Van Baren seven years of faithful service in his calling to proclaim the glorious Gospel message of our Lord Jesus Christ in our congregation." In his "remarks of appreciation," Mr. J.M. Faber noted that Rev. Van Baren had preached in this congregation over 600 sermons, which were not shaken out of his sleeve, but "generated in his study with the open Bible at his side." And, Mr. Faber added, if with those sermons "he has stepped on our toes (and he has), it's because our toes were in front of our feet which were walking on forbidden paths."

Rev. Van Baren was acknowledged as "God's gift to us." Fitting it is, certainly, that each of our churches with undershepherds thank the Lord for providing us with faithful servants. Some of our ministers have served faithfully for many years. We learn from a Southwest Church bulletin that the Consistory there arranged a program, which was to be given on October 6, to celebrate the *forty years* of Rev. H. Veldman's ministry.

For the remainder of our news column, we would like to pass on a little information concerning last summer's workshop for teachers, sponsored by the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies. We glean this information from the Federation secretary's report to the member school boards.

The workshop, which dealt with "Written Communication Skills," was held at Hope School during the weeks of June 19 and June 25. The

workshop, directed by Mr. Darrel Huisken, was attended by two teachers from Hope, one from South Holland, three from Covenant, and one from Loveland. Some idea of what transpired during those two weeks, and of the value of what was accomplished there, can be gained from evaluations written by the participants themselves. One of the teachers had this to say:

"I believe that the work that we did this summer — the distinctive Christian principles that we set down, the course outlines that we suggested, and the ideas for teaching writing that we accumulated — can be an effective impetus for further development and enrichment of the writing programs in all of our schools."

From another participant's letter we quote the following: "I was able to participate in the third consecutive workshop of this kind and once again the experience was profitable and exhilarating. The two previous workshops were experiences which cannot be replaced by any other experience in the field of teacher education. The years which I spent as a student in the classroom being prepared for the teaching profession were valuable, but the summers spent in workshops were the kind of experiences which one who has been working as a teacher needs so that he may be refueled and refortified for the arduous work of teaching the many areas in the teaching profession."

Concerning the rather lengthy written product which has come out of the workshop, a third individual submitted that, "Undoubtedly, the most distinctive feature of the workshop product is its statement of philosophy and its list of objectives. This is unique; no patch-up job on somebody else's list, but one based on Scripture and our peculiar view of God and man. . . . We have begun with these workshops to spread our professional wings and produce material ourselves which is educationally sound and distinctive and which we can be proud to claim and defend."

And for an evaluation of workshops in general, we take the following excerpt from the director's report to the Committee for Teacher Educational Development:

"Workshops are a success because they do what really little else can do effectively. Workshops draw together teachers of like mind, spirit, and devotion. The mind of Christ, the Spirit of our Lord, and the devotion of God characterize these people. They are drawn together, they work together, and they learn together for one purpose: to better equip the covenant youth to take its rightful place in the kingdom of God here on earth."

D.D.