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Wishing You  
A Blessed  
New Year

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## MEDITATION

# To Live Is Christ

*Rev. C. Hanko*

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Phil. 1:21*

New Year 1975.

All around us there is an exchange of pleasant greetings of "Happy New Year."

Some seem to be rather flippant about it, evidently confident that the new year can never be as bad as the old. The past year may well be past and forgotten, but the new year looks far more promising.

Others speak with tongue in cheek. Whether we care to face it or not, the reality is inescapable that the world is still in turmoil, like a seething kettle that is ready to boil over at any moment. Every nation of the globe faces an economic recession. Problems which formerly plagued a single nation now involve the whole world. Churches suffer from unrest, dissatisfaction, loss of membership and lack of interest. Heresy runs rampant as ticklish ears attend to every new whisper of vanity. Each family has its own problems, every individual his own cares.

A new year in an old world, a world that is steeping itself in iniquity as it runs its course toward total moral bankruptcy.

One can only anxiously ask: where lies the solution to all my problems?

The solution to our problems does not lie with men.

Those who have looked to the powers that be have always been disappointed. One who builds his hopes on promises of politicians is due for a rude awakening. One who dreams that his own resources can carry him through is trusting in soap bubbles.

In this world of sin, with the heavy clouds of judgement smothering us more day by day, we can only look to the Lord, our Maker, our Creator, our Savior.

In faith we say with the apostle Paul: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

This is Paul's confession as he sits as a prisoner in Rome. Once he had escaped out of the mouth of the lion, yet now he was being brought to trial a second time. The outcome was still uncertain. He might be set free, since there were no real charges of any crime that could be brought against him; but knowing the

kind of justice that prevailed in the world, he might very well be put to death for his faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Whatever the outcome, the apostle is not deeply troubled, for he knows that he is in the service of Christ, Who will use him to the best advantage. Christ will be magnified, whether that be in Paul's life or in his death, whatever may serve best to the glory of the Lord.

The church at Philippi is greatly concerned about Paul's welfare. Eagerly they looked forward to a favorable verdict that would spare the apostle for the churches. Instead of the Phillipians comforting him, as one might expect, Paul is compelled to comfort them. Therefore he writes in his own intimate way that when he considers the crown that awaits him, he grows eager with anticipation, for that will be far better than anything this life can offer him. Still, when he considers the churches, he is torn with the desire to serve them. The important thing, he knows, is that Christ be glorified, whether that be in the apostle's life or his death. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

This is not passed along to us merely as a matter of information, but rather is preserved for us by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures that we may experience the same grace with the apostle, to make the same confession. What better confidence can we express at the outset of a new year than to confess with the apostle that living is Christ and dying can only be gain.

Living is Christ. This golden nugget of truth is taken from the unfathomable depths of Scripture's mines.

It could be expressed in this way: Christ is the SOURCE of my life.

We are reminded that we are chosen in Him from eternity. God has chosen Christ as the Firstborn among many brethren and given to Him the entire family of all the elect. In Christ we are sons of God and heirs of salvation, to glorify God forever.

As if that were a small thing, God has redeemed us in Christ through the death of the cross. We, who are born in trespasses and sins, children of wrath, even as



the most hardened sinner, are made sons of God through the death of His dear Son. When there was no other sacrifice to give to atone for our sins, God gave the Son of His Love, His only-begotten, to redeem us from death unto everlasting life in covenant fellowship with Him.

The Spirit of Jesus Christ now dwells in our hearts to bestow on us the merits of the cross. He assures us of the adoption to sons and the right to eternal life. He even changes us into the likeness of Christ, so we cry from the depths of our hearts: "Abba, Father." Since we are sons, we are heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, now to suffer with Him, only to be glorified forever.

We can even put it this way: Christ is the **STRENGTH** of my life.

In this flesh dwells no good. Sin still wars in our members, causing us daily to complain that what I will I do not do, but what I hate, that I do. Sin seems too powerful to suppress. In our own strength we never can, but the Word of God assures us that sin shall not have dominion over us, for grace abounds.

Which makes it even more emphatic: Christ **IS** my life. Living is **CHRIST**.

This is actually nothing more than an echo of Christ's own witness: I am the Bread of Life. I am the Water of life. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. I am the Resurrection and the Life. Not: I am willing to be the Bread of Life, and all the rest. Nor: I give you the Bread of life and other gifts. But I **AM** the Bread of Life. I am **THE** Bread of life. So that we become partakers of Christ and all His benefits. All our salvation is in Him. He makes us partakers through faith, the living bond that unites us with Him forever. By His Spirit we eat His flesh and drink His blood, so that we become completely one with Him, as flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. We are as intimately one as one body, one organism: for He is the Head, we are the members of His Body. He is the Bridegroom, we are the Bride.

This can only mean that Christ is **THE PURPOSE** of our lives.

The apostle could say: "Whether I live, I live unto the Lord, and whether I die, I die unto the Lord: whether I live, therefore, or die, I am the Lord's." It was his avowed privilege to be a servant, a slave of Jesus Christ. All the scars of his body that spoke of past stonings, past whippings, past affliction that he had suffered, were so many brand marks signifying the ownership of Jesus Christ. To Paul they were indubitable proof that he belonged to his faithful Savior Jesus Christ. The ambition of his life was that God be glorified in Christ.

Although not in the same measure, we do experience that grace of God that inspires us to pray:

"Our Father, hallowed be **THY** name." With the Psalmist we say: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord."

Christ is, therefore, also the **GOAL** of our lives.

The same yearning that impels us to pray that God may hallow His own Name in all His works, also motivates us to pray: "Thy kingdom come." Since Christ is our life, we can never be fully satisfied until we are face to face with Him, sharing the fulness of His life and blessedness in glory, praising and magnifying the Name of our God with endless song.

To live is Christ. Wonderful reality.

For to **ME** to live is Christ. That makes this confession even more personal.

No, the apostle had not always been able to say that either. There had been a time in his earlier years when for him living meant persecuting the church of God. Saul felt that he was doing God an honor by trying to wipe out the name of Jesus from the earth; — until Jesus Himself appeared to him as the living Lord in a dazzling brightness that faded out the noonday sun! He saw Jesus, and he believed. Long afterward Paul still spoke of himself as the chief of sinners, whom Christ had come to save. He confessed: Jesus is the **SOURCE** of my life.

Every sincere child of God humbly repeats that confession after him. We find an echo in our hearts of that blessed truth of Scripture: "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

He is also the **STRENGTH** of my life.

I experience anew every day what Jesus taught: "Without me ye can do nothing." The guilt of sin weighs like an impossible burden upon my soul. The power of sin is so overwhelmingly strong that I cannot overcome it. The thought oppresses, if I cannot even stand in the midst of daily temptations, what would happen if I were called to stand with Daniel's three friends in defiant opposition to the command of the king, knowing that refusal to obey can only mean death? Or could I pray at an open window, if I knew being faithful to my God meant being fed to the lions? How shall I stand in the evil day?

You and I know that to this question there is but one answer: the answer of Christ, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Or again, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." To which faith responds: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Jehovah is my light, and my salvation near;

Who shall my soul fright, or cause my heart to fear?

While God my strength, my life sustains,  
Secure from fear my soul remains.



Christ is the strength of my life; but even more than that, Christ IS my life.

He is the vine, and I am privileged to be a branch of that vine, bearing fruit through the power of His life in me. "I live, yet no more I, Christ lives in me." We begin to understand what it means that Enoch walked with God. We also know something of the confidence of the Psalmist that made it possible for him to say: "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

That makes Christ also the PURPOSE in my life.

I ask myself: why are you a minister? Why do you preach and write meditations? Because it happens to be your vocation, or because you enjoy it? I know that there is but one answer to that question, one proper answer: I am a minister because God's name must be glorified through Jesus Christ in me.

You ask yourself: why am I reading this meditation? As a teenager, why do I go to school and study day after day? As a mother in the home, why do I busy myself with these unpleasant chores around the house? As a father, why do I toil day after day, struggling to support my family? Why? To all those questions there may be but one answer: that my very life may bear out that which I pray, "Father, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come." Anything apart from that is sin.

That makes Christ also the GOAL of my life.

Asaph puts it this way: "Nevertheless, I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand, Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me in glory." To which I add the refrain:

When I in righteousness at last Thy glorious face shall see,  
When all the weary night is past, and I awake with Thee  
To view the glories that abode, Then, then I shall be satisfied.

"For to me to live is Christ, *and to die is gain.*"

We often say that death is gain only after we have set certain limitations to it. Death is gain for the burdened invalid, for the aged, and for the pain-racked sufferer. Yet Scripture sets no limitations, so that faith responds: "To me death is gain." Death is only, always gain, gain when it comes at the close of life's weary day, but also gain when it comes at any other time. Death is gain even if it strikes in this new year.

Gain it is for us individually, yes. For to be with the Lord is far better than anything this life can offer. It is especially gain because Christ is magnified in the death of His people, as well as in their lives. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Christ uses the death-bed of the believer to show that even the last enemy is servant of Christ to bring His saints to glory. As we slip out of this valley of shadows, we immediately pass over into the light of glory, this present night bursts into an eternal day, our last sigh becomes a song of victory shared by all the saints and all the myriads of angels about the throne.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

As we enter into this new year, is that our confession?

Living day by day means what? Serving Mammon, laboring for the bread that perishes? Then death is total loss.

Living for me means what? Family and friends and earthly pleasures — are they the joy of my life? Then death robs me from all that is most precious, and that forever.

Living for me means what? My proud self, that BIG I — am I the most important? Then death spells everlasting torment where the fire never grows dim.

Living for me is Christ? Then I enter this year with the confidence that my life is hid with Christ in God. That spells eternal gain!

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And what will you gain, after all, I pray you, by thus roaring against this truth a hundred times over? You dazzle the sight of the ignorant and the inexperienced by setting before their eyes, as a shining cloud, your doctrine that God will have all men to be saved. But if these words of the apostle are not in perfect harmony with that election whereby God predestinated His own children unto eternal life, let me ask you this question: How is it, that if God willed all men to be saved, He did not show unto all nations and all men the way of salvation? Universally and well-known is that remarkable word of God in the law, "Behold, I set before thee this day the way of life, and of death" (Jer. 21:8). If, therefore, God willed to gather together unto salvation all men without distinction, why did He not set before all men in common the way of life and salvation? Whereas, the fact was, that He deemed one family or nation only worthy of this high privilege. Nor did He confer this great blessing upon that one family for any other reason than because He loved them (if the testimony of Moses is to be believed), and because He would "*choose them for a peculiar people.*"

— John Calvin,

*The Secret Providence Of God*, p. 343



## EDITORIALS

## The Evangelical Presbyterian Church and Common Grace (2)

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

We must still consider the reference to Psalm 145:9 which was introduced into our discussion with the brethren of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

First of all, let us recall that they suggested that the word "mercies" can and must be understood in a restricted sense in this verse, which reads: "The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." Rev. Rodman wrote in this connection: "Here the word mercies must be understood to be restricted in its extent for it can only refer to the works of God's providence in respect of time, and cannot include grace and favor, nor can it refer to God's eternal purposes concerning angels and men." In connection with this it is stated: "This interpretation is consistent with Ps. 103:17 which states, 'The mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.' The idea of a mercy inclusive of grace and favor in the context of a supposed common grace makes nonsense of Scripture for the following reasons: — God's goodness in respect of the physical creation which will pass away is not from everlasting to everlasting. His mercy is not upon the reprobate angels and men who are reserved for everlasting destruction. Rather God's mercy and grace govern all that content of His providence, both temporal and spiritual, which belongs only to the elect who fear Him and keep His commandments. Again, there is no division of purpose and no such thing as common grace."

Once again, I want to state that I am glad that the brethren of the EPC, regardless now of whether they propose a correct interpretation of Psalm 145:9, definitely do not want to understand this verse as teaching a common grace of God. Let it be noted that they are very emphatic about this: for they state that the idea of a mercy inclusive of grace and favor in the context of a supposed common grace makes nonsense of Scripture. On this, therefore, they are correct: to interpret Scripture anywhere as teaching common grace does violence to the Scriptures.

In the second place, however, I do not believe that this interpretation of Psalm 145:9 will stand the test of Scripture and of sound exegesis. While I thoroughly appreciate the desire to avoid the idea of

common grace, I nevertheless believe that the brethren pour a different content into the term "tender mercies" in order to do so. They define the term "mercies" in this verse as having reference only to God's works of providence in respect of time and as not including grace and favor, nor referring to God's eternal purposes concerning angels and men. They do not explain what this mercy is, neither how it can exclude grace and favor. They claim that this interpretation is consistent with the fact that Psalm 103:17 speaks of God's mercy being from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him. Now I would point out, first of all, that unless it can be shown from Scripture itself that such an explanation of divine tender mercies is possible, this explanation cannot be accepted. Secondly, the mere fact that Psalm 103:17 speaks of God's mercy as being from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him is, of course, no proof that this interpretation of Psalm 145:9 is tenable. The interpretation is consistent only in respect to the fact that they wish to make this a temporal mercy which has nothing to do with God's eternal purposes concerning angels and men. What must be shown, however, is that the Bible ever speaks of such temporal mercies of God which have nothing to do with grace and favor. Thirdly, it seems to me that the very context of Psalm 145 already militates against this idea. In vs. 8 we read: "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy." Notice that this verse, the immediately preceding verse, speaks of God's "great mercy" and His being "full of compassion" in the context of His being "*gracious*." The subsequent context speaks of the Lord's upholding all that fall, and raising up all those that be bowed down, vs. 14. It speaks of the Lord's being nigh unto all them that call upon Him, vs. 18. It speaks of the fact that "he will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them," (vs. 19). And it speaks of the fact that "The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy," (vs. 20). Now it would be very strange, to say the least, if in such a context suddenly the term "tender mercies" would have the meaning which the EPC brethren wish to give it. I would propose: 1) That God's mercy always has the connotation of His



favor, His grace. 2) That God's mercy always has a saving connotation. 3) That God's mercy is essentially the same as His grace, only with the added connotation that it is His favor shown to those who are in misery. Briefly, we may define God's mercy as His will to bless and to deliver the objects of that mercy as they are in misery and woe, and to make them perfectly blessed with Himself.

It will also be evident from the preceding remarks that, with all respect for the "Prince of exegetes," I cannot be satisfied in this instance with the explanation of John Calvin. The truth of the matter is that he does not explain that "goodness" which God is said to shower down also upon the wicked. Nor does he really explain God's mercy, except that he by implication connects the mercy of God with the misery of the creature, due to the fact that the whole world is under the curse, and except for the fact that he includes under this mercy the brute creation. The real problem of this text, however, with reference to the matter of the common grace issue, is not solved by the explanation quoted from John Calvin. Parenthetically, let me remark that even here a good interpretation can be placed upon the remarks made by Calvin.

But now let us turn to the text itself.

First of all, notice that we do not read "all men" in the text, but merely "all." The Hebrew simply has: *tobh Jaweh lakkol*. The question is: to what does this term "all" refer? What is its content? May we simply understand the text as referring to *all individual men*, righteous and wicked? This would be in conflict with the whole of Scripture, which teaches currently that God hates the reprobate ungodly, that He is angry with the wicked every day, and that He causes the things of this present time to work unto their destruction. It is impossible, in the light of the current teaching of Scripture, to understand Psalm 145:9 as meaning that God is merciful and good to all men. This would also be in conflict with the context of Psalm 145, which is particular throughout. Particularly would it be in conflict with the contrast found in verse 20, "the Lord preserveth all them that love him, but all the wicked will he destroy." However, it would also be in conflict with the text itself.

That brings us to our second remark, namely, that we must pay attention to the fact that we have Hebrew parallelism in this verse. And this implies that the second part of this text explains the first part. Notice that this means, therefore, that the Lord is good to all His works, even as His tender mercies are over all His works. The "all," therefore, means: all creatures in the organic sense of the word, all the works of God, without any reference to all the individuals of a certain kind of creatures, as, for

instance, men. If thus we interpret this verse, it is not in conflict with the last part of vs. 20, which teaches that God will destroy all the wicked. And it is fully in harmony with the current teaching of Scripture. All kinds of creatures are included in the word "all" of verse 9. But the ungodly are excluded.

In this connection let me quote part of the comments of the Rev. Herman Hoeksema in *God's Goodness Always Particular*, pp. 165, ff.:

We read the text as follows: 'The Lord is good to all his creatures, and his tender mercies are over all his works.' To be sure, we also insert something. And we do that, wherever the word *all* occurs in the Bible without further limitation. The word *all* demands this. Without some modifying insertion and addition the word *all* has no meaning. It requires a modifier simply because in itself it is indefinite. But only the text and the context may determine just what this modifying word shall be. We may not arbitrarily insert a word according to our own notion, or in order to suit our own preconceived ideas and theories. Only the Word of God itself may determine our choice of the limiting word. And with respect to Ps. 145:9 it is not at all difficult to determine this. What modifier should be added to the word *all* is so clear, that it can only cause surprise that one could miss it. The text almost literally mentions the word. If you read the whole verse and its context, you most naturally read: 'The Lord is good to all his creatures, and his tender mercies are over all his works.'

But, perhaps, you ask what may be the difference between this interpretation of ours and that of the Rev. Zwier. Do we not really broaden the concept, rather than limit it? He reads: *all men*; we prefer: *all creatures*. But it would seem that the former are included in the latter, and that, therefore, we also find in this Scriptural passage a proof for the general goodness of God.

To this we reply that in a certain sense we do have a broader concept of God's goodness than those who teach the theory of common grace. But our difference with them is exactly this, that their general goodness of God is *common*, ours is always *particular*. They insist that righteous and wicked are alike the objects of this general goodness of the Lord. God's favor, grace, mercy or lovingkindness, therefore, is common. It is because of this that they insert the word *men* rather than the self-evident *creatures* in Psalm 145:9. And the Word of God will have nothing of such a common general goodness of the Most High, that makes the wicked the objects of His love. True, Scripture teaches very plainly that God's goodness does not only include men, but also other creatures; the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air and the fish of the sea, the young raven and the wild goat and the strong Leviathan; yea, also the trees of the woods and the flower of the field, the tender grass and the green herb, the golden sun and the moon with her mellow light and the twinkling stars, the ever restless sea and the majestic rivers and



meandering books, — all these are the objects of God's goodness. His mercies are over all His works! All these creatures are even, according to God's covenant with Noah, taken up into His covenant. And of this all comprehensive nature of the covenant of God the rainbow is displayed in the clouds as a sign.

Of this mercy of God over all His creatures many of the Psalms sing. Thus, for instance, Ps. 104:10, ff.: 'He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies. He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.'

And this creature, which is now subject to vanity, shall once be liberated, according to God's eternal covenant, from the bondage of corruption to share in the glorious liberty of the children of God. Rom. 8:19-22.

If the Rev. Zwier will sing of this lovingkindness and mercy of God over all His creatures, gladly will we join in singing. The Word of God witnesses of this goodness of the Lord abundantly.

But we earnestly protest, in the name of that same Holy Scripture, against any attempt to make this lovingkindness of the Lord *common*, and to let the Church of Christ sing of a grace or favor of God over the righteous and wicked alike. For this makes God common. God's goodness is, indeed, over all His creatures; and the ungodly are right in the midst of the manifestations of this goodness of God. But they have no part with it. They are not themselves the object of it. The wrath of God abideth on them.

This is plain from the very Psalm in the ninth verse of which we are taught to sing of God's tender mercies over all His works. For in the 20th verse we read: 'The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.'

Very briefly, therefore, we would interpret this passage of Scripture as indeed referring to God's grace, and that, too, His grace as it is revealed toward the creature that is in misery. But that grace is not common, but cosmic.

## The Geelong-Woudstra Crisis

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

In our Nov. 15 issue we reported to you concerning the dismissal of Dr. S. Woudstra as Professor of Systematic Theology at the Reformed Theological College at Geelong, Australia. Since that time we have learned from various correspondents in Australasia that the facts as reported in that editorial were correct.

From more than one source we have learned concerning some further details and some further developments.

First of all, it has been reliably reported to us that as far as his position with respect to Scripture is concerned, Dr. Woudstra hides behind Report 36-44 of the Christian Reformed Church, the report and decision concerning the Nature and Extent of the Authority of Scripture. With respect to his views concerning election and reprobation, we are informed that Dr. Woudstra appeals to Dr. Berkouwer's book on "Divine Election" and to Dr. Runia's contribution

in the book "Crisis in the Reformed Churches." In this connection, therefore, the issue with respect to Dr. Woudstra's views is the same as it was in the Runia matter some years ago, namely, that of the denial of sovereign reprobation. We are even informed that Dr. Woudstra made use of Dr. Runia's class notes in the teachings that were criticized. From all this it is evident that the issues are indeed very, very serious. Moreover, it is plain, too, that the issues which confront the Reformed Churches in Australasia in connection with the Reformed Theological College, from which they receive their ministers, are at least in part some of the same issues which are troubling the Reformed community elsewhere in the world, especially in the Christian Reformed Church in America and in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands. Reformed believers and officebearers may well pay careful attention to this, lest their churches and their faith be jeopardized by these corruptions. So-called conservatives had better not sit



on their hands and hope for the best, but should take affirmative action, and should not allow the liberals and those who coddle the liberals to win out by default. Meanwhile, it appears as though the initiative for the removal of Dr. Woudstra was largely by men from the Free Church, that is, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. It must be remembered that the Reformed Theological College is not a denomination school, but is run by an association. There are various churches which lend their support to this college, including the Reformed Churches of Australia, Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and the (Free) Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. It is reported that the men of the Free Church were adamant about the removal of Dr. Woudstra. Nevertheless, the action to remove Dr. Woudstra was taken by the (all Reformed) Board of Directors of the college, and that, too, by the unanimous recommendation of the Deputies of the Reformed Churches of Australia, among whom is the Rev. W. Deenick, editor of *Trowel and Sword*, the magazine of the Reformed Churches of Australia.

But there have been further developments.

The Board of Directors informed the Sessions (consistories) of the various churches and also the members of the Association concerning their decision as early as Oct. 25, 1974. This letter stated:

"It is with deep regret that the Board has to inform you, as members of the Association, of its decision to terminate the services of Dr. S. Woudstra, who has been teaching at the college. This decision is the culmination of a situation of unrest and dissatisfaction that arose in the College concerning the teaching of Dr. Woudstra.

"This decision was reached on the basis of reports made by the ecclesiastical Deputies, who have investigated the entire situation, and also after due consultation with the members of faculty."

Furthermore the Board states that they have taken these actions in accordance with Article 11 of the Constitution and Articles 9 and 11 of the regulations of the Reformed Theological College. After stating that the CRC Foreign Missions Board has been informed and that Dr. Woudstra has been authorized to make plans for return, the letter goes on to state: "In making this decision the Board has acted in the best interests of the College. It is concerned that the College continues to maintain an unambiguous witness to the Reformed faith in the Australian scene and fulfill its avowed purpose (as stated in Article 3 of its regulations) 'to teach, defend and propagate the Reformed Faith' and 'to train students for the Holy Ministry.'" The Board concludes by asking for prayer for Dr. Woudstra and his family as well as for the College.

Now it is obvious that this statement of the Board is as brief as possible. In fact, it states nothing about the teachings of Dr. Woudstra or about the specific grounds for his removal. Only by implication does it suggest that there were doctrinal issues at stake which involved the college's "unambiguous witness to the Reformed Faith in the Australian scene" and which would make it impossible for the College to fulfill its avowed purpose. It would seem to us that if both the Board and the Deputies reached a unanimous decision in this matter, and if, moreover, the issues were as serious as are suggested in the Board's letter and as have been reported to us, it would have been in the best interests of the College if the specific issues had been made known to the constituency of the Association. Still more: since, though the college is operated by an association, nevertheless the supporting churches are intimately concerned in the college's "unambiguous witness to the Reformed Faith," it would appear to us that the churches at large, both Presbyterian and Reformed, have a right to know what is going on. I say this, regardless of the right or wrong of Woudstra's dismissal. I am of the opinion that the action taken was correct. Others, however, might be of a different opinion. But if the grounds for Woudstra's dismissal are not made known, no one in the churches can possibly be in a position to judge, though this is a matter of great concern both to the members of the Association and to the members and officebearers of both the Presbyterian and the Reformed denominations in Australasia.

Yet, as of the tenth of December, I was informed that while there are many rumors in the churches, nevertheless there has been little, if any, information on this matter given out in the churches and in the periodicals. This is altogether wrong.

Moreover, the Rev. W. Deenick does matters no good and does neither the Reformed Churches nor the Reformed Theological College a service by editorializing in *Trowel and Sword* (Nov., 1974) on "Rumour Round The College", but failing to inform his readers of the facts. He was in a position to do this: for he is one of the deputies who voted in favor of Woudstra's dismissal. Not only could he have published the statement of the Board of Directors, but he could have furnished details as to the reasons for Woudstra's dismissal and as to the doctrinal errors involved. Yet he fails completely to do so. He makes some points concerning "the character of the college as an independent institution and concerning its relationship to the churches that co-operate in it." And we freely concede that there are difficulties involved in the operation of an independent college. We agree, therefore, when the Rev. Deenick writes: "That the RTC is an independent college also means



that we must respect the authority that the institution has in its own affairs. The men appointed to exercise that authority are bound by the constitution under which they have been appointed. In the matter of professorial appointments and doctrinal supervision the churches co-operating in the RTC have (through their synodically appointed deputies) certain rights, privileges and obligations, stipulated in the constitution; but the final decision rests with the B of D. It is quite out of the question that local sessions or individual members of the association could have a say in such appointments. The evaluation of a professor's qualifications (academically and otherwise), of his place in and his contribution to the college and of his doctrinal standing within the RTC is not the responsibility of any local church or of any individual. It is the responsibility of the B of D which receives advice from church representatives and from the faculty." We also agree, therefore, when he adds: "In Dr. Woudstra's case this means that the final decision re his professorship at the RTC is no one's responsibility but that of the Board."

In this light, it would also appear to be true that the denominations supporting the RTC (specifically, now, the Reformed Churches of Australia and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand) cannot become involved in the question of the rightness or the wrongness of the decision concerning Dr. Woudstra until their deputies make their next report to the synods of their respective denominations. At that point a synod could pass judgment on the case. And if such a synod found itself in disagreement with the Board of Directors, it would be confronted by the question whether it will or will not continue to support the College.

Yet the Rev. Deenick brings up a difficulty in this connection: "One more question comes up in this connection. How far reaches the validity of a pronouncement by the B of D concerning a man's orthodoxy? Obviously it has validity within the context of the RTC, but in the church it cannot have any authority. Yet, a man's reputation in the church could be severely damaged by it. He stands accused before his case has been dealt with properly in the councils of the church. It seems necessary then that at this point (as well as at others) the constitution of the RTC be looked into carefully.

"The evaluation of the work of a professor or a lecturer is properly within the jurisdiction of the B of D; and many different aspects of his work, also the doctrinal aspect, will come up for examination. The authority to make (and to publish) a verdict on a man's orthodoxy can (it seems to me) never rest with a non-ecclesiastical body. The present board has acted wholly within the limits of the constitution, but the

constitution may well need revision at this point.

"As far as Dr. Woudstra is concerned good order and fairness require that the church holds him innocent until the church finds him guilty if it finds him guilty. In what manner the church should act in his case is to be decided upon by the classis of the Reformed Churches in Victoria."

The Rev. Deenick here brings up a problem, of course, which lies in the very nature of an independent seminary. Such a non-ecclesiastical school must necessarily have control of its own affairs; if it does not, then, of course, it loses its independent character as a school operated by an association rather than by a denomination. And if it should lose that independent character, it would seem that the very possibility of various denominations cooperating in such a school would also disappear. Yet these paragraphs leave a strange impression, for the following reasons: 1) Why at this point should the constitution of the RTC be looked into carefully? And how can looking into that constitution solve any problem? The choice, it seems to me, is plain: either an independent college or a denominational college. 2) Not only does Dr. Woudstra stand accused, but he stands *condemned*. It is true that his condemnation is valid within the context of the RTC only. Nevertheless, he has been condemned by a Board of Directors, consisting of Reformed men, and that, too, at the recommendation of the deputies of the Reformed Churches, of whom the Rev. Deenick is one. Is the Rev. Deenick suggesting that what was reprehensible teaching in the College might nevertheless be acceptable in the Reformed Churches? 3) The Rev. Deenick's statement is incomplete. In this context, he should have added that no decision by Classis Victoria of the Reformed Churches could have any validity or should carry any weight with the Board of Directors.

Yet it appears that Classis Victoria is now attempting to influence the College. For in the bulletin of the Reformed Church of Geelong there appears the following announcement from the Rev. Deenick: "Since the members are naturally keenly interested in the developments round the college and the doctrinal agreement at the college and in the church we should publish in this bulletin also that the classis meeting on Saturday, Nov. 16, after a rather long and a thorough interview with Dr. Woudstra, came to the conclusion that his ministry in the church has been faithful to the gospel as taught in our churches. Whether this means that the Reformed Theological College will now come back on its earlier decisions is still an open question. The college is independent and in it we work together with Christians from other non-Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Since the decision at classis was not fully



unanimous and since there is obvious disagreement between the R.T.C. and sections in the church it is necessary that everyone acts with restraint and that we pray sincerely for the unity to be restored and the christian love and fellowship to be maintained as it has been so far." We are informed that this decision of the classis was by a narrow margin. However that may be, it is not the classis, or any other classis, which has anything to say about the RTC. And the college and its Board of Directors should resist adamantly any attempt on the part of Classis Victoria to influence it to reverse its earlier decisions in the Woudstra matter.

This is the more true in the light of the nature of these issues. Referring to the disappointment of many with respect to the RTC, the Rev. Deenick writes: "Understandable as this reaction may be, it is not fair to ignore the fact that the real reason for our troubles is the theological confusion in which the (Dutch orientated) reformed community finds itself. This is not the mistake of the Reformed Presbyterians or the Free Presbyterians but of the reformed theologians (in the Dutch tradition) themselves." A little later, referring to Dr. Woudstra, the Rev. Deenick writes: "That his teaching and his position at the college have run into the present difficulties is a distressing disappointment for all and everyone in the RTC; but it is not unrelated to the general state of uncertainty in (Dutch orientated) reformed theology, for which no one in the Presbyterian world can be blamed and in which we in Australia do not want to be involved."

The fact of the matter is, however, that the churches in Australia and New Zealand *are* involved in what Deenick calls "the general state of uncertainty in reformed theology." Personally, I would call it by a different name. It is a struggle for the Reformed truth over against vicious attempts to compromise and to destroy that Reformed heritage. That struggle is going on all over the world. It is impossible for any group of churches which is part of the Reformed community to avoid taking a stand with respect to that struggle. It is simply impossible today so to isolate oneself that he is not confronted by these issues. Besides, the churches in Australasia are concretely confronted by these issues. They were confronted by them a few years ago when Dr. Runia was in the college; and they may be thankful that he is gone. Whether they like it or not, they are now confronted by these issues in the matter of Dr. Woudstra.

If the Reformed Theological College is pressured to restore Dr. Woudstra to his position, I hope that they will firmly resist it. Classis Victoria, if it was properly informed concerning the issues, made a grave mistake already. I hope that the Reformed Churches in Australia will not follow the lead of Classis Victoria. Let those who love the Reformed truth see the handwriting on the wall. Let them take a firm stand, both in Australia and in New Zealand. Let them be much more firm than they have been heretofore. That only will be salutary for those churches.

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Anniversary Year

*Rev. J. Kortering*

"We wish to stress that the work of preparation (for our fiftieth anniversary as churches) should not be postponed, but should begin immediately. A worthwhile celebration will depend to a large degree on very thorough planning and advance work. The occasion is a momentous one — not because of what we are and have done, but because of what our covenant God has wrought for, in, and through, us. Our aim should be to make the thankful commemoration of this anniversary commensurate with the momentous character of the occasion."

These words are quoted from a synodical advisory committee report which was given to the synod of 1973. That synod also adopted the guidelines which has made up the planning of the Fiftieth Anniversary Committee.

Our Lord has now enabled our churches to enter this anniversary year, 1975. We trust it will be one of sanctified joy in our God.

The question might enter your mind: why 1975? Didn't our churches begin in 1924? This past year we were reminded from our *Standard Bearer* that its beginnings date back to 1924. While our expulsion from the Christian Reformed denomination took place in late 1924, our formal organization as a denomination did not begin until 1925. On March 6 of that year the three expelled consistories, Eastern Avenue, Kalamazoo I, and Hope, organized provisionally as Protestant Christian Reformed Churches on the basis of the Act of Agreement. Thereafter, other congregations were organized. And eventually, after our appeal to the Christian



Reformed Synod of Englewood, 1926, was rejected, we organized permanently as the Protestant Reformed Churches and formed a General Classis. Hence, our formal beginnings go back to March 6, 1925.

The theme of our celebration is "Covenant Faithfulness." Once again we note from the advisory committee: "In searching for an appropriate theme or motto for this celebration, we were guided by the following considerations: a. We wanted to stress the idea that as we look backward over the fifty years of our existence, our motive is to look forward in faith. b. We wanted to find a theme which would adequately express the distinctive aspect of our position and history as Protestant Reformed Churches. c. We wanted a theme which could serve well as a unifying factor for our entire commemoration."

The Fiftieth Anniversary Committee was mandated to take care of the arrangements so that our churches will be able to celebrate this anniversary in keeping with this stated goal.

As a committee, we desire to share these plans with you so that you may make the necessary preparations to participate.

One of the most exciting things we look forward to is the distribution of our anniversary book. The book will be close to 200 pages and bound in hard cover. Mrs. Homer C. Hoeksema has worked hard as editor of this book. She not only wrote an interesting section on the history of our local congregations and denominational life, but also took care of the publication details. The book will also include a section by Prof. H. Hanko on the history that gave rise to our coming into existence, Prof. H. C. Hoeksema on our doctrinal distinctiveness, and Prof. R. Decker on our world and life view. It should be apparent that the value of this book is broader than a momentary anniversary celebration. We quote from the foreword: "This book is intended to be more than a mere memorial, to be glanced at and stowed away. The various writers have contributed the material with the view to making this a compact and brief summary of all that the Lord has entrusted to us, for the edification of our older members, the instruction of our youth, and as information for anyone who may be interested in the heritage entrusted to us. We cherish the hope that this memorial will be found in the homes of all our people, and will be presented to our covenant youth at the time of their public confession of faith."

The financing and distribution of the book will be handled by the Committee for the Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature. Notices will soon appear in the *Standard Bearer* for the sale of this

book. Estimate for the price runs about \$4.95. It is possible that the committee will make the book available to our consistories for presentation to our young people at a reduced rate. Last report is that the book is at the printer and if the binder can process it on time, it should be ready for distribution in March.

Sunday, March 2 has been designated as Anniversary Sunday. Our consistories have been contacted and the suggestion has been made that the sermons on this day be a fitting commemoration of our anniversary. Different texts have been suggested, both emphasizing God's faithfulness and our calling to be faithful. Possibly the one service can emphasize God's faithfulness and the second one our calling to be faithful. The idea of having such a Sunday is that it is not only the Sunday closest to the beginning of our churches, but that we may be guided in our celebrating by the Word of God. This should set the key-note for our anniversary year.

We also suggested to the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People that they plan a special "singspiration" that evening in the Grand Rapids area. We would also suggest by this article that this idea be carried out in our churches in other parts of the country. Surely, God's covenant faithfulness is worth singing about and it would bring to a fitting close this special day.

The annual synod of our churches will be meeting in Hull, Iowa beginning on June 11. The reason for meeting in Hull is connected with our anniversary. In the first place, it will give the mid-west opportunity to share in the anniversary on a denominational basis. The second reason is that Hull is the oldest congregation in the west, having been organized also in March 1925. The pre-synodical service will include a sermon directed to our anniversary theme. A special program for Sunday, June 15 is also being planned.

The really big celebration is for this summer. A great deal of work is going into the planning of the 1975 Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention. This will be an opportunity for our young people to celebrate our anniversary not only, but plans are to include all our people, as many as possible, from all areas of our country to come together for a week of anniversary celebration.

The young people's societies of our First Church in Grand Rapids have been appointed the host societies. They are working with a sub-committee of the anniversary committee to co-ordinate the activities so that the young people can still have their own convention, but that the families can participate in some things together and other things independently from the young people. Details will eventually be forthcoming.



The important thing for the present is to plan your vacation to be in Grand Rapids, Michigan the week of August 4-8. Think of what this can mean for greater acquaintance and unity among our people. The one thing about young people's conventions is that our young people from all over the country get to know one another, share like faith for a week, stimulate one another unto godliness through mutual fellowship. Isn't it a worthwhile goal to try to broaden out on this idea for this year and to include families?

The convention will be on the beautiful Knollcrest Campus of Calvin College. We have been informed that Calvin dormitories will be available not only for the young people attending the convention, but, if desired, also for families. The cost estimate for lodging is \$3.00 per day for adults and half price for children. Meals will also be available for those desiring at a cost of \$1.30 for breakfast, \$1.70 for lunch, and \$2.50 for dinner. In the event that you are a camping enthusiast, provision will be made to locate a campground in the vicinity and try to keep our people together as much as possible.

If you are thinking about the possibility of going to Grand Rapids this summer and might like to use any of these facilities, you should write Rev. G. Van Baren soon and he in turn will make the necessary reservations.

To whet your appetite, how would you like to attend an old fashioned "field day"? You might just be able to do that in August 1975. Talk this over as families and as interested members of your congregations and see if we can't get participation from almost all our churches.

One final note — we also plan to bring to a close our anniversary year by sharing our blessings with others. The month of October will be our "Anniversary Radio Month". Rev. M. Schipper will be the speaker D.V. The purpose of this endeavor is two-fold. The first is to tell others outside our churches that God is faithful in preserving His truth and covenant and that we rejoice in being able to testify of this to the whole world. The second purpose is to announce the Reformation Day Rallies in our local areas which will be an invitation to those in our communities to come and rejoice with us in the Reformed faith which God has graciously preserved for us and our children. It is possible that our professors will be able to tour the country and present these lectures. These details have yet to be finalized.

In summary, we look forward to an eventful year under God's blessing. If we are to exalt ourselves, our pride will ruin all our efforts. Rather let us exalt in our God, for He is faithful and by His grace alone enables us to continue in the faith of our fathers. Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord.

## The Birth of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (3)

— Rev. Charles Rodman —

Now from this there was a spiritual awakening in the denomination and the fellowships and in several other places. Firstly, among the Baptists. Five Baptist pastors appeared to grasp the truth of the doctrines of grace. At least they all had varying degrees of this grasp. And what they knew they commenced to preach in their congregations. And when they preached it, it caused an upheaval in their congregations. I can remember preaching on the doctrine of election and on total depravity. Now I'll never forget that. It created such an uproar that you would have thought that I was advocating the people in that congregation to embrace Roman Catholicism. In fact, they would have preferred Roman Catholicism to the doctrine of sovereign election and total depravity. A colleague came to me during this turmoil, and he said to me: "You know that it's the manner in which you have preached that has caused all this trouble. I preach the same things to my people, but they have received it. We haven't had this upheaval in our congregation." And I was very sore

distressed to think that it could have been, although I only had preached it in the best way I knew how to preach. But I was prepared to do anything rather than hinder the work of God, or to grieve God, or to hurt these people. However, he returned to his congregation, and he thought, "I'll make sure that these people know what I am saying." So one night in a Bible study he got out a blackboard, and he put down, "This is what Arminianism teaches, and this is what Calvinism, or the Reformed faith, teaches." And when he had put it out like that on the blackboard, immediately he had the same rumpus in his own church. You see, what was happening was that they were interpreting him according to their background. Everything that he said they interpreted, and they thought that he meant what they thought. So I quickly wrote to him, and said I was sorry to learn that he had this terrible rumpus in his church, but that it was the way that he taught it. If he had taught it in the right way, he would never have had it.



Well, then, of course, this started to take place through the five congregations, the five centers, in the Baptist Church. And they called the Assembly together. Of course, yours truly, with my other brethren — we had to go before the Assembly. They didn't know how to tackle it. In the Assembly meeting they said: "Look, there is disunity, disharmony. And therefore we want all these people in this Assembly to put up their hands who believe that God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." Well, of course, we all put up our hands. They looked in amazement. Of course, what we interpreted of "God so loved the world" they interpreted quite differently, because we believed it. We believed what it says. They believed something different. They read something into it. The next question which was put to the Assembly was: "All those who believe that you should preach the gospel to every creature, will you put up your hands?" So we all put up our hands. There was no problem, because it is our duty to preach the gospel to every creature. And they looked absolutely amazed. In the end they dismissed the Assembly, and we went back home again and continued to preach the truth. And, of course, you have no idea: you would have thought that we preached sovereign election and total depravity in the Bible study, in the morning service, in the afternoon service, in the catechism class, and, of course, in the evening service. They said, "We are always hearing it," and we had only preached it once. You could preach on the Jews; you could preach on any subject you liked. And every time they heard you preach they could hear you preaching on total depravity or election. So it wasn't long, and there was another Assembly; and we all were back up again. We had to face the powers that be. This time, of course, they knew a little bit; and they knew just how to fish us out. Some of us weren't afraid a bit. But there were two brethren who sought to hide their position by covering over their wording of the statement that they had made with evangelical jargon; and it was a statement that you could interpret both ways. You could read it as an Arminian and read it as a Calvinist; it all depended on what you were. You would interpret it according to your background. They read the statement in the Assembly, and they said, "Well, these brethren believe what we believe." And one said, "Mr. Chairman, they don't. I know that they don't. I've heard them." "Well," he said, "Look, you must not say that these two men are liars. They are two faithful men and our own two ordained ministers." And then they said, "Put some specific questions to them." So one question was something like this: do you believe that Christ died for every man in the world? Now that had them on the spot. And when they heard it, when the president said, "These men are not going to deceive us," this put

these two brethren right in focus. Now the saddest thing happened that day. They recanted. They publicly recanted. Three of them out of five! And then, of course, when they recanted, this statement (referring to a statement described a little later HCH) was passed in the assembly. There were only two of us out of all those who were sympathetic towards the Reformed faith who were prepared to resist it. It says that whereas a submission from a sub-committee consisting of three members, representing the two opposing views, with the President of the Union as chairman, set up at the direction of a Special Assembly which met on the 28th of November, 1959, conferred for eight hours and agreed that the theological differences were so deep as to be irreconcilable; and whereas the doctrine of unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and associated teachings are plainly not in accord with the accepted Baptist belief in the Baptist Union of Tasmania and the Baptist Unions of other Australian states; and whereas such doctrines can only be presented from Scripture by a heedless disregard of the general trend of the New Testament teaching and the great numbers of other passages of Scripture which plainly teach to the contrary, or by making the meaning of such passages subservient to a theory which for its exponents becomes more important than the Scriptures themselves; and whereas wherever such doctrine is preached in congregations of open-minded worshippers (Mind you, open-minded worshippers!) serious disunity results, and the work of the Holy Spirit is quenched; and whereas such doctrines drastically interfere with the character of God and man as revealed especially in the New Testament, minimize the ministry of the Holy Spirit, seriously detract from the meaning of the atonement, rob believers' baptism of much of its meaning and, carried to a logical conclusion, cut the nerve of all evangelistic and missionary endeavor; and whereas historically such doctrine has always produced inertia and the ultimate death of most churches which espoused it; the Assembly, believing that no provision is made for such extreme doctrine in the ten points of the schedule of doctrine as set forth in the Act of Incorporation, (a) calls upon the associated churches of the Baptist Union of Tasmania to resist the presentation of unconditional election, limited atonement, and kindred doctrines; and upon all ministers, preachers, and teachers to maintain a clear presentation of the whole counsel of God, Who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of repentance; (b) calls upon ministers, pastors and teachers who should find themselves at any time so committed to these doctrines that they should become a major plank in their ministry to consider seriously whether it is not incumbent upon them to resign from the ministry of



any constituent church of the Baptist Union in Tasmania.

And this meant that to remain in the church was impossible. The next Lord's day after that meeting there were thanksgiving services throughout the Baptist Union of Tasmania because three brethren had recanted. That motion was passed, and now what we held dear was forbidden to be taught in the church.

I can remember the deacon who went back with me to my church and congregation. He said, "Can't you see that this is the hand of God? Why are you so stupid not to see that this is as though God is against you? This is an indication or proof that you're wrong." And I can remember saying to him: "My good brother, all they have done this day is pruned that tree of the Reformed faith. It shall flourish again. It shall come again. We may have got rid of people who only never really grasped it." Then, of course, I had to resign. I resigned from that particular congregation. It is strange enough that in the Baptist Church you could hold most doctrines. In fact, one of the leaders of the Union wrote, "Dare to be free." But you were free to teach the doctrine of most things. But there was one thing that you were not free to teach, and that was the doctrines of the Reformed faith.

But there was another minister who had previously left. He could see the writing on the wall, and he had left with the greater portion of that congregation. That was the minister I was telling you about who wrote on the blackboard what is Arminian and what is Calvinism. They put him out of the ministry, and so he left with the greater portion of his congregation.

Now I'm going to tell you a couple of more things, and then we're going to stop for tonight. Now what was happening in these fellowships that started? Well, light commenced, and continued to dawn with them. They conferred with us, and we conferred with them; they had the greatest interest in what was happening to us, and we had the greatest interest in what was happening to them. We found that whether you preached the doctrine of total depravity or unconditional election, wherever you preached it, it caused an uproar. When they commenced to preach it in some of the fellowships, there was uproar there. In one the greater majority of the people left. They went to liberal Baptist churches. But I can remember one pastor telling me, "You know, I know where the truth lies." He said, "I've been like a possum up a tree. I'd get up among the branches, and I would wonder where the root of this thing is, where does it belong, where does this fit, what is the foundation of this grace." And he said, "I'd come down the tree, or I could see that it was coming from the doctrines of

grace. I'd go up the tree. I had a job to look at it; I knew perhaps the place would explode." And we said to him, "You've got some light on the subject, then, have you?" And he said, "Light? I've got that much light I need a pair of welding glasses to look at it!" And there he could see the truth. But he said, "What I would need is someone to come to my congregation and to teach them." And so somebody went. And they taught them that man doesn't act to become born again; but he is born again, and then he acts. Having taught them total depravity, sovereign grace, on that occasion it pleased God for almost the entire congregation to be persuaded of the Reformed faith.

Now there was another very interesting and colorful character. He was at another one of these fellowships. He was greatly taken up with the mystics. He thought the solution to the problems that we found ourselves in lay in the mystics. According to mysticism, you become governed by your feelings. You see, either you are governed by the Word of God, or you are governed by reason contrary to the Word of God, or else you subject the Bible to your feelings. So if you feel something, it doesn't matter what the Word of God says: you go by what you feel. Now he was in that position. The story leading up to this is too long to tell now. (This is going back now, of course, to the beginning of the movement in these fellowships. I've taken it to the conclusion in the Baptist church. We're going back now to what was happening right in the beginning of the fellowships.) And I told this man: "Look, I believe the solution lies in the doctrines that are set forth and taught from the Word of God in the Westminster confession." He said, "No, I couldn't have that. That's too doctrinal, too legal, as far as I'm concerned." He said, "That's as dead as chaff. I couldn't have that." But events happened to shake him. Now I don't have time to tell you of those events, though they are very interesting. But one day he was in the hospital, and he was reading — I am not sure whether it was Whitefield's Sermons or whether it was some other divine; I think it was George Whitefield. I can't think of what book he was reading. A nurse came to him and said, "My word, you're very interested in that book." And he said, "Nurse, this book is very interested in me, if you would like to know the truth." He said, "I am very interested; this book knows a lot about me." A few days later the doctor went to him. He called on him and said, "Mr. Lyons, you seem to be emotionally upset." He said, "Doctor, so would you be if you'd been preaching heresy for years and found out that this could destroy people." And on the broad of his back it pleased God to reveal to him His sovereignty, man's total depravity, sovereign election. Previously someone had gone to him and told him that he ought to burn all his Calvinistic books. They were heresy. He was only young in the faith then. In fact, he did



burn them. But when he found out that he had been deceived, he not only burned every Arminian book — which was a reaction which was natural, I suppose. But he went to his whole congregation, and he took every book they had that was Arminian, and he burned them. And that was the means of the beginning of the development of the Reformed faith in that particular center.

There's only one more story, and I'm going to leave it there.

There was a group known as the Worldwide Evangelization Society. And the people of the Evangelical Fellowship, that little group in the beginning, used to send literature into that missionary society, or into that college. Now, of course, you were not allowed to read such literature, because really it was very unholy, unscriptural. It was error. So people were afraid to read it. They used to plant it underneath their beds; and when nobody was looking, they would get away and they would read it. And eventually, through talking to people outside in the fellowships (and they knew them before they embraced the Reformed faith), and they went and talked with them — when they were pointed to the Scriptures, they could see that they were wrong. And what happened? It simply meant that there was a tremendous turmoil in that college. In fact, you were expelled from the college if they caught you handing out such literature. But eventually you could not contain that work of the Spirit of God. It swept right through that college; and those people who were mystics, governed by their feelings, it pleased God by His truth to set them free.

I well remember on one Saturday afternoon that I was going along towards Hobart (I was a minister in the Baptist Church then), and I met this man who was a lawyer. He was a brilliant lawyer. He had become interested in the things of God. And he was conned, if I may use that word — or persuaded would perhaps be a kinder word — to join this society, to go and be a missionary. And when I said to him, "What are you doing here?" he said, "I don't know what I'm doing here." I said, "Well, what made you come here?" He said, "Well, I was just doing something, and I had this feeling that I must go to Hobart." But I said, "Did you have any reason to come here?" He said, "No, I'm just waiting for the next events." Now there was a man who was a clever man, but he had left his reason by the wayside. You see, it really wasn't spiritual to be rational. You had to go by these intuitions. Now people were governed by that terrible thing, and there are some in this congregation tonight

who were there in that college. People had given away their money, their homes; they thought that they merited something. They thought really that it wasn't Christian to have money, even to work. It was unbiblical. They called it living by faith; but really that is tempting God. God has ordained the use of means, and we should use means. We should have a lawful calling. But when these people were brought to a saving knowledge — or rather they had a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ — but when they were brought to a knowledge of the truth, they were immediately set free. And that movement became such a stir that eventually the principal and those who grasped the doctrines of the Reformed faith — or at least, it was only the doctrines of grace — they were told to get out of that college, and they had to move. Now that is the effect that the truth had when it came.

People who I had known all my life, bosom companions in all those years laboring for God, doing evangelistic work — there was only one person who came to see me when I embraced the Reformed faith. They looked upon you like a leper. You were nothing else but just someone who had gone queer. I well remember the night when they wanted to welcome me to my congregation of that Baptist Church, how really they lauded me to the very sky. I had really to fear what would happen; I was able to keep both feet on the ground. But in just a very short while these same people, when I preached to them the truth, didn't want me, and they wanted to get rid of me as quick as they could.

Now where the Reformed faith is embraced by an Arminian you can always tell: it's a soul-shattering experience. It is like as though your very being has been out of joint, and you've been put back in joint. Indeed, it is that your whole soul has been out of focus. And then you see God on His throne as sovereign, the sovereign God, the One Who has mercy upon whom He will have mercy, but also the One Who commands us to have Him as our God, and the only way to happiness through our Lord Jesus Christ, and hence the command to repent and believe. And in Jesus Christ there is mercy for the chiefest of sinners.

(This is as far as the first cassette recording carried the story of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. At this point they were neither Presbyterians, nor were they yet an organized denomination of churches. They had embraced the so-called doctrines of grace, but not the full Reformed position. As soon as we receive the second recording, we shall continue this story of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. HCH)

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



## THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

# God's Most Elegant Book

Prof. Robert D. Decker

*We know him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, his power and divinity, as the apostle Paul saith, Rom. 1:20. All which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse. Secondly, he makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by his holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation.*

—Article II, *Belgic Confession*

The relation between this second article of our Confession and the first is quite obvious. The believer's confession of God as the overflowing fountain of all good presupposes that God can be known. One cannot confess anything concerning God except one knows Him. Article 2 speaks of the two means by which God is known by us: creation, preservation and government of the universe and His holy and divine Word. This does not mean that man can comprehend God. That remains forever impossible because God is the infinite One Whose depths of Being and glory can never be plumbed by the finite creature. The Church, therefore, has always maintained the Biblical distinction between comprehension and knowledge. Neither is the knowledge of God of which this article speaks merely intellectual apprehension of God. It is rather that genuine spiritual knowledge of faith which is life eternal according to the Word of the Savior. (cf. John 17:3).

Thus the only way to know God is by means of the wonder of His revelation. This fundamental truth deserves emphasis in our time. Neither reasoning nor some subjective "inner light" or "religious experience" (which is false mysticism) can ever yield the spiritual knowledge of God. To insist that one can attain to the knowledge of God by means of human reason is to fall into the error of rationalism, which ultimately becomes skepticism. The Bible everywhere testifies that the mind of man is darkened by sin. In fact, the Scriptures teach the impossibility of man's ever coming to a knowledge of God apart from grace. Still more, man by nature is opposed to God. This truth is clearly presented in Romans 8:7, 8: "Because the carnal mind (literally, "the mind of the flesh", R.D.) is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." The greater danger in our time is the subjectivistic influences which insist on something more than the "holy and divine Word." That "something more than the holy

and divine Word" may be "inner light" (Quakerism), "conversion experience" (Arminianism), or "baptism in or with the Holy Spirit" (Pentecostalism); but whatever it may be, it is a rejection of the sufficiency of the Holy and divine Word by which God "makes himself more clearly and fully known to us, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation." Over against these errors the child of God believes in his heart and confesses with his mouth that the only way to know God is by means of God's own revelation of Himself.

This implies that God must reveal Himself to us. God knows Himself. And because He is God Who dwells in a light which no man can approach unto, He must come down to us and manifest Himself to us. No man can ascend to heaven to discover God. Only when God comes down to us will we ever know Who and What He is. This also implies that in coming down to us God must reveal Himself in a manner which can be understood by us. There is an infinite gap between God the Creator and man the creature. Belonging to the wonder of revelation is the fact that God in His love and tender mercy adapts a correct revelation of Himself to the understanding of man, the finite creature. The result is that revelation is understandable and complete and adequate for our salvation; or, in the word of Article 2: "... as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation." Finally, this implies that God must make us capable of receiving this revelation i.e. capable of responding in faith to God's revelation. In the state of perfection this was possible by virtue of man's creation in the image of God. But through the fall into sin man's mind became darkened and his will became perverse. He could no longer know God. That God, however, reveals Himself means that He gives His elect in Christ Jesus "eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand" His revelation. Without this spiritual illumination we remain blind and deaf to the revelation of God.

This article distinguishes two means by which God



is made known to us. The first of these means is: "... by the creation, preservation and government of the universe..." In other words, the creed speaks of creation and God's providence as the first means by which God reveals Himself to us. This is commonly called in Reformed theology, "general revelation". Unfortunately, this whole subject has been the occasion of no little discussion and even controversy and misunderstanding among theologians. There has even been some criticism of this article of our creed. In the minds of some (notably the late Karl Barth) there are remnants of Roman Catholicism's doctrine of natural theology and nature — grace dichotomy in Article 2. There ought be no misunderstanding, and this criticism of Article 2 is wholly unwarranted.

Notice, in the first place, that the article does not speak of two revelations of God: a general revelation for all men which yields a kind of common fund of knowledge concerning God (natural theology) and a special revelation (the holy and divine Word) which is limited to the elect. Quite to the contrary the creed speaks of only one revelation of God which reaches us by two means. There are not two revelations, the one intended for all men and the other for the church; but there is one revelation and two means by which this revelation reaches us. In the second place, and closely related to this is the fact that the article takes the viewpoint of faith. Article 2 does not say the unbeliever or even mankind in general knows God by these two means, but *we* know God by these two means and by these God makes Himself known to *us*. That "we" and "us" are those who by the grace of Christ "believe with the heart and confess with the mouth" faith in God. The ungodly certainly cannot and does not make this confession.

Thirdly, when Article 2 speaks of creation and providence as one of the means by which God makes Himself known to us, it is thoroughly Biblical. The inspired poet of Psalm 19: 1 and 2 exclaims: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." It is God Who: "... watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth..." (Psalm 104:13ff). The same Psalmist declares of God: "Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind ... Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away." (Psalm

104:2-7) Indeed the Lord's works are manifold, and the earth is full of His riches (Ps. 104:24); or, in the words of this article, the "universe is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, his power and divinity..."

In the fourth place, both implicitly by its reference to Romans 1:20 and explicitly with the words: "All which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse" the creed speaks of the purpose and effect of this general revelation of God with respect to the wicked. To be sure, Romans 1 teaches that God shows the ungodly the "invisible things" of Himself, even "his eternal power and Godhead"; but both the purpose of this and its effect is "so that they may be without excuse." (verse 20) In this connection it must not be overlooked that it is the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against the ungodly. (cf. verse 18) Romans 1:18ff. also makes very plain that the ungodly always distort and reject what they see of God in His creation. These "hold the truth in unrighteousness." (verse 18) Hence, it cannot be said either on the basis of Romans 1 or Article 2 that men are able to construct some sort of natural theology.

Neither must we ever forget the relationship between these two means of revelation. Apart from the holy and divine Word, which can only be received by the gift of faith, one simply cannot receive God's revelation in creation and providence. No one has ever stated the matter more clearly than John Calvin who wrote: "Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God. This, therefore is a special gift, where God, to instruct the church, not merely uses mute teachers (creation and providence, R.D.) but also opens his own most hallowed lips." (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I, V, 1) The Scriptures are the spectacles through which we are able to discern clearly the glory of God in His creation, preservation, and government of the universe.

With this article and continuing through Article VII, the creed takes up the whole matter of the church's confession concerning the "holy and divine Word," the Scriptures. Beautifully woven into the fabric of these statements of faith are what have been called the attributes of Scripture, namely, its authority, necessity, perspicuity, and sufficiency. These articles have something to say concerning each



of these either by implication or directly. Two of these attributes of Scripture are touched upon in Article 2. This article speaks of the perspicuity of the Word of God when it states that God makes himself "more clearly and fully known to us" by His Word. There is nothing obscure about the Bible. God's Word plainly and in language a little child can understand teaches us all that we need to know in this life to God's glory and our salvation. Hence, those same Scriptures are sufficient. We need nothing more than the Word of God. What is "necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation" is contained in God's Word.

And this is the wonder of God's revelation. While the Bible is perfectly clear and understandable, one cannot receive it apart from faith, the gift of God's grace. Unless the Spirit of Christ works faith in the heart of a man, he will inevitably reject and deny God's Word to his own destruction. Always the issue between the world and the church is one of unbelief versus faith.

This is the voice of our fathers concerning God's revelation. May God give us the faith to continue in this tradition, sounding the same voice amid the din of apostasy which characterizes our times.

## ALL AROUND US

# The South African Reformed Church And Race Relations

*Prof. H. Hanko*

The race issue is still very much alive in South Africa, also in the Reformed Churches of that country. The following are excerpts from the *RES News Exchange*.

The General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, which meets every four years, convened the latter part of October. The DRC is probably the most influential (white) church in South Africa. For this reason, . . . a long report on race relations . . . on its agenda . . . sparked much comment. . . . The report on race (Landman Report) was issued from a more "enlightened" element within the DRC. So hopes were high that the Synod would adopt resolutions that would provide new and strong leadership in the touchy area of race relations.

The final product, like most synodical decisions was a child of compromise. As a result, it evoked widely varied reactions. The Scriptural basis and the principles derived therefrom show a genuine willingness by the church to listen to the demands of the gospel in the matter of race. However, the practical implications drawn from these principles disappointed many observers, even many of those traditionally sympathetic. The congregations received very little new practical direction from the DRC Synod.

However, a clearer look at the biblical givens can exert a considerable influence on a church: in this regard definite steps were taken by the Synod. It unequivocally rejected all attempts to found the racial differentiation of mankind on the Noachitic curse. Also rejected was the identification of South Africa with the Israelites, a practice that had applied God's commands to Israel to be a separate people to

(white) South Africans. . . . Although the New Testament recognizes the diversity of races, it does not make it into a supreme principle, but holds as the highest norm for relations between the races the command to love one's neighbor. However, the report maintains the New Testament does allow that under certain conditions different races may arrive at a way of living together in the same country through the way of "separate development". . . .

On the subject of social justice the report makes strong principal statements. Although it maintains that the church has a unique role in this world, which is not first of all to deliver a program of action for all dimensions of life, but to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, the report sees it part of the church's task to take a critical and healing stance toward sinful structures in society. . . .

The principal part of the Landman Report was adopted by the Synod with relative unanimity. The practical consequences, however, evoked heated debate and strong differences of opinion. The RES (Sydney 1972) resolution on interracial marriages, which was adopted by the "Mission Church", a daughter of the DRC, was rejected. . . .

. . . The report proposed that the churches open their doors to all races and worship together. Another proposal suggested that (white) church buildings be shared with congregations of other races. Both proposals gained considerable support, but the Synod concluded that, given the function of Synod within the formal (Reformed) structure of the church, it could not really impose such recommendations upon the congregations. Many commentators felt that the Synod neatly dodged the issue.



...The Synod resolved to look more closely into the socio-economic forces that are creating frustration within the Colored and Asiatic communities. Some observations were not adopted by the Synod, on the grounds that the church does not have the duty to hold up a blue print for social change to the government.

In connection with this, we may also note that the

Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa has threatened, in the form of an ultimatum, to break off fraternal relations with the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands if the latter does not reverse its headlong plunge into false doctrine. This ultimatum has stirred a large amount of controversy in the Netherlands. The whole issue of race in the South African Churches is part of the controversy.

## A New Reformed Seminary In France

On October 13 and 14, in Aix-en-Provence, in Southern France, a new Reformed Seminary was officially opened. It is an independent and inter-denominational Seminary, but its avowed purpose is to uphold and maintain the Reformed faith, and to train ministers in the Reformed faith for work in the Reformed Churches in France. Although the faculty is taken from various denominations, the French Confession of Faith is the confessional basis of the Seminary. The French Confession of Faith was written at about the same time as the Belgic Confessions, closely resembles the Belgic Confession in form and content, and was written under the influence and with the advice of John Calvin. It has always served as the confessional basis of the Reformed Churches in France, but the major Reformed denomination in France, the French Reformed Church, has become increasingly liberal and pluralistic.

The main support of the Seminary comes from conservatives within the French Reformed Church and from the Independent Evangelical Reformed Church in France which is a member of the RES. The school is opening with a Faculty of five, within twenty-five students, fifteen of whom are full-time.

The new Seminary has provoked considerable discussion within the Reformed Churches in France. Especially leaders within the larger and more liberal denomination consider the Seminary a divisive force within the Churches.

This is not an uncommon development within the Churches. Our own country has seen similar phenomena. Conservative and orthodox leaders who have experienced the liberalism of their parent denominations and who have seen the church's

seminaries become increasingly liberal, have turned to independent seminaries which are under no Church control as the solution to the problem. Apparently suspicious of church controlled seminaries, they see independent seminaries as the only viable alternative of preserving the Reformed faith and preparing students for it.

This, quite naturally, brings up the problem of the legitimacy of independent seminaries. While we can sincerely sympathize with those who have become thoroughly disgusted with the liberalism of church-controlled schools, and while we can understand why the trend is toward independent Seminaries, we have some reservations about this trend. The problems which this trend seems to create are of two kinds: the one principal and the other practical. The Reformed Churches have always taken the position that the instruction of young men for the ministry of the Word is part of the official preaching of the Word. If this position is correct, and we believe that it is, then it seems to follow that the theological school which trains such ministers must also be under the control and direction of the Church. That is the principal matter which concerns us. The practical matter concerns the ability of a Seminary which is independent to prepare successfully young men for the pastoral ministry. Is there not a very real danger that a Seminary, loosed from all ecclesiastical control, becomes a Seminary where the study of theological disciplines is an end in itself? Is it not possible that the very fact that such a Seminary is separated from the life of the Church will lead to a Seminary where there is little or no *pastoral* preparation in the true sense of the word?

These problems may be worth discussing as the trend continues towards independent seminaries.

## Listening Movements

While this subject is perhaps somewhat removed from the ordinary subjects we discuss in this column, we thought it interesting enough to include a few remarks about it here.

Some time ago, *Newsweek* magazine contained a short article in its Science section which dealt with bodily rhythm. The article pointed out the well-known fact that people speak not only through



words, but through a variety of gestures of the hands, arms, torsos, eyes and other moveable parts of the body. It pointed out further, that listening is also accompanied by clearly visible bodily movements such as movement of the head, raising of the eyebrows, shifting of the body, etc.

Some scientists have recently made a study of more subtle and less noticeable bodily movements which are made in listening. To their astonishment, they discovered that there are some interesting features about such bodily movements. In the first place, these movements start very early in life, as early as twelve hours old, and may perhaps take place already before birth. In the second place, they discovered that infants begin immediately to establish in their bodies a rhythm of bodily movement which corresponds to the rhythm of the language being spoken. While mere nonsense syllables or disorganized sounds bring about nothing else but disconnected and unrhythmic movements — even in infants, the rhythms of speech soon are synchronized with the rhythms of bodily movement in children. Ordinarily, it takes only about two months for “babies motoristically to lock into a speech rhythm.” And, because different languages have different rhythms, the bodily movements are different also and the rhythms established differ according to the language which a child hears.

The scientists were mostly interested in this question because they saw its potential as a diagnostic tool to discover autistic babies early in life. The tests showed that autistic babies respond to speech differently than normal children. If this is true, it will

be an invaluable aid in the field of education.

But there are interesting implications of another sort. It is not our purpose to discuss them here. But several things come to mind. Everyone who has ever watched a child learn to read, e.g., will know how such a child uses his entire body to struggle through the first simple words of the printed page, and how such bodily twisting and turning seems to be a necessary part of the reading program of children. Or again, we are interested in the fact that the language which people learn as children is very really their “mother-tongue”. That is the language they remain most fluent in all their life, though they may learn three or four or more languages as life progresses. And when such people reach old age, it is not at all uncommon to find them reverting to the language they learned as children. Perhaps this is because the speech rhythms of those first sentences remain with them all their life.

It seems as if this is true even in a more general sense. Those who have Dutch backgrounds, e.g., find it much easier to learn to pronounce the Dutch language than one who has a background of a different nationality, even though neither had ever learned a word of Dutch in their first twenty years. I have even seen this in connection with the pronunciation of various dialects in the Dutch language.

Well, it is an interesting subject, and seems to have implications of considerable scope in the whole area of verbal communication. Perhaps it would be worthwhile for some of our teachers to pursue this matter further.

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## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of Hebrews 12:1-3

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

#### “ALSO WE” MUST RUN THE RACE (Hebrews 12:1)

It is with rather special emphasis and formality that the writer to the Hebrews introduces this twelfth Chapter of Hebrews. The writer would emphatically include also the New Testament Hebrew Christians in the great activity of faith of which he had spoken in Chapter 11. Writes he “therefore also we”. It is by certain consequence that also the Hebrew Christians must run the race of faith. If God would not have the Old Testament saints receive the final promise without us, neither will he have us receive the crown

of life with the Old Testament saints without our running the same way of patience. There would have been no point in relating the battles, victories of faith of the Old Testament saints, if their walk of faith were not an example and incentive for us to press on in the way of suffering to glory. We too must run the race!

We run the race with a certain difference. We run the race as those who live in the dispensation where God hath spoken unto us in His Son. (Hebrews 1:1-3) In this dispensation the Old Testament saints form a cloud of witnesses. Yes, they are one church with us; we believe an holy catholic church. But their voices



come to us from the pages of the Old Testament canonical Scriptures, as the rule of faith and life! As these ran, thus must we run. Qualitatively we run the same course. We run in the arena in which these former saints are spectator-witnesses, so to speak. They surround us with their testimony, showing us by the demonstration of their faith the outcome of such faith unto salvation in contradistinction from those who fall back into the perdition of their souls. Each one in this arena has completed the race. They are the worthies of whom the world is not worthy! And now we too must be such of whom the world is not worthy.

### **RUNNING THE RACE SET BEFORE US (Hebrews 12:1b)**

It is a race which we must run. This term "race" is the translation of the Greek term "*agoona*." From this word comes the term in English which refers to conflict. The term is *agon*; it is a contest, a conflict, specifically the conflict between the chief characters of a literary work. In the N.T. it refers to a contest, conflict, fight which is held in a stadium; it is the emblem of efforts and trials of the Christian life. (Thayer) It refers to the good *fight* of faith which the apostle had fought. He has *agonized* through all manner of trials of faith. (II Tim. 4:10) And Timothy is admonished to "fight the good fight of faith" and thus to lay hold on eternal life. (I Tim. 6:12) This little study indicates that "race" must not be taken in the limited sense of running. It refers to the entire circumference of the Christian activity of faith as this leads to salvation. The entire idea of the "*agoona*" is full of the thought of peril, affliction (Phil. 1:30) and of extreme conflict with opposing and hostile forces and deadly enemies and foes. (Col. 2:1)

This is the "race" which is "set before us". This is not a man-made and humanly contrived race and battle. It is the battle which is initiated by the LORD Himself in Paradise when he put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman. (Gen. 3:16) There is something beckoning and hopeful about this race in that it is set before us. We see this when we remember that the writer to the Hebrews in Chapter 6:18 speaks of the "hope set before us." That hope is something on which we must lay hold by faith. We, who flee for refuge to God, do so in the hope of laying hold on the objective glory and peace of Christ. This hope is sure and steadfast. The reason is that Jesus has entered into the holy place as the King-Priest as our forerunner. He ran before us in our behalf. And now we have an anchor that holds, sure and steadfast within the holy place. The anchor holds and our hope is no fiction or product of our sick imagination. The race is real and it is set before us and it leads to glory!

Now this race we must run. Interesting it is to note that the writer includes himself in this exhortation. He will also run; run he must and run he will. He himself feels the urgency of the matter of this race. Hence he says: let *us* run the race. *That* every preacher must say and do! The term in the Greek expresses the strenuous effort in the Christian life and cause! Paul employs the metaphor of "running". He runs the race in the preaching of the gospel. To demonstrate the strenuous effort in this ministry he writes "Know ye not that they which run in the race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible". (I Cor. 9:24, 25) Those who cling to the gospel of salvation "run well" (Gal. 2:2) In Philippians 2:16 Paul's running is tantamount to his "labours" in the Gospel.

Here in Hebrews 12:1 the "race" refers to the great spiritual and mental trials which they shall need to endure for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. Yes, it may be a physical trial. It may be "unto blood", to be martyrs for the faith. It is above all a trial of the soul, which requires much patience! And in this trial of patience it must be with the Hebrew Christians not as seed sown in stony places which has no depth of earth and which cannot endure the heat of the sun of persecution. (Matt. 13:5, 6, 20, 21). They must bring forth fruit, consisting in patience, to the full-eared grain, some hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty. (Idem 13:23).

Particularly in the case of the Hebrews it refers to their not falling back, away from Christ and from His atoning work on the Cross on which he brought the sacrifice for all of our sins, once and for all, in the end of the ages. They must not account the blood of Christ a common thing! They have need of patience, that, after they have done the will of God, they may receive the promise. That promise is the final glory of heaven; it is to see the glory of the perfected Christ.

Down through the ages the church has run this race in opposition to every foe and to all the false doctrines of the evil one who would corrupt the gospel of sovereign grace! It is either man saving himself or God saving us; it is either-or and never both-and! It is not of works of righteousness which we perform. We will need to cling to the Five Points of Calvinism and reject the *Five Points of the Remonstrants*. And in this race and battle, which is constant, we will need to give God all the glory, and honor His work in His Son in these last days. And nowhere shall we allow the enemy to shoot a breach in these doctrines. We shall indeed cling to the pattern of sound doctrine as confessed in the *Twelve Articles Of Faith*!



Thus our race is clinging to Christ, the Head! We shall need to do this over-against all the contradictions of men. Always the truth is gainsaid by unbelief, by those who hear the gospel but do not believe the gospel, and, therefore, gainsay it in their blindness of unbelief. And those who gainsay the gospel, while pretending to preach the gospel are, indeed, legion. Our day is full of "isms" which all have this in common that they deny that Christ is the eternal Son of God, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And, therefore, they deny the teaching of the vicarious atonement for the elect church of God. Do not the Jehovah Witnesses deny the very JEHOVAH of the Scriptures when they deny that Jesus is Immanuel, God-with-us? Do they confess the atonement in the Blood of the Son of God, and the manifestation of His Godhead in power in the resurrection from the dead? They do not! They contradict, as did all unbelief, through the ages. Do not the Seventh Day Adventists deny that Christ atoned for our sins on the Cross; yes, he brought the sacrifice there and then, but atonement no; that must wait till after the "investigative judgment" is completed and the saints prove that they are worthy. That is changing the gospel into a lie. And this is the case with all Liberalism in our day.

Yes, we must run the race!

And to run the race overagainst all the Pelagianism and Arminianism of every shade and color takes much power and strength. And that power is simply *patience*! Patience is a sort of key-word here in these chapters in Hebrews. (Hebrews 10:12) Writes the author to the Hebrews "Ye have need of *patience*, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise".

The idea of patience is not that of a mere slavish acceptance of the duties and responsibilities which must be performed. Patience is not the part of the weakling, who cannot avoid being imposed upon by the insults of others and the abuse which this entails. On the contrary, patience is first of all the manifestation of a deep and humble trust in God, expecting all things from His Fatherly care. It is an

abiding trust and confidence in God's faithfulness to keep His Word to us. And patience is also a sure hope of one day standing before the Lord in glory and to hear from God's mouth "well done, thou good and faithful servant". Patience is a gift of grace from the God of patience and all consolation. (Rom. 15:5; Rom. 5:3, 4; 8:25) It is through patience and comfort of the Scriptures that we have hope!

Now there is *power* in patience. It is the power which energizes us in the race. We cannot run this race in our own strength. The text says that we run *through (dia)* patience. Patience is the *means* of our running. To remain under the difficulties is necessary to run the race. This enduring power is faith, hope and love in God. It is the earnest expectation of hope where we find patience. No evils are then great enough to daunt us.

### THE BESETTING SIN IMPEDING OUR RUNNING (Hebrews 12:1)

It seems from the Greek text that the "sin" which so easily besets us in this race is a very definite sin. The text does not speak in the plural of sins but in the singular of sin. Besides, the text also uses the definite article to point out this sin. It is *the* sin which so easily besets us in this race. While there is set before us the race which we must run, we are beset with the sin which impedes our running. It seems that wheresoever we turn there is that sin, like the wild animals at night about the camp in the forest. This sin, it seems to me, is contextually the sin of impatience. It is the very opposite of patience. This impatience is born from the lack of trust in the Lord; it is then that we murmur at the ways of the Lord with us. The road is too long and the paths are too steep and rocky. The contradiction of sinners causes our hearts to fail when we are impatient. We then become "nervous" with the Lord's doings in our life. And this impatience becomes a weight, an impediment in the running of the race. And these must all be put off. This requires much prayer. This is really putting off of the old man of sin. Running the race is true joy, firm hope and ardent love, in God through Jesus Christ.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

"Peaceable Fruit — For the Nurture of Covenant Youth," by Gertrude M. Hoeksema is now available postpaid for \$5.95. Write to: RFPA Publications Committee, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49501. Be sure to enclose your check and to include your name

and address.

(We take this means of apologizing for the delay in sending copies to those who ordered during our pre-publication sale. Copies were distributed the very day they came from the bindery.)



## News From Our Churches

Rev. G. Lubbers accepted the call he received from Pella. The congregation of First Church, of which he had been a member since 1970, when he accepted the call to serve as missionary to Jamaica, planned to bid Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers farewell, in the basement of the church after the evening services on December 22.

\*\*\*\*\*

The congregation of First Church made an effort, too, to help Mrs. Wm. Nienhuis celebrate her birthday anniversary. A large birthday card was placed on a table in the foyer, and members of that church placed their signatures on it. First Church doesn't do that with *every* birthday, of course. This one was something special. Mrs. Nienhuis, you see, was born on December 11, 1874!

\*\*\*\*\*

Scores of names must have filled that card. An evidence, that surely is, of the communion of saints. That's a form of communion which could be seen in *any* of our churches, of course. But, how about *this* one, from Isabel? According to a December bulletin, one of the members "invites the congregation to his house tonight for song and fellowship." A Sunday evening singspiration which fills a large auditorium has distinct advantages, surely; but the kind of

communion experienced by a small congregation, gathering for "song and fellowship" in a home, has a beauty all its own.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dipping into my supply of old news, just now, I happened, coincidentally, to draw out an Isabel bulletin on which I had underscored a reference to a *Singspiration* held there. "Next Sunday evening," the July 21 bulletin read, "our sister church at Forbes will join us in a SINGSPIRATION here in Isabel. Let us keep this evening open to sing praises unto our God and to fellowship with our fellow saints." It's plain that Isabel also seeks what I had just referred to as the advantages of a larger gathering in singing the Lord's praises.

\*\*\*\*\*

On that same bulletin from Isabel, reference was made to the work of radio-broadcasting in that area. The announcement read as follows: "We are now co-sponsors with the Mission Committee, of the REFORMED WITNESS HOUR to be heard weekly on Sunday afternoon at 4:10 on KBHB, Sturgis, 810 on your dial. This one-half hour program will replace the 15-minute Reformed Witness which we enjoyed for the past 13 weeks. The Mission Committee has

(continued on back page)

### BOOK REVIEW

*Models of Religious Broadcasting*, by J. Harold Ellens; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 168 pages, \$3.45, paper. (Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema)

As the title indicates, this is a book about religious broadcasting. This book rather thoroughly covers the history of religious broadcasting, going back all the way to the earliest religious radio broadcasting efforts. The author classifies the various religious broadcasts into four main types, or models: the "Mighty Acts of God" model, the "Pulpit" model, the "Instructional" model, and the "Leaven" model. He chooses for the "Instructional" and "Leaven" models.

This reviewer found the book to be rather interesting because of the historical data presented. Especially interesting were the references to such early broadcasts as those of Father Coughlin and Dr. Walter Maier. For those interested in a history of religious broadcasting, and, along with it, a bit of nostalgia, this is a good book. The author's conclusions are colored by his false disjunction between proclamation and preaching, with which this reviewer does not agree, of course.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to the family of MR. DAVID MEULENBERG who died in peace early Monday morning, December 16, 1974. We remember the brother as a former officebearer, as a man who in the offices held served faithfully and revealed himself to be a peacemaker in the true sense of the word (Matt. 5:9). He suffered but he knew his affliction was of the Lord, (1 Peter 4:19) and that this affliction could not be compared to the glory that awaited him (Romans 8:18). May the family of this departed brother find comfort in the Word of God knowing that "God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." and that "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (Psalm 46:1, 11)

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.  
Mr. J. Huiskens, Clerk

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On January 3, 1975, our parents, MR. and MRS. WILLIAM HOKSBERGEN, hope to celebrate their 40th Wedding Anniversary. We are thankful to our Heavenly Father for sparing them these many years for each other and for us. It is our prayer that God may continue to bless them as they go down life's path together in the fear of their God.

Their Children  
Mr. & Mrs. John Hoksbergen  
Mr. & Mrs. William Jansma  
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Hoksbergen  
Mr. & Mrs. Don Hoksbergen  
Mr. & Mrs. Ken Hoksbergen  
15 Grandchildren  
Hull, Iowa



agreed to help us support this program by paying one-half the cost. Let us be thankful that we can have the opportunity to bring this radio ministry into our homes and into the homes of many others."

\*\*\*\*\*

For further news concerning radio broadcasts, we lift the following from a September bulletin of our church in Holland, Michigan: "This afternoon The Reformed Heritage Hour will air over WZND the 100th message that the radio ministry of our congregation has sent forth. . . . May our covenant God use this ministry to His own glory and the comfort of His people."

\*\*\*\*\*

Further efforts "to disseminate our distinctively Protestant Reformed views," were set forth in a December Congregational Letter from the Reformed Witness Committee of our Hope Church. "The committee is now engaging itself," according to the newsletter, "in an effort to proclaim the truths of God's Word by means of the printed page. We plan to place one-fourth page ads in the Walker, Ottawa, and Grand Valley Shoppers, D.V. These ads would consist of a written meditation summarizing appropriate sermons by our pastor and also including the availability of a taped copy of that sermon."

It seems that taped sermons are duplicated and mailed regularly "to people in Maine, Montana, Ohio, South Africa, and New Zealand." The newsletter included excerpts from a couple of letters received in response to those mailings. From New Zealand, this response: "I was in Wellington a couple of days ago . . . the brethren there are coming together in a home and listen to the sermons. We here at Christ Church make a much wider use and they go all over the country, even students at universities are listening to the sermons. Young men are becoming hungry for the reformed truth. We thank the Lord for the blessings of this ministry . . . in your country you have big churches and sometimes I think that some of your people take it for granted to belong to a faithful reformed church. . . ."

And, from South Africa: ". . . What a sheer delight it was to receive the tapes you sent me! . . . I appreciate them tremendously and am grateful to God for His goodness to me. It makes me so glad to hear God honoured and Christ exalting sermons in these days of apostasy and compromise." D. D.

# THE STANDARD BEARER

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