

The STANDARD BEARER

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There seems to be little reason why the majority of denominations, denominations which have the largest membership rolls, should not get together. Membership in many denominations is a social matter. Doctrinal differences and church political differences mean little if anything in a time of doctrinal indifference. Liturgical differences are no longer barriers when most denominations are engaging in some form of liturgical renewal, and when all the emphasis is on social work. It would seem that only a certain traditionalism still keeps most denominations apart.

Nevertheless, the pressures are so strong that the leaders will some day have their way. We may be sure that there will be no room, not only in the new ecclesiastical structures being erected, but in the world as a whole, for the Church of Christ. Ecclesiastical union, in most of its forms, is opposition to God. That is its deepest spiritual principle. And opposition to God always manifests itself in opposition to those who represent God's cause in the world.
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MEDITATION

Looking for the Blessed Hope

Rev. M. Schipper

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Titus 2:13, 14

With these words the apostle completes the thought he began to develop in the verses 11 and 12, which are joined to our text by a semicolon. We called attention to those verses in our previous Meditation under the theme "The Saving Grace of God."

Because our text is so closely connected to the preceding, it is well that we briefly review what was written concerning it. First of all, we pointed out what that saving grace of God is: it is the grace that saves. It is the grace which God richly bestows. It is the grace of God which has appeared. Secondly, we called attention to what that saving grace of God does. First of all, it teaches us to say: No! No – to ungodliness. No – to worldly lusts. In one word, it teaches us to live antithetically in this present evil world, which is fast developing under sin and darkness. Positively, that grace of God teaches us to say: Yes! Yes – to God. Yes – to all that is good and beautiful, as it is related to the saving grace of God which is realized in us as a gift of grace. And this entails that we live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age. Thirdly, we pointed out in whom this saving grace of God works. It is not in all men individually, for the grace of God is never common; but it is in all classes of men. Thus the wonderful grace of God that saves shall be richly distinguished and distributed in the church which is being formed out of every nation, tribe, and tongue, and from all classes of people.

Now, in our text, the apostle continues the thought and completes it. It must become plain that the saving grace of God not only teaches us how to live in the present world, but it also teaches us to look for the blessed hope.

With regard to the text itself, three remarks should be made, shall we clearly understand what the apostle is saying. First of all, it should be noted that when the apostle tells us that the saving grace of God which has appeared also teaches us to look for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, he does not have in

mind two different objects we are to look for. It must be understood that the blessed hope and the appearance are the same. Also that the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ are the same. Secondly, we call attention to the translation in the text which we believe to be faulty, namely, "the glorious appearing." The apostle does not have in mind the glorious appearance of God and of Christ, wonderful as that may be; but he has in mind the glory of God and of Christ which He will give us when He appears. You feel immediately that these two ideas are quite different; and not the first, but the latter receives the emphasis in the text. Thirdly, it must be remarked that verse 14 of the text reveals to us the ground, not only for the grace which has already appeared, but also for the glory that must be revealed with the final appearance of Christ. So understood, we are ready to consider the main thrust of the text: namely, that the grace of God teaches us also to look for the blessed hope.

Glorious object!

As was said, not two objects are we to look for: first, the blessed hope, and then the appearance of the glory. No, rather, it is one object that is twofold. It is the blessed hope which consists in the appearance of the glory which God in Christ will bring with Him for us. In other words, it is the appearance of the glory of God which is the object of our blessed hope.

That it is our blessed hope means not only that it is cause for happiness and joy, which it surely is. That which is blessed is certainly cause for rejoicing and fulness of joy. But the term "blessed" implies much more. It signifies that which fills up, complements, and completely satisfies what is still lacking in us.

O, indeed, by the grace that saves we have already received much, very much! Words cannot adequately express the greatness, and beauty of the grace of God we already possess: how He made us dead sinners alive, how He justified us in the atoning sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, how He wrought with His saving

grace in us, sanctifying us by His Word and Spirit and leading us in the way everlasting, causing us in hope to look to the heavens, from whence our final salvation shall appear. O, wondrous grace it is, that teaches us how to live in this present evil age which is fast developing in sin until the cup of iniquity is full, and which cries for the final display of God's wrath in the judgment that shall dispose of all the wicked.

Even so, the half has not been said! Like the Queen of Sheba, when she saw the glory of Solomon, exclaimed, "The half has not been told me!" so it will be said when we see the final perfection of our salvation, which is the object of our hope, when we shall see the fulfillment of the work of grace in us in the glory our God has prepared for all His own.

Such is the significance of the blessedness.

Blessed hope!

And when the apostle speaks of hope, beloved readers, he is not speaking of something that is anticipatory, but uncertain. That is the way we use the term "hope," but the Word of God never does. When we use the term, we usually mean that we are not sure. Usually we say, "I hope so," and invariably we shrug our shoulder as a sign of doubt. We say, "Tomorrow I hope to do this or that." But it is very well possible that we will not do what we hoped for, because so much may happen that will make it impossible. But the Bible never speaks of hope this way. According to Scripture — and thus it is used also in the text — hope is the anticipation of that which is objectively real, of what is absolutely certain, Whatever the blessed hope is, it is that which cannot fail to materialize. We shall surely have it.

And what is that blessed hope?

It is the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ!

Also here, as we already suggested, there are not two objects: the great God, and then the Saviour Jesus Christ. Rather, the apostle tells us that the great God is our Saviour Jesus Christ. Incidentally, we believe, here is Scriptural proof for the deity of Christ. Our Saviour is identical with the great God.

The glory of which the apostle speaks is, therefore, the glory which God in Christ, the Saviour, prepares and will grant unto us when He appears.

The epiphany, the appearance of the glory!

That is the object of our hope which the grace of God teaches us to look for!

The glory of God Who is great! Of God Who is great and glorious in Himself. Who is full of infinite perfections, and Whose Self-glory is the radiation of these perfections. Great is He in love, mercy, and grace; in righteousness and truth, in wisdom and honor, in immutability and independence, in might

and power. These and many more are the virtues of God which reflect His glory. But when the apostle speaks of His glory, he does not have in mind the appearance of God Himself; rather, he has in mind the glory which God has prepared and purposes to give unto His people in Christ, and on the basis of Christ's merits. This glory, which is but a reflection of His own, He purposes to give unto us. In principle we already have it through the sanctifying grace of salvation, but it is not yet manifest what we shall be. When He shall appear then we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And when He will see us in that epiphany, He will see in us the fulness of His beauty, and be glorified.

And this glory is all bound up in our Saviour Jesus Christ!

The One Who gave Himself for us as a ransom!

The One Who delivered us from all iniquity!

The One Who cleanses to Himself a select people, zealous of good works!

O, indeed, the glory which is the object of our hope is not that which comes to us because of our worth; but it has its sole ground in the meritorious and saving work of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Of Jesus, Who saves His people from their sins. Of Christ, Who was appointed and anointed, and qualified to save them; Who officially represents them in the matter of their redemption before the face of God. Of Christ, Who in His redemptive work prepares a people which is the lot of Jehovah's inheritance, a people that is formed for Jehovah's praise.

Looking for the blessed hope!

Looking is hope in action. Looking is hope in anticipation. Looking implies especially three things. First, that we know that the object we hope for is real. Second, that we expect to receive that object. Third, that we are longing for it while we wait.

The blessed hope causes us to be in tension. As with magnetic power it pulls us heavenward, whence we look for the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. It has an attraction to the work of grace in our regenerated hearts. This regenerated heart knows that the life of glory we now have is but in principle; and therefore it stretches out for the perfection of glory in a life that is everlasting, to be attained in the day of Christ. This looking for the blessed hope is a constant activity, whereby we keep on longing and expecting the glory our Saviour prepares for us.

And the cause of this activity is the appearance of the grace of God which teaches us. As it teaches us how to live holily in this present evil world, so it also teaches us to look for the blessed hope, for the glory which is to be brought unto us when God our Saviour in Jesus Christ appears.

When He shall appear, every eye shall see Him. The wicked shall then seek to hide themselves from the face of Him with Whom they have to do. They shall even call to the mountains in the false hope that they shall annihilate them. For our great God shall be fierce in the day of His wrath, and the wicked shall be consumed.

But the righteous, who have been taught by the grace of God that bringeth salvation, who live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; are taught by that same grace to look for the blessed hope, the glory that God in Christ shall bring with Him in His appearing. And they long with great

expectation for that glory, and therefore for that appearing.

Keep looking, then, ye children of hope!

You have not long to wait!

The grace of God which teaches us always does so through the Word and Spirit of God. And that Word informs us in no uncertain terms: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"

Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Amen!

EDITORIAL

After Fifty Years

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

(The text of an address delivered at Calvin Seminary, December 19, 1974)

Members of the Faculty, Students, and Guests:

First of all, I express my sincere thanks for the invitation to lecture to you today. I am thankful, too, for the subject which was suggested to me by Dr. Stob, "After Fifty Years." I believe it represents something of a milestone in itself that a Protestant Reformed minister is afforded an opportunity to speak on this subject at a Christian Reformed Seminary. Needless to say, I am quite willing and happy to speak to you on this subject.

That subject is and will be much in the hearts and minds of us who are Protestant Reformed. In the year 1975 we hope to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of our denomination, which was provisionally organized on March 6, 1925. The reaching of such a milestone for our denomination, for which at one time many predicted an early death, gives reason to pause and to reflect on our origin and our history and to evaluate our present position in the ecclesiastical world at large, and especially in the Reformed community. And I believe that since our denomination had its painful birth from yours, it should also give reason for reflection and evaluation on your part. It is my sincere hope that this lecture will contribute to the achievement of that end.

Although I represent the second generation of the Protestant Reformed Churches and their ministry, I may nevertheless say that I stand before you as a son of the Christian Reformed Church. This is literally true: for I was born and baptized a member of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church one year before the crisis of 1924. I believe, too, that I am a

true son of the Christian Reformed Church – not, of course, as the Christian Reformed Church is today. In that regard I am a son of the Protestant Reformed Churches. But I believe that I am a true son of the Christian Reformed Church according to its true genius prior to 1924. This makes the occasion and the material of my lecture all the more momentous to me – and, I hope, to you.

Finally, by way of introduction, I must point out that my lecture this morning must needs be in the nature of a summary. If I were to review the history in detail, to analyze the doctrinal issues and implications in detail, and to document and prove from Scripture and the Confessions all that I say in summary form this morning, you would have to afford me the opportunity for several lectures of this length. And so I ask you to bear this in mind; and I believe that this was the intention of the invitation that was extended to me. Parenthetically, let me say that if you have questions, I suggest that you write them down. Then, if time does not permit me to answer them here this morning, I offer to answer them in writing in the *Standard Bearer*, in which a transcript of my lecture will also appear.

As I speak to you on the subject, "After Fifty Years," I will arrange my material under the following three questions:

- I. What Happened Fifty Years Ago?
- II. What Took Place During the Intervening Fifty Years?
- III. What Is the Situation Today?

I. What Took Place Fifty Years Ago?

Fifty years ago the Protestant Reformed Churches had their origin in the events connected with the common grace controversy, and specifically in the events connected with the adoption of the Three Points of Common Grace by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church of 1924. At that time three pastors, the Rev. Henry Danhof (of Kalamazoo I), the Rev. George M. Ophoff (of Hope, Riverbend – now Walker, Michigan), and the Rev. Herman Hoeksema (of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids) along with their consistories, were deposed from office, following the Synod of 1924, by Classis Grand Rapids East and Classis Grand Rapids West of the Christian Reformed Churches. These consistories and their pastors, along with the greater portions of their respective congregations, felt both for reasons of doctrine and reasons of church government and ecclesiastical justice that they might not recognize this deposition, but considered themselves called of God to continue in the duties and functions of their offices, and therefore, were compelled to organize a self-contained church organization. Pending the disposition of their appeal by the synod of 1926, this organization was at first provisional; and they called themselves *Protesting Christian Reformed Churches*. After the final disposition of the case in 1926, they organized permanently under the name *Protestant Reformed Churches in America*. I call attention to this for three reasons. In the first place, because it is a matter of fact that the two Classes mentioned proceeded to do what the Synod of 1924 specifically refused to do, namely, to demand subscription to the Three Points and to discipline the ministers involved, and that, too, in the name of the Formula of Subscription. Besides, it must be kept in mind that the synod had declared Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema to be Reformed in the fundamentals. I mention it, in the second place, because it was in 1924 that the Christian Reformed Churches turned to the hierarchical, or collegialistic view of church government, according to which Classis and Synod are higher (rather than broader) assemblies, and according to which they can assume the power to discipline – something which resides only in the local consistory and the local offices. And I mention it, in the third place, because I must point out that it is a matter of fact that we did not secede, did not leave, did not separate. But we were expelled. Our mother church denied us a place, declared officially that there was no room for us in the denomination, and thus made it necessary for the Protestant Reformed Churches to come into existence. Moreover, these actions received the synodical stamp of approval in 1926 at the Synod of Englewood.

It is a matter of simple historical fact, therefore, that we are the continuation of the churches which we were before 1924. We are not fundamentally something new. We are not a departure. We are a continuation: in the true sense of the word, a continuing church. And we stand in the line of the church historically.

The second, and by far the most important answer to my first question is: the Three Points of Common Grace were adopted by the Synod of 1924. It is this, from a doctrinal point of view, which led to the origin of the Protestant Reformed Churches. And let me add that although there are related matters which are important, it is this *doctrinal* matter which is by far the most important. If you ask what was the origin of the Protestant Reformed Churches as far as principles were concerned, then the negative answer to that question is: the raising to the status of official church doctrine of the Three Points of Common Grace in 1924.

I cannot take the time this morning to enter into the history of the common grace controversy. Suffice it to say that the Three Points did not drop out of the sky in 1924, but that their adoption was the climax – in some respects, the premature climax – of several years of ferment and debate. And if “common grace” had been left a matter of theological opinion and a subject for free discussion, there would have been no 1924. But that was not to be.

Permit me briefly to summarize the doctrinal issues involved in the Three Points. In this connection, let me emphasize, however, that we do not live as churches by denials. This was and is sometimes alleged. But no church can exist by mere denials. And we certainly do not so exist. Moreover, the very fact that we have been in existence for fifty years should give the lie to that suggestion. And therefore, as I summarize, I will also set forth our positive position.

The First Point speaks of a favorable attitude of God towards all creatures, and not only to the elect. It is the teaching of the First Point that there is in God a gracious attitude toward all men, among whom also the reprobate ungodly are included. Apart from the saving grace of God shown only to the elect, there is also allegedly a non-saving grace of God in which also the reprobate share. This non-saving grace of God is supposedly manifest in the good gifts which God bestows also upon the wicked, such as rain and sunshine, food and gladness, gifts and talents, name and position and might, houses and goods. Over against this idea, we maintain that God’s grace is always particular, directed to His elect people alone. Indeed, we do not deny that God bestows good gifts upon men, including the reprobate. But we cannot accept the idea that there is a gracious attitude of God and an operation of grace toward the reprobate

wicked. We maintain that the grace of God goes out to the whole creation, the organic whole of His creatures, with His elect in Christ at the center. And we hold that at the same time there is an operation of God's hatred and wrath proceeding toward the reprobate ungodly in and through all things which He bestows on them. "The curse of Jehovah is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just." (Prov. 3:33)

But we hold that there is another serious departure from the Reformed truth involved in the First Point. For the preaching was included in this alleged gracious attitude of God and this operation of God's grace toward men in common. The First Point teaches that God is gracious in the preaching of the gospel not only toward the elect, but toward all men, toward all to whom the gospel is proclaimed. This is the error of the general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation to all men — essentially, the error of Arminianism. And that this is, indeed, one of the errors of the First Point is literally plain from a decision of a later Christian Reformed Synod, that of 1926, which spoke of a "goodness or grace of God in causing to go forth a well-meaning offer of salvation to all to whom the preaching of the gospel comes," as well as of a "certain grace or goodness or favorable inclination of God" which "is revealed toward a group of men broader than the group of the elect, and that is, among other things, also evident from the fact that God well-meaningly calls each one to whom the lovely invitation of the Gospel comes." The Protestant Reformed Churches believe that this presentation of the grace of God and of the preaching of the gospel is contrary to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. Over against this error of the general, well-meant offer we maintain that the preaching of the gospel is grace only for the elect, and at the same time a savor of death unto death for the reprobate. We maintain, indeed, — with our confessions — that the preaching of the gospel is general, or promiscuous, in that it is sent to all, both elect and reprobate, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel. But we believe — again, with our confessions — that the contents of the preaching is always particular. In the preaching salvation is promised (not offered) only to those who believe and repent, that is, to the elect. It can never be said that the preaching of the gospel is an evidence of grace to all who hear it, including the reprobate. Principally, the position of the well-meant offer of salvation is Arminian. And only too many Reformed churches and church members have, as a result of this view of the preaching been victimized by outright Arminianism and have become enthusiastic supporters of many a wild, God-dishonoring evangelistic movement. We consider it our calling to warn unequivocally against the rampant Arminianism

of the day, and to call God's people back to the Reformed truth of the gospel of Christ crucified, Who is "to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power of God and the wisdom of God." (I Cor. 1:24)

The Second Point of Common Grace teaches a restraint of sin. It speaks of a general operation of the Holy Spirit — not saving, and therefore apart from regeneration — whereby sin is restrained in the individual man and in the community. It implies that there is a spiritual, ethical operation of the Holy Spirit upon the natural man which, without renewing his heart, is for his good, with the result that he is not as sinful and corrupt in his actual life as he would be without this working of the Spirit. By this general operation of grace the natural man is improved, except for his heart; his mind and will and all his inclinations can be changed or inclined for good. Now we understand full well and believe, along with our Confession of Faith in Article 13, that God "so restrains the devil and all our enemies that without His will and permission they cannot hurt us." Actually the Confession here speaks of God's "bridling" of the devil and wicked men; that is, God controls and governs them. And He certainly does so unto the realization of His own counsel and the salvation of His own people in Christ. But we deny that there is any operation of grace toward the reprobate ungodly taught here or anywhere in our confessions. And we deny that there is an operation of grace by the Spirit, outside of regeneration, whereby the natural man is improved to any degree whatsoever.

We have many objections against this view. But our chief objection is that it constitutes a denial of the Reformed truth of the total depravity of man. It is Reformed according to our confessions to say that man is by nature so corrupt that he is incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil. But in the light of the second point, this totally depraved man is a mere abstraction: due to common grace, there is nowhere in this world a man who actually is totally depraved. As the natural man appears, he is not wholly corrupt, but greatly improved and capable of good. However, Scripture and our Confessions teach the very opposite. Scripture teaches us (Rom. 1:18, ff.) that there is an operation of God's wrath revealed from heaven, whereby He so operates upon the wicked who forsakes His way that he is given over more and more to his own sinful lusts and desires, to do things that are unseemly, so that he proceeds from sin to more sin, goes from bad to worse. Hence, while we readily admit that the sinner is restrained and controlled by the all-controlling providence of God and according to His all-wise counsel, we maintain that the process of sin is bound to the development

of the human race, so that every man does not commit every possible sin, but each man, according to his own place and time, character and talents, gifts and means, develops the one root-sin of Adam until the completed fruit of sin is wholly revealed and the sinfulness of sin is exposed to the full. This, and not the idea of any improvement of the natural man, is also a realistic view of natural man and of the world in the midst of which we, as the people of God, live today.

The Third Point of Common Grace teaches that the natural man, by virtue of the influences of common grace, although incapable of performing any saving good, can perform what is called civil good. By this is meant the doing of good in civil life. In the sphere of the first table of the Law, man is unable to do any good. This, after all, is "spiritual" good. But in the sphere of the second table of the Law, the natural man can perform good. He is able to live a relatively good life in this world. We may point out in this connection that proof from the Confessions was sought for the Third Point in Canons III, IV, Art. 4, where we read: "There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment." This, however, is only the first part of Article 4. And if we read the rest of this article, we learn that our Canons here maintain the Reformed doctrine of man's total depravity: "But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God, and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay, further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God." This quotation very succinctly expresses our Protestant Reformed position. In all his nature, the natural man is totally depraved; and in all his existence he always sins, and does so in every area of his life. Good works, according to our confessions, are those works which are in harmony with the Law of God, are performed to the glory of God, and proceed from a true faith. Good works, therefore, are performed only by the Christian. And the natural man, the man outside of Christ, being by nature totally depraved, always sins.

It will be readily seen, whether you agree with our Protestant Reformed position or not, that the matters touched on in the preceding go to the very heart of the Reformed position. They are not insignificant, but crucial. They are vital. And the differences of position which we have set forth above are fundamental. And let me add: they are issues which

must needs affect not only the doctrinal stance of a church, but the very heartbeat of the church's life — the preaching — as well as the actual walk of God's people in the midst of the world. And I believe that fifty years of history will bear this out.

There are two more items which I deem important to mention in this connection.

The first goes back more than fifty years, namely, the so-called Janssen Case. I mention this because that case, which concerned, if you will, what is today referred to as the nature and extent of the authority of Scripture, was connected with 1924. Not only was there a historical relationship, but there was an intrinsic relationship. I believe that Dr. Janssen's erroneous position with respect to Scripture was rooted in the principle of common grace. And I believe that in the light of recent developments in your denomination as well as in the Netherlands, the importance of that intrinsic relationship between common grace and the errors of Dr. Janssen looms ever larger, even as the importance of the relation between a correct view of Scripture and the maintenance of sovereign, particular grace looms ever larger.

The second item which I must mention is that of the doctrine of the covenant. In a way, that also goes back more than fifty years. For the view which was for many years taught and maintained in your denomination with respect to the covenant of grace was that of Prof. W. Heyns. Without going into detail, let me point out that his view was principally that of a general, conditional promise and common covenantal grace to all the children of believers head for head. Principally, that is the First Point of 1924 applied to the doctrine of the covenant. I mention this, because it was that view which became the occasion for the development of our position with respect to the covenant of grace. And I mention this because I believe that here is an area of rich positive development in our Protestant Reformed theology, preaching, and world and life view. Again, I cannot go into detail. But let me briefly characterize that view as the organic conception of God's covenant, understood as the relation of friendship between God and His elect people in Christ, which is realized organically with believers and their seed, in the line of generations, and which embraces the entire cosmos.

That brings us to the second main question.

II. What Has Taken Place In the Intervening Fifty Years?

Our Protestant Reformed Churches are about to reach a milestone. Fifty years of history have been made by us — full and busy and eventful years. No one, you see, stands still. Individuals and also churches develop. And they develop in the

fundamental direction which they have chosen. That is true for us of the Protestant Reformed Churches; it is also true for you of the Christian Reformed Church.

And let me insert one thing right here. We are not perfect, and have not claimed and do not claim perfection as a church. We have been characterized by many weaknesses, faults, sins, shortcomings — as is always the case with the church in the world. But of one fact we are convinced: we began on a fundamentally Reformed basis, and all our history and development has proceeded from that basis in a Reformed direction. We started out Reformed; we very definitely want to be recognizably Reformed; and we are Reformed today. I believe that no one can successfully deny that.

Let me very briefly recount something of our historical and ecclesiastical development.

1. From the outset we engaged in mission activity. That mission activity has been chiefly at home: we considered it our calling specifically to proclaim and to develop the Reformed truth in opposition to the evident departure in the direction of Arminianism and liberalism here in our home land. And we engaged and still engage in that home missions activity always in response to Macedonian calls to “come over and help us.” We have also engaged in mission activity beyond our national borders — notably, in Jamaica and in Indonesia.

2. We have a radio broadcast, the Reformed Witness Hour, which is almost as old as your Back To God Hour.

3. From the outset we have maintained our own theological school, something without which no communion of churches can successfully exist. From that school all our ministers have graduated. In our school we have provided training for the ministry in harmony with the stand of our churches. And in that training we use as much as possible our own instructional materials, in the form of textbooks and syllabi.

4. Over the years we have developed a distinct Protestant Reformed literature: our periodicals, our *Standard Bearer*, our Beacon Lights (for young people), our Sunday School Guide, our catechism books. But also many books of a theological and expository nature have been published and have emanated from the circle of our churches.

5. As a matter of our Reformed principles, we have developed as far as possible, and wherever possible, our own educational system — parental schools in which we strive to apply Reformed principles to education.

6. By 1940 we had also attained a full-orbed ecclesiastical organization, with consistories, two

classes, and a synod; an organization under the Church Order of Dordrecht and in which we are averse to every form of ecclesiastical hierarchy.

And so we grew slowly numerically also; we have never enjoyed a rapid growth. This growth continued until at one point about 22 years ago we numbered 24 churches, had 28 active ministers, and numbered about 1400 families from Ontario, Canada to the West Coast.

And then came a crisis in our denomination, a crisis precipitated in part by our contact with the so-called Liberated Churches of the Netherlands and with immigrants in Canada from those churches. I cannot take the time to recount that history this morning. I only want to point out, first of all, that fundamentally the issue was principally the same as in 1924; only this time it involved the matter of the covenant of grace. The issue was whether the promise of the covenant is a general, conditional promise for all who are baptized. In other words, the issue was whether, in the sphere of the covenant, grace is general or particular. The De Wolf group held the former. And that the issue was indeed the same as in 1924 is, I believe, confirmed by history: the De Wolf group could not and did not maintain a separate existence, but readily found their way back into your denomination, without any essential change being made on your part as to the Three Points. That is a fact of record.

The second aspect of that crisis which I would mention is the fact that numerically we were decimated, of course. But the Lord preserved us as a denomination. He also strengthened us through this struggle. And also outwardly we have revived. Today we are 20 congregations, from New Jersey to the West Coast. We number some 800 families. We are active in home missions. We have some 20 active ministers. We have a vibrant theological school. We have a press which receives world-wide attention. Our original leaders, Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff, have gone to glory. Most of our corps of ministers is of the second and third generation, though there are still among us several of our veterans, active since our early years. And from all our pulpits are sounded the same clear notes of the pure and lively preaching of the Word, Reformed according to the confessions.

But there is another question concerning those fifty years. How have our two denominations stood in relation to one another during that period? Was there any contact? Were there any efforts to heal the breach? In answer to this question, I call your attention to the following facts:

1. Officially, there were two approaches made by our synods to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church. One was by our synod of 1940. The second

was by our synods of 1957-1959. Both times we called attention to the wrongs of 1924, and we urged that steps be taken to remove what separated us as churches, and declared ourselves ready for full discussion of our differences. Both times our overtures for reconciliation were rejected.

2. Unofficially, in 1939 there was an abortive conference at the Pantlind Hotel between our ministers and several ministers of the Christian Reformed Church, Dr. K. Schilder of the Netherlands being present. Conspicuous by their absence were the Christian Reformed leaders who had played a leading part in 1924. The Rev. Herman Hoeksema came prepared with a position paper at that conference. Thereafter, however, there was no progress because of a refusal on the part of the Christian Reformed participants to engage in discussion. Nothing further developed.

3. At various times throughout these years our *Standard Bearer* has called for steps to be taken to remove whatever obstacles exist by way of thorough and open discussion. None of these calls has ever been heeded.

That brings me to my final question, which I must needs answer very briefly.

III. What Is Our Stance Today?

Where do we stand as Protestant Reformed Churches?

In the first place, it should be evident from the preceding that we have not changed fundamentally since 1924. We have developed. Our theology has been refined and enriched. We have matured. But we stand *fundamentally* where we stood 50 years ago, and our development has been in that line. We stand unabashedly and unequivocally on the basis of the infallible Word of God and our Reformed Confessions.

In the second place, I call your attention to the fact that our denomination is unique in this respect, that we are not internally troubled by any of the numerous heresies and other departures and innovations which are troubling churches throughout the world and throughout the Reformed community today. Why? Not because we live in isolation; that is impossible. Not because we pay no attention to these developments: for we follow them closely, in your denomination and in others, at home and abroad. We are theologically aware. But because the Lord preserves His church in the way of faithfulness, love of, and adherence to the truth of His Word. I say that not in pride, but in utmost humility. As churches we have nothing to boast of in ourselves; what we are, we are by the grace of God only.

But there is a second aspect to this question. That is this: where do we stand as Protestant Reformed Churches with respect to the Christian Reformed Church today?

To answer that question, I must briefly call attention to the fact that the Christian Reformed Church has also passed through fifty years of history since 1924. *Fundamentally*, you have not changed. Your stance with respect to the crucial issues involved in the Three Points is basically the same. But you have developed. And you have developed, I am convinced, in the fundamental line of 1924.

For the most part, I believe, that development has taken place in the past 20 years, roughly since the time when the generation of 1924 passed from the scene. They did not develop much along the common grace line. Partly, I believe, this was due to the fact that they were too traditionally Reformed to accept all the consequences involved in '24. But as James Daane put it, the winds of change began to blow through your denomination. And although there were other influences at work also, chiefly those winds of change blew from the direction of 1924. In some cases, the changes were directly related to the Three Points; in other instances, the relationship is less direct.

Permit me to mention a few items.

First of all, with respect to world-and-life-view, I mention:

1. Your tolerance of membership in worldly labor unions.
2. Your change of stance with regard to the Film Arts, the decision on which appealed directly to the Second Point of 1924.
3. The increasing marriage of Jerusalem and Athens in the area of education.

Secondly, with respect to doctrine, I mention:

1. The general atonement theory put forth by Prof. Dekker in the 1960s. This was directly related to the First Point of 1924 — so much so, that no one on either side could discuss the matter without reference to 1924 and the well-meant offer.
2. In close connection therewith was also Dr. Stob's claim at that time that God hates no one.
3. There is the open denial of sovereign reprobation, and, in fact, of all "decretal theology" by Dr. James Daane in *The Freedom of God*.
4. There is the as yet uncondemned universalism put forth by Dr. J. Harold Ellens.
5. There are the various departures in the area of Scripture, including Report 36-44, the increasing incidence of some form of evolutionism, the denial of

the literal and historical character of the events recorded in Genesis 1-3, etc. These we see as the ultimate development of 1924 in connection with the views put forth by Dr. Janssen prior to 1922.

There are more items which can be mentioned. I have not mentioned such things as Key 73 and Evangelism Thrust, nor the effort to relax the Formula of Subscription and the admitted signing of that Formula with mental reservations, nor the movement for liturgical revisionism.

Now admittedly you are seeing your denomination through the eyes of another. And I want you to know that I mention these things not with pride and boasting and joy, but with sadness and pain of heart. But I will defend the proposition that your present

ills are all related — doctrinally, practically, church politically, and ethically — to 1924. I have stated this publicly many times.

And therefore, in conclusion, my answer to the question concerning our stance in relation to your denomination is: it is basically the same now as in 1924. We call you to return from those errors to the old paths of the Reformed faith and to stand where we stand. Only, today that call is more urgent than ever before. If you look back only about 20 years, you yourselves can observe that you no longer stand where you stood then as a denomination. You are fast losing your Reformed character. Return!

Thank-you for your attention.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Hebrews 12: 1-3 (cont.)

Rev. G. Lubbers

THE GREAT INCENTIVE TO RUN THE RACE (Hebrews 12:2)

It would seem that the great incentive to run the race with patience would be the fact that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses; the testimony of all the Old Testament should inspire us to run. And, indeed, their witness, when heard by faith from the sacred record, does spur us on to greater effort and heights of faith! However, that which the writer cites as the impelling consideration of faith is that we look away from everything else to Jesus.

What distinguishes Jesus from all others in the "cloud of witnesses" is that He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. The term *Author* means "the first leader, the beginner." The term is translated "leader" in Acts 3:15, in Acts 5:31 it is translated "Prince" in the phrase "Prince of life." Here it is translated in the KJV "author." This translation underscores that he is the *originator* of faith. He brings about faith by his mediatorial labors. He is the builder of the house. That is why Jesus is greater than Moses. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth *became* through Jesus Christ. Christ brought this about as a new creation. Old things are passed away and all things are become new in Him. And because he is the one who works faith, he is also the one who finishes, perfects faith. He is the (*teleiooteen*) Finisher. All that lies between that beginning and that perfection is the work of Jesus. There is, therefore,

nothing in all of our running which is not the work of this Jesus of Nazareth, who is greater than Moses. And, therefore, we look away from all other things unto Him.

It is indeed interesting and profitable to discern that, in the book of Hebrews, the name "Jesus" has a peculiar significance wherever it is employed by the writer. Such is the case in all of the nine (9) instances in which it occurs. When the writer would underscore that all things shall be subjected unto Christ we are informed that we do not yet see that all things are subjected unto Christ, but what we do see gives every reason to believe that this will one day come to pass. The reason? We see *Jesus*, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor! (Hebrews 2:9). When the greatness of Christ in relationship to Moses in his office must be shown then we are told "to consider the Apostle and High priest of our confession, even *Jesus*, who was faithful to Him that appointed him." He is the Builder of the house of God. And this house is the church, even we the believers who remain faithful. Small wonder that we are told that to run the race we must "look to Jesus." When all the assurance of the blessed hope which is ours is underscored by the writer and the immutability of God's decree must comfort us, then we are told that this is attained in this Jesus, who has gone as the forerunner within the veil of the sanctuary in the heavens. He has become a priest for us forever after the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 3:1; 6:20) And when the certainty of salvation must be underscored

in the Mediator of the better covenant, the writer speaks of Jesus as the surety of a better covenant in His blood. (Hebrews 7:22) If we need boldness to enter into the sanctuary of the Lord then we are pointed to the "blood of Jesus" who is the great high priest in the house of God. (Hebrews 10:19) All the church of the firstborn in glory are there only because of the blood of Jesus which speaks better things than that of Abel. His blood does not call for God's vengeance, but for pardoning mercy! (Hebrews 12:24) This is the Jesus, who suffered, without the gate of the city of Jerusalem at the place of the skull, in order that we might go outside of Judaism to be partaker of his reproach. (Hebrews 13:12) This is the Jesus, who is the great shepherd of the sheep; His is the blood of the covenant. He is the Lord Jesus, King over all. (Hebrews 13:20)

Bearing this grand use of the name "Jesus" in mind we no longer need to ask: why look away to Jesus? He is Jehovah saves, or Jehovah is salvation. And, therefore, we do not merely look to Jesus, but we look away from all else to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith!

And then what must we notice in this Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith? We notice that this Jesus, too, did run His race with patience; he is the forerunner. (Hebrews 6:20) He ran before us as the sacrificial priest who brings the sacrifice for the sins of the people. He is the anchor of our hope within the most holy place. And to be such a Savior for all His own was the purpose of His running. There was a "joy set before Him" to be perfected one day in all His people, even as he once said, "my joy in you that your joy may be full". (John 15:11) As Christ Jesus did run, thus must we run too. We have the same goal in mind in our running as he; we as those who are saved, and He as the Saviour of us, His people. And this joy which was set before Christ He never left out of view in His Messianic consciousness. He even looked beyond the Cross to the crown. When He spoke of the suffering to come upon Him, spoke of this to His disciples, it is ever as the way for the triumphant glory of "being raised the third day". (Matt. 16:21; Luke 13:33) We must suffer with Him to be glorified with Him.

Hence, we must notice that Christ "endured the cross". This cross which he endured was all the suffering of the wrath of God against the sins of the "whole human race", all the elect out of all nations. He bore this wrath from the beginning of His life to the moment when, on the Cross, he cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished". But notice, that He could bear the Cross because he ever saw the joy set before Him. And He weighed the shame of the Cross against this joy, and then He bore this shame of the Cross because He really despised it. He looked down upon

this "shame" of being the accursed of God with a certain holy and joyous and victorious contempt. That there was a terrible "shame" connected with this Cross could not tempt Him to come down from the Cross when mocked and jeered by the mob about Him. He stedfastly *endured* the Cross and accepted the shame. His was the great manifestation of a patience which is rooted in infinite trust in God, which waits patiently until the end and then receives the crown of joy from the Father's hand and is received as the Firstborn Son in glory, a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

For after Christ had thus suffered he went and "sat down on the right hand of the throne of God". Thus Psalm 110:1 was fulfilled. He is now the Lord of lords and the King of kings. He sits on David's throne forever. He is the Lord of glory. That is the fulfilment of the "joy which was set before Him". One day we shall sit with Him in glory judging the world and the angels. (I Cor. 6:3)

THE SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATION IN OUR PATIENCE IN THIS RACE (Hebrews 12:3)

Faith does a bit of considering, weighing, and reckoning. It does this by the rules of the new man in Christ according to the *regula fidei*, the rule of faith. This is a consideration which is not possible of the natural man who has not the Spirit of Christ. He cannot even see the Kingdom of God; He is not born again out of God. Hence, faith has its own spiritual consideration.

The writer here admonished the saints unto such a consideration in regard to Christ's suffering. The Hebrews were enduring "contradiction" from the unbelieving countrymen, the Jews, and perhaps also from unbelieving Gentiles. But it was especially from the source of the unbelieving Jews that they suffered contradiction. It was alleged by these contradictors that Jesus was not the Christ, the Messiah foretold in the Scriptures, and that His blood had not taken away all the blood of the goats and bulls of the Old Testament sacrifices, and that Aaron's priesthood still stood as the God-appointed priesthood in the earthly temple of shadows and types. And so the Christians were "contradicted", even to the point of being beaten and put in prison for the faith in Christ. In such a situation faith must do a bit of "considering." It must see that this is, therefore, the order of the day for the Christians. In the world they must expect tribulation. They must expect that it will be at a very great cost that they will need to continue in the faith. They will ever, too, be contradicted by the synagogue of Satan, who is the great antagonist in this battle of contradiction. Now they will never see their own suffering, frustration and pain in proper perspective until they see that they are sharing the sufferings of

Christ and suffering the same contradictions which Christ endured! Then they will see more and more that it is contradiction of "sinners" that they endure. These sinners must be seen and evaluated for what they really are! They are not weak saints, sinful saints who have much sin yet in their members and who often stumble in many ways, especially in words, and, who are, therefore, not yet perfect in holiness; nay these are sinners who love sin, and who reject the ways of the Most High, and who slander the saints and pervert the gospel of truth with their lie of works. They would place man in the stead of God; they love the praise of men more than the praise and the approval of God. Haters and enemies of the Cross of Christ they are, and of the blessed hope of the resurrection.

Christ endured the contradiction of such sinners. And always the believers too must endure such contradiction and must see it for what it really is. And then they will not be lured into believing the false talk and siren songs of Satan which the false teachers and confessors spew and vomit forth in their

matchless fury. There is nothing quite so enervating as the lack of full assurance that the enemy is really an enemy. But to be convinced that we are really dealing with an enemy we must see that we are dealing, not with our personal enemy, but that we are dealing with the very gates of hell which would prevail with its lying slanders, and even with its hot ovens, and infinite forms of cruel torture against the church. Look to Jesus and see what they did to him. That will clear the issue once and for all!

Notice that Christ endured such contradiction of sinners "against Himself!" Truly, this was contradiction without a cause. It was the undiluted hatred of hell in the hearts of hardened unbelievers, whose very destruction is nigh. These will be cast with the Dragon and with the false prophet into hell. They have no joy set before them and they cannot tolerate that God's children rejoice in the living hope with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

This is what we must consider concerning these sinners, lest we become weary and faint in our minds.

ALL AROUND US

What Progress Ecumenism?

Prof. H. Hanko

Since the ecumenical ventures of the sixties, progress towards church union has seemingly slowed. The efforts which churches were making to merge into ever larger denominations seemed to be put on the back burner of ecclesiastical concerns. But if the impressions were being left that ecumenism was no longer of concern to the church, a recent article in *Reader's Digest* served to correct that impression. Although ecumenical ventures may be taking on different forms, the pressures in that direction remain. We include some summary quotes from the article to demonstrate this.

The article starts out by saying:

Not long ago, a commission of U.S. Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians wound up a three-year study of Papal authority with a startling conclusion. Catholics, they reported in substance, over-claimed when they said that Christ appointed Peter as the first Pope, but Protestants have failed to acknowledge that a chief overseer is needed. . . .

A little earlier, a commission of Anglican and Catholic theologians, after reviewing the great Reformation debate over whether during the

communion service Christ is physically present in the bread and wine, came to the conclusion that what counts is the real presence of Christ in the hearts of the participants.

Two more momentous developments could not be imagined in the wave of religious tolerance set off by the late Pope John XXIII's decision to convene the Second Vatican Council. . . .

After discussing briefly the stymied efforts of COCU (Consultation on Church Union) to form a denomination of 24 million members out of nine different denominations, the article goes on to say:

Yet even those churches that would not join COCU in the beginning increasingly talk of some ultimate form of reunion growing out of gradual convergences in belief and practice.

If reunion comes, the result will bear little resemblance to the old-style military-chain-of-command kind of church polity. Even recent Vatican statements on ecumenism have begun to sound the cautionary note that any new association of churches must allow each religious community to preserve its "spiritual patrimony". . . . Yet, 49 of the 169 Roman Catholic dioceses in this

country now are full members of local councils of churches (up from one just five years ago), and there is serious speculation that before too long the National Conference of Catholic Bishops will affiliate with the National Council of Churches of Christ in America.

The efforts towards union are evidently becoming increasingly broad:

In a few places, the church councils now include Jews. In Connecticut, Stamford, Darien, Greenwich and New Canaan are served by a Council of Churches and Synagogues. . . .

A few quotes will demonstrate the different forms ecumenism is taking:

Many churches, particularly in the inner cities, are finding that they can survive only if they join forces. In Kansas City, Mo., one Presbyterian church was down to 50 congregants, mostly elderly women. A nearby congregation of the United Church of Christ had a similar problem. . . . Once the decision was made to combine forces, nearby Catholics and Episcopalians asked for and received permission to hold their services with the other two congregations. Today there is a new \$400,000 building offering Mass at 9 a.m. and a combined Protestant service at 11. . . .

To meet religious needs, Columbia formed a Religious Facilities Corporation, which built a \$1 million multiple-denomination church building. Its 23,000 square feet of usable space includes conference rooms often used for Sunday-school classes and nursery, pastors' studies, worship halls and lounges now used by four Christian and three Jewish congregations. . . .

Reston, Va., another "new town", took a slightly different tack. When United Redeemer Methodist became firmly rooted there, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), United Church of Christ, the United Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of the United States . . . joined it to form the United Christian Parish of Reston, which now has two centers of worship and plans four eventually. The ministers rotate between the two worship centers, one of which is characterized by an informal style to appeal to younger members. As a prototype for future, wider reunion, each parish member is regarded as a member in full standing of all five of the sponsoring denominations.

In an attempt to analyze somewhat the movement, the article makes some observations.

A distinct "plus" in the movement toward church reunion is an increase in good manners and a decrease in petty inter-church quarrels. One area where common courtesy was long overdue was in what used to be called "mixed marriage". In Massachusetts, a statewide Commission on Christian Unity, representing, among others, four Catholic dioceses and also Baptists, Episcopalians, United Methodists, Lutherans and United Church of Christ, has published new guidelines for what are now called "ecumenical

marriages." Entitled "Living the Faith You Share," the guidelines urge these couples to worship *together* from time to time, to educate their children ecumenically and to conduct home worship. The Episcopal diocese advised its clergy: "We must not make the couple feel guilty of falling in love, when in fact the churches are guilty of the sin of separation."

Asking the question: "What would it take to get the churches really back together again?" the article discusses a few views of some ecumenical leaders.

Some ecumenists think that it will take a terrible scourge, a cataclysm of some sort. Others hope that the difficulties the churches seem to be having in holding their members and clergy, the deterioration in the quality of society around them, will increasingly make Christians more conscious of their likenesses than of their differences.

The hope is for a stronger church.

They look on membership losses as resulting in fewer but more dedicated Christians who will be more effective.

One theologian remarked:

that "growing secularity of our time" was driving Southern Baptists . . . and Catholics . . . toward each other. . . . "To save the world" by Christian definitions is a large order, and even God may need both of us to get the job done."

The general impression left by the article is that ecumenism is by no means a thing of the past. It is alive and well. The emphasis is however, quite different. While, during the sixties, the emphasis fell on denominational merger, this movement gradually slowed partly because the denominational leaders were far ahead of the people in the pew. And when the people in the pew voiced their objections loudly enough, the leaders were forced to pause in their headlong rush. They could not carry the people along. Now however, merger is more of a local matter. Within various cities churches are cooperating in various tasks — if they are not actually merging. In various Councils there is increased cooperation not only between denominations, but also between religions.

Nevertheless, the leaders have not given up their dreams of nation-wide churches, if not world-wide churches. And they are still busy meeting, discussing their differences, finding where they can agree and how they can put their agreements into effect. They are busy plotting the next steps to be taken and they are considering how best to deal with a lagging laity which repeatedly slows their efforts.

There seems to be little reason why the majority of denominations, denominations which have the largest membership rolls, should not get together. Membership in many denominations is a social matter. Doctrinal differences and church political

differences mean little if anything in a time of doctrinal indifference. Liturgical differences are no longer barriers when most denominations are engaging in some form of liturgical renewal, and when all the emphasis is on social work. It would seem that only a certain traditionalism still keeps most denominations apart.

Nevertheless, the pressures are so strong that the

leaders will some day have their way. We may be sure that there will be no room, not only in the new ecclesiastical structures being erected, but in the world as a whole, for the Church of Christ. Ecclesiastical union, in most of its forms, is opposition to God. That is its deepest spiritual principle. And opposition to God always manifests itself in opposition to those who represent God's cause in the world.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

The Inspiration of the Written Word of God

Prof. Robert D. Decker

We confess that this Word of God was not sent, nor delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as the apostle saith. And that afterwards God, from a special care, which he has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing; and he himself wrote with his own finger, the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.

Article III, Belgic Confession

Article 2 speaks of the two means by which God is made known to us; creation and providence and His holy and divine Word. In the Article under consideration now the fathers say something about that "holy and divine Word", something we do well to understand in our times. The church has always had to do battle at this point against those who would deny or undermine the absolute authority of the Word of God. But in our times we witness something different about this age-old battle. Whereas in the past the opponents of the faith were generally found outside of the sphere of the church, today the church must fight its battle against those within who would deny the absolute authority of God's Word. The church's own theologians discuss and debate the "nature and extent of Biblical authority." We ought to understand at the outset that there can be no debate over what the Belgic Confession says on this subject in this and succeeding articles. The creed maintains without equivocation that God's Word is inspired, from God Himself, and therefore "holy and divine" and authoritative for our faith and life. Those within the pale of the Reformed churches who hedge on this key issue and who persist in speaking of the "human element" in the Bible cannot honestly appeal to the Belgic Confession in support of their views nor may they claim to be in agreement with the points of doctrine set forth in this creed.

When speaking of this Word of God the article distinguishes between the spoken Word and the

written Word. The Bible, after all, is of rather recent origin. For the first two thousand years of the history of the world there was no written copy of the Word of God. Still more, the writing of the Old Testament books took another two thousand years. The last of the New Testament books must have been written somewhere between the years A.D. 90 to 95. But even then the church as a whole did not really have the written Word of God, for it was written on scrolls and in the hands of only a few scholars and monks for centuries. In fact, it was not until the invention of the printing press around the time of the great Reformation some 450 years ago that it became possible for every believer to have possession of the Bible. But the believers were never without the Word of God in all those years before the inspired Bible was completed and in the hands of God's people. God caused Himself to be known from the very beginning when He spoke to our first parents in Paradise.

This revelation took on a variety of forms. God made Himself and/or His will known by direct speech. He spoke to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and many other of His servants and saints. God also spoke by angels to Abraham, Manoah, Zacharias, Mary, the Shepherds, and the women at the tomb of Jesus. Dreams were another means of revelation. God spoke to Jacob in a dream and to Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Pilate's wife. God revealed Himself in visions to Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel, and Peter. By mighty signs and wonders God made

Himself known to Israel through Moses, Elijah, and Elisha and other of His servants. God made Himself known by direct revelation. He spoke His Word to the prophets who in turn said, "Thus saith the Lord" to God's people, or, "The Word of the Lord came unto me saying. . ." An unmistakably clear instance of this we have in the case of Moses, to whom the Lord said: ". . . see, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land." (Exodus 7:1, 2) In the New Testament Christ promised the apostles the Spirit of truth Who would lead them into all the truth and cause them to recall all that Christ had spoken to them. (John 16:13) So we find the book of Acts repeatedly emphasizing that the Apostles spoke as they were filled with the Holy Spirit. (cf. Acts 2:4; 4:8; 6:10) This Word of God the Heidelberg Catechism calls: ". . . the holy gospel, which God himself first revealed in Paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly, has fulfilled it by his only begotten Son." (Question 19)

For proof of this truth the creed appeals to the classic text out of II Peter 1:21 which reads: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Apostle's argument in this passage is that the Church does well to take heed to the more sure word of prophecy, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, because no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. (vss. 19, 20) The men of God did not offer their private opinions or their own interpretations, but they spoke only under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit! The Word of God must be obeyed; indeed, we do well to take heed to it!

The confession goes on to affirm that, ". . . God, from a special care, which he has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants the prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing. . ." The Scriptures abound with proof of this. "And Jehovah said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book. . ." (Ex. 17:14) Others under orders to write include: Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and Habakkuk. Several prophecies were intended for writing rather than for speaking, in order that the people might give to them more careful attention. (cf. Jeremiah 29; 36:4; Ezekiel 26; 27, 28) To John on the isle of Patmos the exalted Savior said: "What thou seest, write in a book and send it to the seven churches." (Rev. 1:11) In addition to these passages the Bible repeatedly refers to its divine authority. The Apostles were keenly conscious of their calling and

place as instruments of revelation. They were not afraid to regard their writings as authoritative. The great Apostle Paul confesses to the Corinthians: "And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God . . . And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (I Cor. 2:1-5) A bit later in this same chapter the Apostle states concerning the "things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (vs. 9): "For God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (vs. 10) Other references to this same truth are: I Cor. 7:10; II Cor. 13:2; I Cor. 14:37. The Apostle Peter regards the writings of Paul as of equal value and authority with the Old Testament Scriptures when he writes: ". . . even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." (II Peter 3:15, 16) The two classic passages in this regard are the one we cited above from II Peter 1:20, 21 and II Timothy 3:16, which reads: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." There can be no doubt about the Bible's claim in this regard. On the basis of Scripture's own testimony the Bible is the very Word of God, given ". . . from a special care, which God has for us and our salvation." It is in this connection, too, that the article appeals to the fact that God Himself wrote with His own finger the two tables of the law. (Deut. 29:29)

In spite of the clear teaching of the Word of God we find many false views concerning this truth of inspiration. Among these are two which ought to be mentioned: the Mechanical Theory and the Dynamic Theory. According to the former, the writers of the Bible were no more than machines, typewriters, which God used to write His Word. This we may dismiss at once, for it does not fit the character of the Bible at all. Why, if this be true, is John's writing so different from Paul's Epistles? The Dynamic Theory teaches that the Holy Spirit did not inspire the words but only the thoughts and ideas of the Bible. This is sheer nonsense: for how else can thoughts be expressed than in words? Besides these two erroneous views, there is the outright denial of the truth of inspiration which teaches that the books of the Bible are purely the product of the human authors.

Over against all these views we maintain with our creed the truth concerning inspiration. The Scriptures are inspired in every part. Their whole contents are the result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We believe on the basis of the Word of God itself in plenary inspiration. Every Scripture is "God-breathed". (II Tim. 3:16) Moreover, those Scriptures are verbally inspired. Every word is from the Holy Spirit, for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (II Peter 1:21) This means that every "a," "and," and "the" is from God Himself. Even the use of a plural instead of a singular is significant, for the Holy Spirit makes these distinctions. Every word is just the word intended by the Holy Spirit. In sum it may be said that inspiration is the work of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ by which He moved, guided, and directed certain authors to record the words of the revelation of God.

What about the "human element" you ask? It is only in the light of the above that we can speak of a "human element" in inspiration. Of course, God used human authors. But what we must never forget is that these were "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit". (II Peter 1:21) These were holy men especially with a view to their task as human instruments of God's revelation; God set them apart for this very work. And these holy men were "of God"; literally, "from God". This means that these holy men had their origin in and owed their existence as human instruments of

revelation to God! God prepared from eternity the character, personality, ability, talent, and all the other natural and spiritual gifts of each individual author of Holy Writ. And God also prepared in time each man for that particular work. God prepared their birth, nationality, and time of birth. For example, God prepared Moses by forty years of instruction in Pharaoh's court and by another forty years of instruction caring for Jethro's sheep. God prepared David on the hillsides of Judea caring for the sheep, in his fleeing from Saul, and in his fighting of the Lord's battles. Thus it was that David could pen so many of the Psalms. So it was with each human instrument, God eternally prepared them and in time called each one for the particular work of writing a specific portion of His Word. Then, too, the Holy Spirit inspired each author in harmony with his God-given nature, personality, character, and talents. This is why Jeremiah differs from Isaiah or Paul from Peter. But, taken together, the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation forms one complete whole. Each book contributes another facet, another aspect of the riches of the revelation of God. In all sixty-six books which came over the course of more than two thousand years there is no contradiction. Thus it is that: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (II Peter 1:19) And, therefore "we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures."

GUEST ARTICLE

The God-Ordained Authority In The Church

Rev. Wayne Bekkering

We have been reminded of the solemn calling and responsibilities of the office-bearer of the church of Christ as we have only a short time ago witnessed the installation of the elders and deacons.

This is a good time, in the first place, further to reflect upon their position in the church as those who are lawfully called of God's church and consequently of God Himself and, secondly, to consider our calling and responsibility with respect to them.

In the first part we want to consider the office-bearers as they represent the authority of Christ in His church. Our reference is, therefore, primarily to the elders as they have been particularly entrusted with the oversight and rule of the church.

We consider this emphasis on the authority in the church beneficial and proper because of the erosion of the idea of authority in all the spheres of life. In just about every institution and area of life the idea of an objective authority is scoffed at and ridiculed as "old-fashioned". To have an objective set of principles as the basis of order will no longer do. The attitude today is that man is come of age and, therefore, able to make decisions for himself, with respect to the rule of things. The authoritarian system impedes development and stifles the self-expression of man. At bottom what we observe in these arguments is sheer lawlessness. Sad to say, this lawlessness has spilled over into the church and has had its devastating effects. It is over against this

influence of lawlessness that we must guard ourselves, lest we be found resisting the ordinances of God and, therefore, God Himself.

God in His Word lays down the basis of all authority in Romans 13:1 and 2, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation". It is true that the context in Romans 13 deals primarily with the sword power; nevertheless, we can gain from this passage a very clear statement concerning authority which applies to the church also. In this connection we ought to observe from Scripture that in this present dispensation all power and authority has been given to Christ, through Whom God is pleased to rule. In turn, Christ is pleased to rule through men, as can be seen from Eph. 4:11 and 12, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." This does not mean that there are three authorities in the church, nor even two, but one — the authority of God in Christ. This one authority can be spoken of as either God's or Christ's interchangeably without fear of contradiction, since Scripture does so. The point is that in the church there is one objective authority, that is, the Word of God in the Scripture. This is something that cannot be passed over lightly, because here hinges the whole rule of the church.

Officebearers stand or fall in relationship to the Word. Implied in the calling of the officebearer is that he rules in Christ's stead, and he can only do that when he rules according to the Word of Christ in the Scripture. That makes knowledge of and conformity to the Word of Christ an indispensable requirement for the officebearers. In and of himself the officebearer is nothing, but in connection with the lawful calling and the Word of God he functions in the place of Christ.

It must be granted that this is an awesome concept — man ruling in the place of God; but this is nevertheless the teaching of Scripture. In II Cor. 5:20 we read, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And in I Thess. 2:13 we have, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." In both of these passages it must be acknowledged that the first reference is to the Word preached and, therefore, to the office of the ministry,

but Scripture makes no distinction between the authority of the Word of God preached or the Word of God brought by a lawful elder. In fact, the minister is an elder, a teaching elder, who rules with the other elders or ruling elders. The officerbearer who functions in his office in harmony with Christ's Word cannot be separated from Christ as far as authority is concerned. Christ Himself says in Matt. 10:40, "He that receiveth you receiveth me. . . ." This fact ought never to puff up an officebearer, but ought always to bow him down. The officebearer ought always to rule in the consciousness that his authority rests in his conformity with the Word. If he ceases to rule in harmony with Christ's Word, he ceases to rule in Christ's stead. By the very fact of taking a position contrary to the Scripture the officebearer cuts himself off from the authority of Christ.

All this presents the offices of Christ's church as positions of awesome responsibility, which they are. The *Form of the Ordination of the Ministers of God's Word* confesses that "Since no man is of himself fit for any of these things, let us call upon God with thanksgiving." This certainly points officebearers in the only direction that they can go to find help. Officebearers ought not to faint nor fall in the face of their heavy responsibility, but ought to be assured that whom Christ calls He also qualifies. God will give to officebearers His grace and Holy Spirit as to all those who continually ask them of Him and are thankful for them. Officebearers must understand that a faithful rule does not come automatically nor by nature, but in the way of imploring God's grace and Holy Spirit both for himself and for those over whom he rules.

In this second part we must consider our calling and responsibility with respect to the officebearers. On the basis of the first part it may seem unnecessary to spell out our responsibility with respect to submission to the authority of Christ in His church. But we must remember that everyone of us is by nature a rebel and dislikes the idea of authority. All authority and, therefore, all submission to it is presented in the Scripture as directly connected with God. We need not dwell on the fact that God is The Authority and that He rightfully demands obedience. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. 4:10b) The fact that "God hath set some in the church . . ." (I Cor. 12:28) and that Christ "gave some, apostles . . ." (Eph. 4:11) implies that the proper officebearers be obeyed even as we must obey God. This can be very clearly seen from Heb. 13:17 where we read, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that

they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." This verse shows plainly that officebearers must be obeyed not in and of themselves, but in that they rule in the stead of Him to Whom they must give account. Ruling in the place of Christ, remember, means ruling according to His Word. There is only one authority in the church that we may obey and only One that we must obey. In other words, we can be bound by nothing but the Word of God. You will certainly recognize the previous sentence as embodying a precious reformational principle. Not only must we be bound by the Word of God, but that is also our chief desire as regenerated children of God. Being bound by God's Word, then, is not something that is grievous, but rather something that we willingly seek.

It follows, then, that only when officebearers rule according to the Word do they rule authoritatively; and only then must they be obeyed. We must be very careful at this point that we do not set ourselves up as authorities in our own right and, therefore, introduce

another authority into the church of Christ. Always our judging of the rule of the authorities must be on the basis of God's Word. We must not merely posit on our "say so" what is right or wrong but that must be shown in the light of the Scripture.

Officebearers who rule well, that is, in harmony with the Word of God are to be counted worthy of double honor according to I Tim. 5:17. This certainly shows us that faithfulness to the Word is a thing to be looked for in the officebearers and something to be highly esteemed for God's sake.

Let us pray for our officebearers that they be found to be faithful to the Word of God. Prayer for the officebearers is commanded in the Scripture. The Apostle Paul pleads in I thes. 5:25, "Brethren, pray for us." With Paul every officebearer desiring to rule well pleads "pray for us". Pray for the officebearer in your homes, so that your children may understand how important the offices of the church are to you and that they may early learn that to obey the officebearers is to obey God.

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Spiritual Growth – The Means (2)

Rev. J. Kortering

Youth leaders, parents, teachers, ministers rejoice when they witness spiritual growth in a young person. It makes all their effort worthwhile when they see some fruit in the life of a young person, especially when it comes spontaneously and not forced. Such moments are golden.

It happens sometimes in a young people's society. Suddenly the members become alive and interested in the subject. Each one puts forth effort to contribute to the discussion. Some even open up their hearts to share some meaningful experience and how they learned through it. All go home inspired. Then again it may come from the lips of a young person in prayer, not just another prayer, but one that shows real spiritual communion with God and that breathes a sincere desire that God will show His mercy upon them. You see this occasionally in school when a young person will go out of his way to show kindness to someone who obviously has a problem and needs to bend someone's ear. Then again, it may mean willingness to stand up and be different and not complain, even though the "crowd" go their merry way.

Youth are also put to the test.

To stand strong does not just happen. You young people perhaps know other young people who in your mind are more spiritual than you are. As you look at them and see them in action, you may even be a little envious. Perhaps you just brush it off and say, "Well, so and so is just different; I'm not that way; I've got to have my fun; I just can't stand up and be different as he or she is." All right, so someone else can contribute more to a discussion than you can. Big deal, you've probably got other good points. You think that way some time?

In this article I'd like to suggest that spiritual maturity is not only controlled by the things we discussed in our previous article. We mentioned the basics, we need the Word of God, that Word must be applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit who gives us grace. It helps us to go to church faithfully and read our Bibles at home regularly. Without these things we would not have any life, much less any growth!

There is more, however.

Spiritual growth comes also from the experience of Christian living itself. The more we practice our Christian faith in our daily life, the easier it will become for us to continue living as a Christian. The

opposite is also sadly true, if we neglect our Christian practice, we become spiritually weak and never amount to much.

PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

Surely the Bible speaks often of spiritual exercise, training, as essential to well-toned spiritual muscles. If our hands are going to be busy serving the Lord, our heart must be exercised in love. I like the way Jay E. Adams expresses it in his little booklet, *Godliness Through Discipline*, page 3:

“How can I discipline myself?” you ask insistently. It is time to begin to consider the answer to that question. First, you must recognize that the very word *discipline* makes it clear that godliness cannot be zapped. It cannot be whipped up like instant pudding. Godliness doesn’t come that way. Discipline means *work*: it means *sustained daily effort*. The word Paul used is the one from which the English words “gymnastics” and “gymnasium” have been derived. It is a term clearly related to athletics. An athlete becomes an expert only by years of hard practice. There are no instant athletes. Do you think that Brooks Robinson became one of the world’s greatest third basemen simply by appearing at the stadium in Baltimore one afternoon after he had decided that morning that he was going to play ball? Do you think that it is only when there is a game that he plays? You know otherwise. You know that he has spent countless hours practicing. When you watch him in action, it is hard not to conclude that he was born with a glove in his hand. He must have teethed on a bat! It takes years of regular practice to achieve such skill.

No weight lifter, for example, says, “Here is a very heavy weight, I never lifted weights before, but that looks like the largest one, I’ll try to press it.” He is likely to break his back. He can’t do it that way. He must start out with a small weight the first week, then gradually over the months and years add heavier and heavier ones. He must work up to the heaviest one. Nor does he decide, “This week I’ll lift weights for five hours on Friday and then I’ll forget about it for the next six weeks.” Athletes must practice regularly, usually every day for at least a short period of time. They work daily, day after day, until what they are doing is “natural” (i.e. second nature) to them.

That is what an athlete does. And that is exactly what is involved in the word that Paul used here. Continued daily effort is an essential element of Christian *discipline*.

His reference to Paul’s writing is found in I Tim. 4:7, 8, “... *exercise* thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”

Our Reformed fathers considered such daily growth in sanctification in Lord’s Day 32 and 33 of our Heidelberg Catechism.

Q. 86. Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we still do good works?

A. Because that Christ, having redeemed and delivered us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit, after His own image, that so we may testify by the whole of our conduct our gratitude to God for His blessings, and that He may be praised by us: also that every one may be assured in himself of his faith by the fruits thereof; and that by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ.

Q. 87. Cannot they then be saved, who, continuing in their wicked and ungrateful lives, are not converted to God?

A. By no means; for the Holy Scripture declares, that no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or any such like, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Q. 88. In how many parts doth the true conversion of man consist?

A. In two parts, in the mortification of the old and the quickening of the new man.

SAY NO!

Mortification of the old man simply means saying No when you should say No. I’m afraid that this is one area that is being neglected by us, and such neglect contributes to spiritual lethargy and subsequent spiritual flab.

The immediate danger of riches, luxury, affluence, call it what you will, is that we are conditioned to get what we want. Sometimes it is so bad that parents and young people cannot even think of things they would like to receive as gifts. A little child says, “Mommy, I want a gum ball.” Well, reach for a penny; it’s the best way to get Johnny to quit nagging. Soon the gum ball is replaced with a bat and ball and probably some grand assortment of trucks. Then it’s got to be a trike, eventually a 10-speed. By some amazing wonder it isn’t long and it’s “four on the floor.”

Carry this through a little more. Soon Johnny gets himself a gal that he wants to call his own. They decide on marriage. Young couples don’t start out today with a minimum; no, they have to have a beautiful house, and, of course, filled with all kinds of furniture, including the color television set. They *need* it.

To add insult to injury, we are constantly harangued with commercials; we’re told we need this or that. And evidently if we’re told often enough, we will decide that we do indeed need it, or I don’t see

how such expensive advertising would ever pay. We're brainwashed to say, "Yes, it's true."

It is in that kind of setting that it becomes so hard to say No to anything. To say No is like trying to get your gear into reverse while you are going 50 miles an hour forward. It presents problems. This we find out in our Christian life.

What is the solution? We must learn to say no to certain things from childhood on. You must expect this and practice this. You will then get used to using that reverse gear. You don't have to go out every night something is going on. Say No sometimes. You don't have to dress like every one else; say No sometimes. You don't have to use the same old jargon everyone else may deem so "neat"; say No sometimes. If your friends want to do something you don't, say No! Say No to the television set at certain times. Say No to the sports-craze if it is getting out of hand.

SAY YES

James reminds us that it is not only important for us not to do evil, he also tells us that if we know what is good, but fail to do that good, we sin by not doing it, James 4:17.

Don't become over burdened with saying no. Remember that every time you say No, there is a golden opportunity next to it to say Yes! We do not live in a vacuum; we are active every moment. And if we refuse to do evil, we have that opportunity to get busy and do something good.

Instead of wasting your time with television, get your school work done the way it should be done; this is good. Instead of trying to be popular because you are a push over and everyone takes advantage of you, try standing up for what you really believe, and don't be afraid to tell others. You may not be so popular, but you will have the inner satisfaction of

having acted out of principle (belief), and not out of the way of least resistance.

The more that you do this, the more you show that you are maturing. This is what your parents are looking for when they are about to decide whether you are old enough to take on more responsibilities. You want to get a job? You want to take the family car out for an evening? You want to begin dating? You want to go on a trip? You want to get married?

The answers to these important questions will not be found in attaining the magical age of 18 years. The government may say that you are old enough to accept adult responsibilities at that age. What else can the government do but set the age as it is determined by the majority of people? And since the 60s were years of uprisings, especially on college campuses by militant youth, the government set that age.

Maturity is not determined by the number of times you have changed the calendar. Rather, it is determined by the way you conduct yourself, the way you show that you can obey and be trustworthy, the way your word is good and you do what you promise, the way that you say Yes when you should and No when you shouldn't.

Indeed, you need the Bible to know when God requires of you the Yes and the No; you need the instruction of catechism and church to help you; you need the Holy Spirit to work grace in your heart. You also need practice.

Your ability to implement this in your life improves with such practice.

This is what God requires of us, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Rom. 12:1.

May God provide you the grace to do this.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Eschatology – The First Period

Rev. H. Veldman

In our preceding article we concluded our discussion of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body as set forth by the fathers during this early or first period of the church in the New Dispensation, during the years, 80-250 A.D. We have called attention to the return or second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is evident from certain passages of the

New Testament that even at the time of the apostles there was a rather general expectation of an early second coming of the Lord. The expectation was kept alive and continued in the early church during the period now under discussion. This was especially true in the first part of this period and under the pressure of more or less severe persecutions which the church

was compelled to endure. It may also be said that there was a strong tendency toward a chiliastic conception of Christ's coming, although it cannot be maintained that millennialism was generally accepted by the church. Some of the fathers do not speak of a millenium at all; others oppose the idea. Nevertheless the chiliastic conception was found not only by some Judaizing sects but also by such fathers as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian.

We also called attention to the doctrine of the Intermediate State during this early period of the church. The answer of the Apostolic Fathers to this question was rather vague. About the place of the souls between death and resurrection they speak very little. Justin Martyr speaks of a better place for believers and a worse place for the ungodly. As to their condition, they do not teach definitely that the souls of believers immediately after death go to heaven. They do have indeed a certain foretaste of their eternal destination and wait for the resurrection of the body. Only the martyrs are received up into Paradise immediately upon death, but even this Paradise must be distinguished from Heaven. The place of the dead is conceived as being in the heart of the earth. It was divided into two apartments separated from each other by a deep ravine. On the one side of the ravine was the place for the believing souls. On the other side was the fire which cannot be quenched. Far above both these parts of the Sheol is Paradise. Thither went Christ after His death. There are Enoch and Elijah and there are also the martyrs until the resurrection.

We now begin our discussion of the General Judgment and Related Subjects. When we speak of "related subjects" we refer to such subjects as Hades, Purgatory and the Conflagration of the World. Before entering into these subjects, however, we would first quote Hagenback as he introduces these subjects in Vol. I of his *History of Doctrines*, 221:

The transactions of the general judgment, which was thought to be connected with the general resurrection, were depicted in various ways. Some ascribe the office of Judge to the Son, others to the Father, both in opposition to the Hellenistic myth of the judges in the under-world. The idea of a *Hades* (Sheol), known to both the Hebrews and the Greeks, was transferred to Christianity, and the assumption, that the real happiness, or the final misery, of the departed did not commence till after the general judgment and the resurrection of the body, appeared to necessitate the belief in an intermediate state, in which the soul was supposed to remain from the moment of its separation from the body to this last catastrophe. *Tertullian*, however, held that the martyrs went at once to paradise, the abode of the blessed, and thought that in this they enjoyed an advantage over other Christians; while *Cyprian* does not seem to know about any intermediate state

whatever. The Gnostics rejected the belief in Hades, together with that of the resurrection of the body, and imagined that the spiritually minded (the pneumatic) would, immediately after death, be delivered from the kingdom of the demiurge, and elevated to the pleeroma. The ancient oriental and Parsic idea of a purifying fire already occurs during this period in the writings of *Clement of Alexandria* and *Origen*. This purifying fire, however, is not yet transferred to this intermediate state, but is either taken in a very general sense, or supposed to be connected with the general conflagration of the world.

GENERAL JUDGMENT

Concerning the doctrine of the general judgment as held by the fathers during this early period of the church, we would quote from Justin Martyr, Vol. I of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Some ascribed the office of Judge to the Son, others to the Father. On page 165, chapter VIII, we read:

And reckon ye that it is for your sakes we have been saying these things; for it is in our power, when we are examined, to deny that we are Christians; but we would not live by telling a lie. For, impelled by the desire of the eternal and pure life, we seek the abode that is with God, the Father and Creator of all, and hasten to confess our faith, persuaded and convinced as we are that they who have proved to God by their works that they followed Him, and loved to abide with Him where there is no sin to cause disturbance, can obtain these things. This, then, to speak shortly, is what we expect and have learned from Christ, and teach. And Plato, in like manner, used to say that Rhadamanthus and Minos would punish the wicked who came before them; and we say that the same thing will be done, but at the hand of Christ, and upon the wicked in the same bodies united again to their spirits which are now to undergo everlasting punishment; and not only, as Plato said, for a period of a thousand years. And if any one say that this is incredible or impossible, this error of ours is one which concerns ourselves only, and no other person, so long as you cannot convict us of doing any harm.

You will notice, in the above quotation, that Justin Martyr calls attention to what Plato used to say, but that the fathers say that the same thing will be done, namely to punish the wicked, at the hand of Christ, and upon the wicked in the same bodies united again to their spirits which are now to undergo everlasting punishment.

And, in chapter IX of his *Second Apology*, Justin Martyr writes:

And that no one may say what is said by those who are deemed philosophers, that our assertions that the wicked are punished in eternal fire are big words and bugbears, and that we wish men to live virtuously through fear, and not because such a life is good and

pleasant; I will briefly reply to this, that if this be not so, God does not exist; or, if He exists, He cares not for men, and neither virtue nor vice is anything, and, as we said before, lawgivers unjustly punish those who transgress good commandments. But since these are not unjust, and their Father teaches them by the word to do the same things as Himself, they who agree with them are not unjust.

In the above quotation, Justin Martyr writes that eternal punishment is not a mere threat. He writes that the assertions of the fathers to the effect that the wicked are punished in eternal fire are not simply big words or bugbears, intended to frighten men to live virtuously through fear, and not because such a life itself is good and pleasant. The Scriptures surely speak of such a punishment in everlasting fire.

We need not say anymore as far as the doctrine of the general judgment is concerned as set forth in this early period of the church. That the Lord would judge the quick and the dead was generally accepted. The Scriptures are clear on this.

HADES

Hades and hell are not synonymous. There are Scriptural passages in which the word *hell* appears and it would be proper should the word *hades* appear in the translation. One such passage is Ps. 16:10 and Acts 2:27. The passage is familiar: "Because Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." This text, we understand, is a quotation of Ps. 16:10. They who deny eternal punishment, that hell is everlasting, are fond of referring to a passage such as this. However, the Scriptures surely maintain that hell is everlasting. Pertinent is a passage such as Matt. 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." This passage certainly teaches that the one is just as eternal as the other. We must bear in mind, however, that the word that is translated "hell" in the above named passages is literally "hades." Hades and Sheol are synonymous. And these words simply refer to the state or abode of

the dead, of all the dead, the godly as well as the ungodly.

In his dialogue with Trypho, a Jew, Justin Martyr gives elaborate reasons for regarding Christ as the Messiah of the Old Testament, and this dialogue is regarded as the first systematic attempt to exhibit the false position of the Jews in regard to Christianity. In this dialogue with Trypho, chapter 5, Justin Martyr has something to say about the soul and what happens to it at death, and we quote:

But I do not say, indeed, that all souls die; for that were truly a piece of good fortune to the evil. What then? The souls of the pious remain in a better place, while those of the unjust and wicked are in a worse, waiting for the time of judgment. Thus some which have appeared worthy of God never die; but others are punished so long as God wills them to exist and to be punished.

In this quotation Justin Martyr certainly has something to say about Hades, the state or abode of the dead. He declares in this answer to Trypho that the souls of the people of God do not die but that they remain in a better place while the souls of the wicked are in a worse place, waiting for the time of judgment.

In a later chapter, chapter 80, Justin Martyr even stigmatizes as heretical the doctrine that souls are received into heaven immediately after death. In this quotation it is clear that this church father also believed in a millenium, but he adds that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise. So, this church father concedes that many Christians did not believe in the millenium. However, we will reserve this quotation from Justin Martyr for our following article. In that article we will quote this eightieth chapter of his dialogue with the Jew, Trypho. The writings of Justin are deficient in charms of style. But his writings are characterized by a manly and heroic pleading for a despised people with whom he had boldly identified himself, and for the intrepidity with which he defends the Christian faith.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society "Ruth" of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church extends its sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. D. Meulenberg, in the recent loss of her husband, DAVID MEULENBERG.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28).

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.
Mrs. Peter Zandstra, Sec'y.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Those who have ordered a bound copy of Volume 50 will soon receive their copies. Due to circumstances beyond our control, all bound volumes this year will be black — not blue or maroon. We are very sorry that for some this will break the continuity of their sets, but this is unavoidable. Seeing this change has now been made, hereafter all bound volumes will be bound in black only.

—R.F.P.A. Business Office

NOTICE!!!

Change of Address

The new address of Rev. George Lubbers is:

Rev. George Lubbers
1314 North Main Street
Pella, Iowa 50219

News From Our Churches

December 31, 1974

Rev. Woudenberg declined the call from our Kalamazoo Church. Rev. Lubbers, who accepted the call from Pella, was to be installed in the ministry there on Friday, January 3.

Rev. Heys, who has not been feeling at all well lately, submitted to surgery for the removal of his gall bladder, during the week of December 16. According to Southwest's bulletin, the prognosis was for "complete recovery, D.V."

* * * * *

In the stack of bulletins I've received during the past two weeks, there are, understandably, numerous references to Christmas programs of various kinds. There was, for example, a Christmas Mass Meeting, for the young people of the Grand Rapids' area, held in Southeast Church on Sunday afternoon, December 22. Rev. Van Overloop was the speaker. That evening there was a Christmas Hymnsing in First Church. According to Southeast's bulletin, an interesting program was planned for the occasion. "Selected passages will introduce the songs shared by the audience, and the Radio Choir. A brass quartette will also contribute music to celebrate the advent of our Lord." That was *after* the evening church service. A "Special Invitation" was extended to the congregation of First Church, via the bulletin, to come to church early and enjoy a "very pleasant surprise" *before* the evening service. And a pleasant surprise it surely was, for, from the rear balcony of the auditorium came the strains of beautiful music, as members of the Radio Choir sang various Christmas

carols, a capella, under the direction of Mr. Roland Petersen.

Sunday School Christmas Programs were also presented in most of our churches. The one in Hull, however, was the only one I noticed that was held on Christmas Eve.

One final Christmas Program yet — this one held in Loveland on the 15th of December. It featured the Loveland Protestant Reformed Choral Society. In addition to numbers by the Choir, the program included also a tenor solo, and a men's quartet, as well as some singing of carols by the audience. At the top of the printed program, incidentally, was a pair of names which has long been familiar to those who have attended musical programs in our churches in Grand Rapids. The Loveland Choral Society performs under the direction of Mr. Gerald Kuiper (now the teaching principal in our Loveland School) and is accompanied by Mrs. Kuiper.

* * * * *

The December 29 bulletin of Southwest included a paragraph which looked at 1974 in retrospect. In it were presented statistics through which, the writer said, "we can see the Hand of our Faithful Father in Heaven in His many blessings to our congregation." Among the statistics from this relatively small congregation, were the following: eighteen confessions of faith, the addition of twelve young people and five families through transfers, five marriages, and seven baptisms. The Lord's blessing on

(continued on back page)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Pella (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Congregation mourns the loss of one of its esteemed and dearly beloved members, MR. CECIL VANDER MOLEN, whom the Lord took home at the age of 83 years, 7 months and 22 days. We express our sympathy to the Vander Molen and Stuursma families.

"Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation. . ." (Luke 2:29, 30).

Rev. G. Lubbers, Pres.
Elder B. Menninga, Clerk.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope, Grand Rapids, herewith extends its heartfelt sympathy to its fellow members, Wm. Kamps, C. Kamps, L. Kamps, and G. Schimmel, brothers-in-law, and to the husband, Mr. Marinus Kamps, in the passing away of MRS. MARINUS KAMPS, December 28, 1974. It is our united prayer that the family, husband, and children receive and find their comfort and strength in God's Holy Word.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Ps. 55:22)

Joe King, Pres.
P. Koole, Sec'y

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of The Junior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, express their sincere sympathy to its members, Mr. and Mrs. David Moelker and Mr. and Mrs. Larry Meulenberg in the passing to glory of their father, MR. DAVID MEULENBERG.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4).

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.
Dort Kalsbeek, Vice-Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

We wish to express our sympathy to two of our members, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Feenstra, in the loss of their brother, MR. DAVID MEULENBERG.

At the same time, we rejoice with them in the sure knowledge of the large measure of glory given to the saints of God for:

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." (Rev. 14:13)

The Junior Mr. and Mrs. Society
First Protestant Reformed Church
Grand Rapids, Mich.
C. Reitsma, Vice-President

a particular congregation is not to be measured in terms of numerical growth, of course, but we rightly rejoice when our Covenant God sees fit to give us that, too.

* * * * *

The Council of Southeast Church has inaugurated several changes in that congregation's order of worship. They include silent prayer in unison at the beginning of the service, Scripture Reading immediately before the Sermon, and the congregation's audible recitation of the Apostles' Creed in unison with the presiding minister.

* * * * *

Mr. Vander Wal has again slipped me a couple of samples of many interesting pieces of correspondence he continues to receive. One came from a reader in Johannesburg, South Africa. In payment for the *Standard Bearer* subscription, he made out a check payable to Mr. Vander Wal personally. In the accompanying letter, he offered this explanation: "I have done this to facilitate matters, as I can send money out to individuals without any questions asked, but to send out money to church organizations takes over three months to get permission granted, etc. The government has put these strictures on money sent to church organizations because of the World Council of Churches' support of terrorists."

The writer concludes with the gratifying statement that he continues "to appreciate the excellent material found in the *Standard Bearer*, and to follow with keen interest the news of the Protestant Reformed Churches. May the Lord continue to bless the work and witness in your churches and missionary labors."

Perhaps there's room to squeeze in one more. From Oregon, this: "I have purchased locally, and have been reading Herman Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics*, and his exposition of the book of Revelation, *Behold He Cometh*. I find them to be a refreshing and delightful — if that term is not too undignifying — exposition of Reformed faith and thought. I would appreciate any information which is available concerning other publications you may have, or design to have for sale."

Needless to say, we are thankful for such evidence that God uses our witness, not only as it extends to the far reaches of the country, but also of the globe.

D.O.

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