

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The formal principle (of the Reformation of the sixteenth century) is that the reformers acknowledged but one source of authority, that is, the Holy Scriptures. With this principle they stood opposed to Roman Catholicism, to false mysticism, and to rationalism. To the Roman Catholic Church they stood opposed, because it acknowledged beside Scripture also tradition as a source of authority, while the protestants rejected everything as having authority, except the Word of God. Besides, the Roman Catholic included the Apocryphal Books in the Bible; protestants recognized only the sixty-six canonical books. Roman Catholics claimed that the right and power to interpret the Bible belonged to the church only, that is, the clergy; protestants maintained that every Christian is able and has the right to interpret the Word of God. By this same principle, however, the Reformation was opposed to false mysticism. The latter is characterized by rejecting the objective authority of the Bible and relying upon inner light. Protestants claimed that the objective revelation in Scripture must be the sole and only reliable canon for faith and life. And, in opposition to rationalism, the Reformation maintained that reason must be subjected to the Scriptures as the Word of God.

— H. Hoeksema,
Reformed Dogmatics, p. 566

MEDITATION

Preservation From Temptation

Rev. H. Veldman

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

Matt. 26:41a

This word was spoken by Christ to His disciples who had been sleeping while He poured out His soul in prayer to His God in the garden of Gethsemane. This sleeping of the disciples was not merely because of physical exhaustion. This is evident from what the Saviour adds in verse 41: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." This flesh, the contrast of spirit, is ethical flesh, refers to what is carnal. The devil had lulled the disciples to sleep because he would deprive the Saviour, in this hour of agony, of their fellowship and prayers. And, therefore, our Lord admonishes them to watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation, succumb to this evil attack of the tempter.

Temptations and trials, although always occurring together and characterized by the same external circumstances, can be distinguished sharply. A child of God is always tempted and tried at the same time and through the same circumstances. Trials, however, always have a good connotation. As one tries, proves metals with the intention of separating the pure from the impure, so trials are various experiences of the church and the child of God in the midst of the world whereby the Lord proves His people, with the divine intention that we may be purified by means of these afflictions, that the pure may be separated from the impure. Of course, God only proves; He only intends the good. Temptations, however, refer to the same outward circumstances but as they are used by the devil for the purpose of leading God's people astray, away from the path of God's kingdom and covenant.

How real is temptation — there is really a being as the tempter! This awareness of the devil's existence is hardly characteristic of the church today. I speak, of course, of the nominal church. In the past Satan was a greatly feared individual — the church was vividly conscious of his existence. This can hardly be said to characterize the church today. This is not because the devil was more active years ago. But it is surely due to the lukewarmness, the lackadaisical attitude of the church, the lack of consciousness of sin, the failure to

recognize the power of evil and lack of concern about it, the wiping out of the antithesis and of the line of demarcation between the church and the world, the seeking of the pleasures and treasures of this world, the contentment and complacency of the church in the midst of the world today. Temptation, however, is very truly a reality! "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," is the sober, very earnest and solemn exhortation of the Christ unto His church of all ages. We must not minimize its reality, Jesus means to say to us. The awful possibility of entering into temptation is continuously present.

This admonition of our Saviour is, we must understand, not in conflict with the Scriptural exhortation of James 1:2, exhorting us to rejoice when we fall into diverse temptations. Diverse temptations are all the varying, different kinds of effort on the part of the powers of evil to lure us away from the sphere of the service and covenant of our God. To fall into them means that we are surrounded by them. And it also implies that we do not seek them. The child of God does not walk about "with a chip on his shoulder," seeking or looking for them. He falls into them, because of his name and position in the midst of the world. Here, however, we read of our entering into temptation. This means that we succumb to the wiles of the devil, walk in the ways of sin, do not simply "fall" into them. Perhaps we are inclined to ascribe our sins to a weakness on our part, to our "peculiar character." Perhaps we would believe that we really could not help it — we simply "fell" into sin. If this, however, be true, how can we watch and pray? How can we be on our guard against something when we are wholly passive? Jesus, however, warns us not to enter into temptation. Any succumbing on our part to the wiles of the devil is always accompanied by a definite choice of our own will. We are responsible beings, also for our failure to walk in the ways of God's covenant.

How tremendous is the danger of our entering into temptation! There are, first of all, the

tremendous forces of sin that are allied, united against us. The world of sin is superbly organized. At its head stands Satan, the prince of the powers of the air, an evil genius indeed! With him is his host of evil spirits, who have access into our inner life. And also at his disposal is the world, led and controlled by the power of sin and the hatred against God and His covenant in the midst of the world. And this is not all. This formidable enemy has a wealth of material at his disposal. These forces of evil assail us through all the attractions, beauties, glories, pleasures and treasures of this present time. Think of all the literature, spiritual and secular, in modern churches and schools, in books and magazines, in which the truths of the Word of God are undermined, cleverly torn to shreds, proclaimed either openly or subtly! Think of all the filth and corruption and immorality, presented to us in the movies, over the radio and upon the television screen! Then, there is also the power of the world, their ability to use force, the sword. They cannot kill the soul, but they can kill the body. Indeed, how dangerous is the position of the church of God in the midst of the world! And to this must be added the fact that the people of God are so ill-prepared to meet this continuous assault of the forces of darkness. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. We are but few, in comparison with the world, a "little flock," and holy only in principle. How little strength we have!

This preservation from temptation takes place only in the way of watching and prayer. Now this certainly emphasizes, on the one hand, the utter futility and folly of attempting to resist temptation in our own strength. To resist temptation we must watch and pray. To resist temptation and evil in our own strength means that we will fight sin, that we will continue in the narrow way of the Lord's commandments . . . This implies that we will resist temptation without watching and prayer, inasmuch as we consider ourselves well qualified to fight the good fight in our own strength. Peter and the rest of the disciples of the Lord were of this mind. And the result? Peter denied his Lord three times, and the rest of the disciples fled. Besides, at this moment they were sound asleep in the garden. How impossible it is to ward off the tempter in our own strength! Of course! To imagine ourselves able to do so would surely reveal an utter lack of understanding of our position in the midst of the world. It would reveal a sad lack of understanding of the powers of evil that are united against us. And it would surely also reveal a sad lack of understanding of ourselves, our own weakness and incompetence.

Indeed, we must watch and pray. To watch means that we must be awake, sober, continually on the alert. We must give strict attention to, observe closely

the enemy of sin and darkness. We must be spiritually on our toes, have our eyes open, be ready for the enemy whenever and in whatever form he may appear. And the devil is very clever, his mode of attack very subtle. He often appears as a wolf clothed in sheep's clothing! So, we must watch, be wide awake. Of course, this implies that we must watch through the Word of God, the Scriptures. On the one hand — and this is fundamental — we must know our calling. We must know the will of God, what the Lord requires of us in the midst of the world, and this applies to everyone of us in the church of God. We must study the Scriptures diligently . . . And, studying the Scriptures, we must watch and observe all about us. Always we must test the spirits, whether they are of God. We must recognize the foe and be able to confront him and deal with him. How absolutely necessary this is! How true it is that we must be very distinctive!

And we must pray. Of course! He who understands the Christian's position in the midst of the world, longs for and seeks the living God and would serve Him, realizes how far short he falls of the glory of God and how miserably weak and frail he is in himself, will surely understand how impossible it is of himself to cope with the enemy, and that, therefore, he must seek all his help outside of himself. He must pray. This does not mean that we will pray that we may never fall into temptation. The premillenarian entertains the hope that he will be delivered from the great tribulation. This is hardly Scriptural. No, we pray that we may not enter into temptation. This means, first of all, that this must be the purpose of our praying. We must pray with this in our hearts and in our minds. Our prayers are often so superficial; we often do not mean what we say . . . And, on the other hand, this also implies that we pray for grace to fight temptation and evil. We must remember that we do not merely *fall* into temptation. We enter into temptation; we choose for the things of the world and of this time. And to pray in order that we enter not into temptation must imply, therefore, that we are aware of the forces of evil, within us and all around us, that we observe these forces closely in the light of the Word of God, that we know our calling in the midst of the world, that we pray that we may not enter into wickedness, but receive from God the grace to fight sin, within us and all around us, and to conduct ourselves as of the party of the living God.

Heeding this exhortation of the Saviour, the fruit is sure: we will surely be preserved from temptation. We will increase in knowledge. We will increase in the knowledge of our calling. Of course! Increasing in the knowledge of the Scriptures, we will increase in the knowledge of the will of God and, therefore, of our calling wherewith God has called us. Our calling in

the midst of the world will stand ever more clearly before us. Then we will also increase in our knowledge of the evil world. The more clearly we know the Scriptures, the abler we will be to discern the lie from the truth, unrighteousness from righteousness, what is our calling from that which is not our calling. And in that measure we will also increasingly understand the clever and subtle character of the world, the wiles of the devil, his approach in whatever form he may appear. We will surely increase in our spiritual soberness and watchfulness.

Increasing in knowledge, we will also increase in grace. In the measure that we watch, we will pray. We will surely learn to know ourselves better and more

clearly in prayer. We will understand increasingly our calling, the powers of evil and sin and our own weakness and inability to cope with the enemy. And we will pray, pray to the living God, constantly. And then we will increase in grace because the Lord will hear our prayer. He will hear us and bless us, not *because* we pray, but *through* our prayers and in the way of prayer. This is His promise, as we may read it in Matt. 7:7: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Seeking God in prayer, looking to Him constantly for help, we will be assured of His promise that He will never leave or forsake us. Then nothing will be of us, and all will be of God. And He will receive all the glory!

EDITORIAL

Correction And Clarification, Please!

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Most of you will know by this time that our Seminary is giving training to three students from the Free Reformed Church of North America (formerly known as the Free and Old Christian Reformed Churches in Canada and the U.S.). This relatively small denomination, which has most of its congregations in Canada, traces its ecclesiastical ancestry to the denomination known as the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. Late last year inquiry was made by representatives of the Free Reformed Church as to our willingness to train their students. Our Theological School Committee informed these representatives of our readiness to give seminary training to their students, with, of course, the clear understanding that this instruction would be on our basis and from our Protestant Reformed viewpoint. During the summer the Synod of the Free Reformed Church of North America adopted a proposal to have three of their students enter our seminary. It is in this connection that an article appears in *The Messenger*, (Sept., 1974) the paper of that denomination, explaining that decision and introducing our denomination to the readers. The article is written by the Rev. C. Pronk.

Now, of course, we have no objection to the fact that the Rev. Pronk introduces us to his readers and explains to the readers of *The Messenger* their decision to ask us to train their students. That makes good sense, and the members of his denomination even have a right to know where and how and by

whom their future ministers are being trained. Not only that, but we like to have the Protestant Reformed Churches introduced to others. However, we like to be correctly introduced. This, I think, is quite understandable. An individual who is introduced to others certainly likes to be correctly presented. This is also true of our denomination. Besides, it is good for the Rev. Pronk's readers also that we be correctly introduced to them, so that they indeed know us as we are and know who are training their students. But the Rev. Pronk's article of introduction falls short in this respect. There are several inaccuracies in his article, some less important and some more important. And besides, there are some items which, to say the least, require clarification. This accounts for my editorial. I wish to call these items to the Rev. Pronk's attention, and I request him to make correction and clarification. I am doing so not in the spirit of debate and polemics, but simply in the interest of accuracy and clarity.

First of all, let me point out some inaccuracies in said article of introduction.

1. Our name is not Protestant Reformed Church (singular), but Protestant Reformed Churches (plural) in America. This may seem a matter of little importance, but it is not. This name expresses that we are a federation of autonomous congregations, and thus expresses our aversion toward the collegialistic view of church government and our opposition to all hierarchicalism.

2. Although it is, of course, true that the name of the Rev. H. Hoeksema is inseparably connected with our origin, I am afraid that the picture drawn by Rev. Pronk here is very scant. True, in one instance he mentions "Hoeksema and others." But his readers will certainly not receive the impression from his account that the struggle in 1924 originally involved three ministers, three consistories, and three congregations. It is certainly less than accurate to write, as he does, "Hoeksema thereupon formed a new denomination, the Protestant Reformed Church." Rev. Pronk's article, whether he intended it or not, tends to leave the impression that the Protestant Reformed Churches are followers of a man, Hoeksema; but nothing could be farther from the truth.

3. The Rev. Pronk writes correctly that "Hoeksema and others could not in good conscience subscribe to these declarations and were consequently deposed from office." And while this is true in itself, it is only part of the truth, and therefore inaccurate. For one thing, a study of the history of 1924 will reveal that this deposition from office was *unjust*. For another — and this is important — Rev. Pronk neglects to say that those who were deposed were deposed hierarchically, in a manner contrary to the Church Order and the principles of Reformed church government. Both in Classis Grand Rapids East and Classis Grand Rapids West, the Classes assumed powers of discipline which belonged only to the consistory. And besides, this discipline was imposed in spite of the fact that the Synod of 1924 had refused to advise discipline at all. In fact, the Synod of 1924 had not even specifically "condemned Hoeksema's views," as Rev. Pronk writes. And besides, the Synod of 1924 had given Revs. H. Hoeksema and H. Danhof the testimony that they were fundamentally reformed.

4. Although, perhaps, this is not so important, it is nevertheless not accurate: "Dr. K. Schilder from the Netherlands soon joined in the debate between Hoeksema and the leaders of the Christian Reformed Church. Schilder even crossed the ocean several times to meet with Hoeksema, for whose intellect he had the greatest respect, and with whose views on common grace he agreed, at least in part. While in America Schilder tried to bring about a reunion between the Christian Reformed Church and Protestant Reformed Church, which almost succeeded." Let me make the following corrections: a) Dr. Schilder did not join the debate to any great extent until about the time of his first visit to this country in 1939. After that he devoted considerable attention to the Three Points of common grace, as a result of the so-called Pantlind Conference. b) Dr. Schilder did not cross the ocean several times to meet

with Hoeksema. Dr. Schilder came for the first time in 1939, and then not to meet with Hoeksema. If I recall correctly, his trip in 1939, which was to be in the nature of a preaching and lecture tour, was sponsored chiefly by Mr. Wm. B. Eerdmans, Sr., and a Mr. Hamstra. At that time Dr. Schilder was boycotted by the Christian Reformed Church, but cordially received among us, even though we had no reason to believe that he agreed with our position on common grace. c) Dr. Schilder was here only twice, in 1939 and 1947. Also at the occasion of his second visit, after the Liberation, the purpose was not to meet with Hoeksema. The so-called Liberated Churches were seeking a hearing with the Christian Reformed denomination, first of all. At that time, although we had no relation of correspondence with the newly formed Liberated Churches, we did receive Dr. Schilder, and even opened our pulpits to him. Again, we were well aware that we were in disagreement with Dr. Schilder — this time on the matter of the covenant. But we wanted to give him a hearing. d) It is not correct that the attempt at reunion in 1939 "almost succeeded." The truth of the matter is, as I wrote also recently, that the conference was a total failure, due to the fact that the Christian Reformed brethren who participated did not and would not really confer. And this is a matter of no little importance. For if the efforts at reunion had "almost succeeded," then it is a pity that those efforts were not vigorously pursued, in the hope that they would succeed. The truth of the matter is, however, that while we of the Protestant Reformed Churches have always shown our willingness to confer and to try to get the difficulties removed, whether by way of an official or an unofficial conference, those of the Christian Reformed Church have never shown any willingness to pursue these matters with us.

I believe, therefore, that it is in the interest of accuracy that the Rev. Pronk should make some corrections on the above counts.

But there are also certain items in his article which, to my mind, require clarification — again, for the sake of his readers as well as for our sake. Permit me to enumerate them.

In the first place, after pointing out that the differences between us and the Liberated concerned especially the covenant, the Rev. Pronk writes: "The Vrijgemaakten believed (as we do) that God addresses His redemptive promise to all children of believing parents, including those whom God foreknows as covenant breakers and as reprobates." This statement is less than clear and accurate. It certainly fails to define the issue between us and the "Liberated." What does the Rev. Pronk understand by "addresses" in this statement? This makes considerable difference. Our differences with the Liberated concerned the

matter of a general, conditional, promise to all children of believing parents. We saw in the Liberated position – and correctly – a repetition of the views of Prof. Heyns with respect to the covenant, and, therefore, principally nothing else but the error of the First Point of 1924 applied now to the covenant. Not only were we “deathly afraid that such a view of the covenant would inevitably lead to Arminianism,” but we unhesitatingly characterized this view as Arminianism applied to the covenant. But I am also asking for clarification because I am interested in knowing whether the brethren of the Free Reformed Church of North America hold to this same idea.

In the second place, after pointing out that we maintain that God promises His grace only to the elect seed of the covenant (again, not a wholly adequate description of our position) the Rev. Pronk writes: “In this respect Hoeksema’s views are quite similar to those of Kuyper and Kersten, although there are important differences too.” This also requires clarification. For one thing, it is not correct that Kuyper unequivocally taught that God promised His grace only to the elect seed of the covenant. His view concerning the heirs of the covenant was very seriously compromised by his theory of presupposed regeneration. In fact, if the Rev. Pronk will investigate, I think he will discover that our view of the covenant is widely divergent from that of Kuyper, that it differs fundamentally in more respects than it agrees. And the same is true of Kersten. I have discovered that there is some misunderstanding on this score, whatever may be the source of it. But I would recommend that the Rev. Pronk compare our view, as set forth in much of our literature and especially in *Believers and Their Seed*, and that thereafter he clarify this statement.

In the third place, there is need of clarification with respect to what Rev. Pronk writes concerning the “free offer.” He writes: “Needless to say, we also have our differences with the Protestant Reformed Church, especially in connection with the ‘free offer’.” We wholeheartedly preach the Gospel overture of free and sovereign grace to all sinners indiscriminately,

and we maintain that this does not make us Arminian.” In the first place, I wish that the Rev. Pronk would define what he means here by “Gospel overture.” That term “overture” does not occur in our confessions, and, as far as I know is not a commonly used term in Reformed dogmatical parlance. Hence, please define it. It is entirely possible, in my opinion, that the position which Rev. Pronk sets forth in the above statement is quite Reformed. But then it is also true in that case that there is no difference between our denominations on this subject. That remains to be seen. In the second place, while the Rev. Pronk speaks of “differences,” he fails to state what our Protestant Reformed position is with respect to the preaching of the gospel. I shall not take the time and space to set forth that position now. It may very readily be learned from our literature, to which the Rev. Pronk has access. In the third place, however, the Rev. Pronk in this paragraph fails completely to touch on the essential issue in connection with the “free offer.” The question is: is the preaching of the gospel, that is, the general proclamation of a particular promise, grace also to the reprobate who come under that preaching? And, if so, what grace do the reprobate receive in the preaching? This is the fundamental issue in the matter of the “free offer.” This was the fundamental issue in the First Point of 1924. If the Rev. Pronk wishes to speak of differences, then let him clarify those differences with this fundamental issue in mind. And let me warn him in advance that he must not do as so many have done, namely, try to shove “hyper-Calvinism” into our shoes. As is being made abundantly plain in the Rev. Engelsma’s current series of articles, we completely repudiate the hyper-Calvinist position.

In conclusion, I repeat: the Rev. Pronk in the interest of introducing us to his people correctly, as well as in the interest of being fair to us, should make correct and clarification on the above points. Besides, perhaps we can have some fruitful and enlightening discussion in the way of such correction and clarification.

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

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

“Hyper-Calvinism” and the Call of the Gospel (5)

by Rev. David Engelsma

That which is objectionable in the “free offer of the gospel,” or “well-meant gospel offer,” is not the teaching that the Church must preach the gospel to everyone and must call all hearers to faith in Jesus Christ. But the error of the doctrine of the offer, and the reason why a Reformed man must repudiate it, is its teaching that the grace of God in Jesus Christ, grace that is saving in character, is directed to all men in the preaching of the gospel. Inherent in the offer of the gospel is the notion that God loves and desires to save all men; the notion that the preaching of the gospel is God’s grace to all men, an expression of God’s love to all men, and an attempt by God to save all men; and the notion that salvation is dependent upon man’s acceptance of the offered salvation, i.e., that salvation depends upon the free will of the sinner.¹

The first two of these elements are openly confessed by the proponents of the offer. In the first of the three points of common grace of 1924, the Christian Reformed Church expressed the following:

“Relative to the first point which concerns the favorable attitude of God towards humanity in general and not only towards the elect, synod declares it to be established according to Scripture and the Confession that, apart from the saving grace of God shown only to those that are elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general. This is evident from the Scriptural passages quoted and from the Canons of Dordrecht, II, 5 and III, IV, 8, 9, which deal with the general offer of the Gospel, while it also appears from the citations made from Reformed writers of the most flourishing period of Reformed Theology that our Reformed writers from the past favored this view.”

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church confessed the same doctrine, if anything more plainly and more boldly, when in 1948 it adopted the doctrinal study of Professors Murray and Stonehouse on “the free offer of the gospel.”

“... there is in God a benevolent lovingkindness towards the repentance and salvation of even those whom he has not decreed to save. This pleasure, will, desire is expressed in the universal call to repentance ... The full and free offer of the gospel is a grace bestowed upon all. Such grace is necessarily a manifestation of love or lovingkindness in the heart of God. And this lovingkindness is revealed to be of a character or kind that is correspondent with the grace bestowed. The grace offered is nothing less than salvation in its richness and fulness. The love or lovingkindness that lies back of that offer is not anything less; it is the will to that salvation. In other words, it is Christ in all the glory of his person and in all the perfection of his finished work whom God offers in the gospel. The loving and benevolent will that is the source of that offer and that grounds its veracity and reality is the will to the possession of Christ and the enjoyment of the salvation that resides in him.”²

The free offer, according to those who hold it, is the grace of God to all men in the preaching of the gospel and is rooted in God’s love for all men. This grace must be conceived of as God’s one, saving grace. For it is grace that desires men’s salvation; it is grace revealed in the preaching of the gospel of Christ crucified; and it is grace that offers Christ and the riches of salvation to men. In the first point of common grace the Christian Reformed Church identified the grace manifested in the offer as a “certain favor or grace of God” which is to be distinguished from “the saving grace of God shown only to those that are elect.” Following the lead of Abraham Kuyper, who however did not make “common grace” a favor of God which desired the salvation of all humanity and which offered all men salvation, the Christian Reformed Church distinguished two graces of God, “common grace” and “special (saving) grace.” The former was viewed as a favor that gives all men earthly blessings, e.g., health, and the latter was viewed as the favor of God that gives the elect salvation. In the past, the Christian Reformed Church has attempted to defend its doctrine of the offer by claiming that it is the revelation of God’s common grace, not His special, saving grace. But the grace of God expressed in the well-meant offer is saving grace, not any common grace, i.e., even though it is grace that fails to save many to whom it is directed, it is as to its character the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. It is not a

¹In his book, *Een Kracht Gods Tot Zaligheid*, Hoeksema listed four objectionable elements in the idea of an offer of salvation. First, the offer teaches that God wills and desires to give grace to, or save, all men. Secondly, it teaches that God actually possesses salvation for all, that is, that Christ’s atonement was universal. Thirdly, it holds that God plainly reveals that it is His intention to give His grace to all. Fourthly, it implies that salvation is conditioned by the free will of the sinner. Each of these elements “*indruischt tegen de Gereformeerde waarheid.*” The offer and the Reformed truth “*sluiten elkander uit.*”

²“The Free Offer of the Gospel,” p. 27

grace that gives rain, sunshine, health, and wealth, but a grace that desires a man's salvation and that well-meaningly offers a man Christ and Him crucified. It is sheer absurdity to make the offer of the gospel an expression of a non-saving "common grace." It is simply a principle that will work its way out, regardless of all foolish distinctions, that the grace of God in the blessed gospel is saving grace. Besides, the fact of the matter is, Abraham Kuyper to the contrary notwithstanding, that the Scriptures know of only one grace of God and one love of God, His grace and love in Jesus Christ. This is the grace, and this is the love, revealed in the gospel.

The doctrine of the offer, therefore, teaches that the love of God in Christ is universal. Apart from all other considerations, this is the denial of the Reformed, Biblical doctrine of election and the sell-out of the Reformed faith to Arminianism. For the meaning of the doctrine of election is that the love of God in Christ is eternally directed towards some definite, particular men, willing their salvation and efficaciously accomplishing it. Election is simply the choosing love of God (Deut. 7:6-8; Rom. 8:28-39). Universal love is universal election, and that was the position of the Arminians.

Since the offer maintains that God's grace is directed to all men in the preaching, it is the denial of the efficacy, or sovereignty, of grace, that which the fourth of the so-called five points of Calvinism calls "the irresistibility of grace." For the doctrine of the offer does admit that many of those to whom God is gracious in the preaching are not saved.

Here the doctrine of the offer most clearly shows itself to be the resurrection of the old Arminian heresy in the Reformed camp. The pivotal point in the controversy between the Reformed faith and Arminianism at the time of the Synod of Dordt was the Arminian denial of the sovereignty of grace. Basic to the Arminian position was their teaching that God's grace was given to all men, not sovereignly to save them, but merely to enable them to choose salvation, if they willed. At this crucial juncture — the actual salvation of a man — everything depended upon the man himself, upon his exercise of his free will. And the whole of Arminian theology is built on this rotten foundation: election, the atonement, and

final salvation are conditioned by the free will of the sinner.³

The Synod of Dordt laid waste the entire Arminian system, and maintained the gospel of gracious salvation, by confessing with the Scriptures that the grace of God, both as an attitude in God and as His power in men, does not enable a man to be saved, does not merely make salvation possible, but efficaciously saves everyone towards whom it is directed and in whom it is worked. The Synod denied "that after God has performed his part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not to be regenerated, to be converted or to continue unconverted" (Canons, III, IV, 12). Rather, the work of grace is such "that all in whose heart God works in this marvellous manner, are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated and do actually believe." The Canons go on to say, in Article 14:

"Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure; but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him; or even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will, consent to the terms of salvation, and actually believe in Christ; but because he who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe, and the act of believing also."

Salvation by grace, as taught in Ephesians 2:1-10, means that dead sinners are quickened by the almighty power of God, i.e., sovereign grace. This implies, as Ephesians I explicitly teaches, that God's favorable attitude, His will to save, i.e., His grace, is directed towards some particular men, namely, the elect. In this light, the Arminian notions of conditional election and an atonement whose application depends on the sinner's decision are also exposed as fraudulent. The gospel is the good news of sovereign, particular grace. The doctrine of the well-meant offer is opposed to this.

³The significance at Dordt of the truth of sovereign, "irresistible" grace is indicated in Carl Bangs' book, sympathetic to the Arminians, *Arminius* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971).

(to be continued)

NOTICE

On Friday, Nov. 8, at 8:00 P.M., Prof. R. Decker will deliver a lecture in Kalamazoo on the topic, "The Foolishness of Preaching."

PLACE: KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

(Take U.S.131 to Stadium Dr., East Exit. The school is located on Stadium Dr. at Howard St., southwest corner).

Everyone is urged to attend.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

The Value Of Our Creeds

Prof. Robert D. Decker

Introduction to the Belgic Confession, cont.

It is well, in the light of the times in which we live, to say something concerning the value of our creeds in general and of our Belgic Confession in particular. The churches of the day are increasingly critical of the creeds, and this is no less true in the Reformed tradition both in our own land and abroad. The cry in our time is that the creeds have lost their value and usefulness for the church. They simply, so it is alleged, do not speak to the needs of the world and the calling of the church in the world. They are said to be dated, outmoded, old-fashioned. The best that can be done with the confessions is to preserve them as interesting relics of the church's glorious past, and then compose new creeds which express the faith of the contemporary church and her calling in these days. What must be said about all this? Is it true? Could we just as well revise or discard entirely our Belgic Confession and write a new creed to take its place?

Perhaps it is best to begin our answer by defining the idea of the creeds. What are they? The late Herman Hoeksema in his *Reformed Symbols*, a syllabus used for the course which goes by that name in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, offered this definition: "A symbol is a statement by a church or group of churches containing a declaration of what such a church or group of churches believes to be the truth of the Word of God." There are three terms customarily employed to express the idea set forth in this definition. These terms are: symbol, confession, and creed. A symbol is a sign. The flag of the United States, for example, is the sign which distinguishes our land from all other countries. A symbol is a sign, therefore, which serves to distinguish a church or denomination from all other churches. The Belgic Confession, in other words, as a symbol distinguishes the Reformed Churches from all other churches. The word "confession" means "to speak with." This term conveys the idea that the church expresses its faith together with one another and with its head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, the Belgic Confession as a *confession* contains the truth which the Protestant Reformed Churches express in union with one another and with Jesus Christ. *Creed* is a term derived

from the Latin verb which means "to believe," and indicates that the content of a confession is the object of the *faith* of the church. Hence, what we as Protestant Reformed Churches believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths is set forth in the Belgic Confession.

In sum, therefore, what we have in the Three Forms of Unity and in the Belgic Confession in particular is the truth of the Holy Scriptures as that truth has been formulated in the mind of the church by the Spirit and Word of Jesus Christ. This truth, gleaned from the Word of God, set forth in systematic fashion in our creed, is the confession of our faith and serves to distinguish the Reformed churches from all other churches.

The Relation of the Confessions to Scripture

This naturally gives rise to the question of the relationship which obtains between the creeds of the church and the Scriptures. Inseparably bound up in this is, in turn, the question of the authority of the creeds. Writing on this point Hoeksema states: "Even as confessions are historically a reflection of the truth of the Word of God in the believing consciousness of the church, so their permanent criterion is Holy Scripture." (*Reformed Symbols*, p. 2). This means that our confessions must always be based upon the Word of God, may never be placed on an equal level with the Word of God, and certainly may never be superimposed upon the Word of God. Hoeksema says in this same connection, "... the latter (the Word of God, R.D.D.) must always be the light in which the confessions must constantly be judged. As soon as the church fails to do the latter, confessionalism, dead intellectualism, is the result." (*Reformed Symbols*, p. 2). The point simply is that the authority of our creeds is not absolute but always derivative. The contents of the creeds must be defended and preached, believed and confessed, obeyed and honored because that content is gleaned out of God's infallible Word, which is the absolute authority for the faith and life of the child of God in this world. Hence, in our expositions of the *Belgic Confession* we shall be at pains to demonstrate the solid Biblical

foundation upon which this eloquent statement of our faith stands.

Objections Against The Creeds

While objections have always been lodged against the creeds, they multiply today. It is "the in thing" to be against the creeds. The striking feature in all this is the fact that what we are hearing in criticism of the creeds in our time is nothing new. It's merely the same tired, old arguments put forth all through the years. How true it is, "There is no new thing under the sun; the thing that is, hath been." One of these objections argues that the creeds are merely human productions and totally unnecessary since the Bible is sufficient. The Church needs nothing more than the Bible. What Hoeksema had to say about this is much to the point: "... historically it is a peculiar fact that very serious objections are raised against creeds when also the contents of the Bible become more and more foreign to the mind of the church. Ignorance of Scripture and its doctrine and opposition to creeds are generally simultaneous. From this it would seem that objectors to creeds are not serious when they claim Scripture is sufficient." (*Reformed Symbols*, p. 3). How true today! There is woeful ignorance of even the simplest truths of Scripture. Many are not even familiar with Biblical terminology. And yet these same people have the audacity to criticize the creeds and clamor for new ones. But what must be said about this objection? That the Scriptures are sufficient we readily confess. That the truth of the sufficiency of Holy Writ may be used as an argument in opposition to the creeds we wholeheartedly reject. Why? Because this is fundamentally a denial of the continuous guidance of the Church by the Holy Spirit in the past. The fruit of this guidance of the Spirit of Christ is the creedal statements of the church expressing the truth of the Word over against the lie of sin. (cf. John 14:15-18, 26; John 15:26ff.; John 16:13, 14) It surely is a great sin to deny and ignore the fruit of the guidance of the Spirit of Truth. Besides, the church always has the calling to express her faith in the midst of the world. This cannot be done simply by saying, "The Bible is enough." The Bible simply is not a logical, systematic presentation of the truth; but it surely is the source out of which the church as guided by Christ's Spirit derives the truth and systematically sets it forth in her creeds.

Another objection is that creeds bind the conscience. This can never be, however, as long as the way remains open for the individual child of God to apply the standard of the Word of God to the confession of his church.

A very common criticism of the creeds today is that they create divisions. We must break down those walls of separation and become one. Such has been

the hue and cry of ecumenism the past several years. Today we have a World Council of Churches from which not even the Roman Catholics are excluded and which seeks to unite all the churches under the simplest, broadest possible statement of faith. Let it be said that creeds do not create divisions, but simply express the divisions which are already present. They must remain, lest our understanding of the truth be diminished and ultimately lost altogether.

Finally, another common objection today is that creeds impede the development of the truth. What nonsense! As long as Scripture remains the source and criterion for our creeds, how can it fail that these will be vital, living, relevant expressions of the truth? How can we fail to grow in the knowledge of the rich, pure, unfathomable truth of God's Word?

The Value of the Creeds

Positively, the creeds are of inestimable value to the church along a four-fold line.

First, they are the means by which the church as a whole can express its faith over against all the world, or by which a denomination of churches can express its faith over against all other churches. That certainly remains the calling of the Body of Jesus Christ in the world. The people of God as members of God's Church stand as the "light of the world." That light must shine everywhere. It was exactly in this consciousness that our creeds were born. They served to define for kings and governors and for all the world the truth of God's Word which lived in the heart and mind of the Church.

Thus, too, the creeds serve as a means to preserve the truth as it is delivered in the line of the generations of believers all through the ages. In this same connection, our creeds serve as the bond of union upon which basis churches of the same faith and mind can unite. And, finally, the creeds are wonderful means of instruction. The Heidelberg Catechism, for example, was composed exactly to meet this purpose.

Now, in this light, is not the time to be critical of the creeds. Now is the time to go back to them and study them in the light of the Word of God. They express the eternal truth of the Scriptures, the glory of which no man will ever fully comprehend! A faithful, prayerful study of the creeds in the light of the Word will lead the church into an ever deeper understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God as taught in the Word.

May God grant us grace always to "contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" in these latter days. (Jude, verses 3ff.) That faith is eloquently set forth in the Belgic or Netherlands Confession of Faith.

ALL AROUND US

A Settlement of the "Science-Scripture" Debate

Prof. H. Hanko

I received a paper from a freshman student in Calvin College which was distributed in a religion course and which was entitled, "The Historicity of Genesis 1-3". If there was needed any further proof that the authority of the Scriptures is being denied in Calvin, and if there is needed any additional proof that "Report 44" on the "Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority" adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church has opened the door to such denial, this paper will serve that purpose with emphasis.

It is rather startling how the paper openly flouts the truth of Scriptural authority. But the frightfully poor logic of the paper leaves one wondering if every rule of logic must be thrown to the winds to make room for the unbelieving views of higher critics.

The author of the paper is Dr. David Holwerda, Associate professor of religion and theology at Calvin. The paper is evidently intended to offer a solution to what the author calls "the last hurdle in the Scripture-Science debate" which "is found in the first chapters of Genesis." All the other "hurdles" in this debate have evidently been overcome; there remains just this one. The paper will now proceed to solve that problem, and the debate will have come to its conclusion.

But it seems as if the debate has been, for the most part, resolved in favor of science. Although there are various assertions by the author throughout the paper supporting this thesis, this point is made already in the first two paragraphs:

The present Scripture-Science debate should not force the Church to make judgments on the validity of scientific theories. Such is not her calling, and history has demonstrated that such is not within the scope of her competence. The Church must be concerned with the understanding of Scripture.

Although scientific development has caused the Church to reassess its understanding of the first chapters of Genesis, scientific theory can hardly dictate the interpretation of these chapters. Scripture must be interpreted in accordance with its nature. Appropriate principles of interpretation must be developed which do justice to the uniquely revelatory character of the Scriptures.

Although the author solemnly avers that "scientific theory can hardly dictate the interpretation" of the first chapters of Genesis, nevertheless the "Church" has no right "to make judgments on the validity of scientific theories." One wonders whether this also holds true of the theory of evolution. And, indeed, science has forced the "Church to reassess its understanding of the first chapters of Genesis."

But Scripture, the author says, must be interpreted according to its own nature. What is the nature of Scripture? Holwerda writes:

The question at issue can be stated rather simply. Genesis 1-11 appears to be a straightforward historical narrative from creation to the call of Abraham. But what type of historical narrative is it? The events recorded are few in number and episodic in character. The genealogies appear to be schematic arrangements demonstrating historical continuity, unity of the race, death in spite of longevity, and perhaps also the role of Israel among the nations. The events recorded antedate historical Israel by millennia and appear to be related positively or negatively in theme and symbol to stories of origins circulating in Israel's environment. . . .

This is a remarkable paragraph. In the first place, it rather deviously admits that the first eleven chapters of Genesis appear to be straightforward historical narrative. But in the very next sentence, this assertion is denied when the question is asked: "What type of historical narrative is it?" While this is indeed a favored ploy of many higher critics, the fact remains that a certain document is either historical narrative, or it is not. It is historical narrative when it relates history, i.e., facts which actually took place. When historical facts are not recorded, then the document ceases to be historical narrative. That is simple enough. But here we have historical narrative of a particular type; i.e., historical narrative which is not historical narrative.

In the second place, the author at this point is guilty of what in logic is called the fallacy of *petitio principii*. When one commits this logical fallacy, one assumes to be true the exact point that needs proving. One argues in a circle. One argues that a cow is a cow because a cow is a cow. Every statement the author

makes in answer to his question is precisely a statement which needs proving. Let him prove that the genealogies are schematic arrangements proving all sorts of strange things. Let him prove that the events recorded antedate historical Israel by millennia, etc. But simply assuming these things, he goes on to destroy the historicity of Genesis 1-11.

The question now is: "How do these considerations affect our understanding of the history contained in these chapters of Genesis?" This question is answered, first of all, by discussing another question: "We shall begin with the question concerning the sources of Genesis 1-11. In order to arrive at a satisfactory answer we must first ask ourselves the more general question, how were the historical books of the Bible written?"

Here again the author makes all kinds of assumptions which are totally unproved. He assumes first of all that the historical books were written in their entirety with the use of *sources*. And he does this because he wants to repudiate revelation. He writes: "Revelation is apparently not one of the sources, *if* by revelation is meant direct impartation by God." Where again is the proof? What right does the author have simply to assume these things?

However, in answer to his question of how the historical books came into existence, the author repudiates various theories. He repudiates completely the idea of oral tradition. He also rejects the notion that there was "some kind of dependence of the biblical authors upon existing stories and myths." After discussing this at length, the author adopts the theory of Prof. J. L. Koole from Kampen who describes the history in the Bible as "prophetic history". What does this mean? The following quotes will probably make it as clear as it is possible to be made:

... The biblical author(s) received a special divine revelation comparable to that received by prophets. This means revelation given in terms of existing thought-patterns and existing world-view. Concepts and symbols are borrowed from the world in which the prophet lives. ... The point is that the prophet addresses his world in terms having a direct relevance for the persons addressed. The prophet is communicating facts; but in his communication, what is symbol and what is event?

... Koole and K. Adam reject the interpretation which reduces Genesis 3 to a story describing the condition of Everyman (meaningful myth). They consider it essential to retain the traditional interpretation of Adam as the first man whose historical fall involved all humanity, but they suggest the possibility of a non-traditional interpretation of the details of the story. Is this a legitimate approach? When one appreciates the time-conditioned nature of revelation, how revelation is expressed in terms of

and in reaction to cultural forms experienced by historical Israel ... it strikes me that the approach of Koole cannot be apriorily rejected.

Prophetic history then is history which has a core of historical fact in it, but a great deal of this historical fact is narrated in such a way that it is, for purposes of interpretation, embellished with and communicated by means of a great deal of symbol and non-historical data which was necessary to get a message across to a people who lived in an entirely different culture from ours. Part of the narrative is history, part is not. Who is going to determine what is history and what is not is left, apparently to the individual. Or perhaps, Holwerda means to say that this question is left to the scientist who will tell us what is in keeping with his scientific discoveries and what is not.

But how does this all apply to Genesis 1-11?

What about the creation account itself, especially Genesis 1? ... Because of the unique character of the events described it has been suggested repeatedly that God is in some manner accommodating Himself to human understanding, and consequently Genesis 1 is not to be construed as a literal description of the acts of God.

Genesis 1 was revelation first of all to Israel. How would it have been understood in *that* world? It appears that Genesis 1 would have been read as an implicit critique of the mythological views of nature existing in the ancient world. ...

This is it then. Genesis 1 (and, presumably the other ten chapters) is only a critique of current conceptions. But how does he know? How does Holwerda know that this is the purpose of Genesis 1? Where is the proof? How did he come to this astonishing and remarkable insight? Apparently he knows better than the Holy Spirit the purpose for including these chapters in the Bible and the purpose for writing them in the way they are written.

But this is Holwerda's position.

All this (material in Genesis 1) is set down in terms of ancient cosmology. ...

The Synod of Assen (1926) suggested that to assume that Scripture contains ancient conceptions that can be dated, and are therefore "outdated," is to assail the authority of Scripture. But why should this be so? Is this approach not rather a legitimate understanding of the historical nature of revelation and of what we have called organic inspiration?

This last is rather interesting. The individual who gave me this paper informed me that the professor of this religion class had assured the class that there were really only two positions one could take on the matter of inspiration. One could take the position that inspiration was mechanical, i.e., that the writers of Scripture simply functioned as stenographers or

typewriters; or one could take the position that Scripture was organically inspired. But, he added, organic inspiration necessarily implies such a view of Scripture as presented in this paper. Apparently, this professor doesn't have the faintest notion of what organic inspiration is all about. Or, if he does know, he deliberately refuses to explain the matter to this class.

What then is the literary form of Genesis 1?

"The literary form of this piece is something of a puzzle . . ." The best identification is to call it a liturgical text, elaborately composed for public recitation on a feast day, which almost surely was the new year's feast. . . .

And so this was the Israelite equivalent of the Babylonian new year's festival.

If then this was its purpose in Israel and the way in which it was understood, and if Scripture is what we confess it to be, are we not misreading Genesis 1 by attempting to garner from it a kind of loose, yet scientific, description of the "how" of creation?

Finally, Holwerda asks: "Does this approach affect adversely the authority of Scripture?" In answer to this, Holwerda quotes Ridderbos:

"Scripture has authority primarily as the proclamation of the great works of God in Christ. The apostles, as the inspired heralds of the salvation received in Christ, did not receive divine omniscience for the fulfillment of their task; neither were they commissioned to uncover the secrets of nature, the structure of the cosmos, or the problems of science. Scripture does not correct every time-conditioned concept concerning the structure of the cosmos and what is found within it, just as it does not attempt to verify quotations from the Septuagint by comparing them with the Hebrew."

We cannot expect Scripture to answer all the questions we wish to ask, nor may we subject it to any standard of interpretation we desire. Scripture must be interpreted according to its own nature. As the proclamation of God's redemptive activity in history, Scripture sheds its light upon all areas of life only from this perspective.

We have not paid somewhat detailed attention to this paper because the author offers his students anything basically new. What this paper contains is the same, for the most part, as has been proposed in one form or another by higher critics over the last century or more. The contribution is not original with him, and the same things have been said somewhat better by many, many others.

We have spent some time on this matter in the first place because it is a demonstration of how far Calvin College has departed from the truth concerning the authority of the Scriptures in the actual teaching given in the classroom.

But secondly, what strikes one in all this is the fact that when one fails to come to Scripture in faith to receive by faith the Bible as the infallibly inspired and authoritative record of the Word of God, one gets himself tied up in all kinds of theories and assumptions and hypotheses which almost no one can understand, and which cannot, for a moment stand the test of logical analysis. If one comes in faith to the Scriptures, the Scriptures speak the very Word of God. Anyone who comes in faith can hear that Word of God whether he be a small child to whom are told the first Bible stories or whether he be a doctor of theology. If one refuses to come in faith, comes instead in unbelief (for this is what the above paper is all about) then there are dozens of theories concerning Scripture from which one can have his pick. There is no real reason to choose one over another. Whichever one you prefer will do nicely. But be sure that all of them make Scripture so difficult to understand that you had better yourself get a degree in theology before you dare to come to Scripture and say: "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth."

This is evil. If Holwerda is correct, we are back again in the days prior to the Reformation and back in the clutches of Rome, for we cannot understand the Scriptures ourselves; we need others to teach us. But, thank God, Holwerda is wrong.

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THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Spiritual Growth--The Content

Rev. J. Kortering

The subject of spiritual growth has been and is presently receiving much attention in the religious press. A great deal of this is being specifically directed toward youth. Campus Crusade is a well oiled machine that grinds out voluminous material for college youth. There are two main gears that control its movement. The one is to reach unconverted young people and bring them to salvation in Christ, the other is to bring the gospel to those who already profess to be Christian young people, but do not experience the full potential of their spiritual life. This kind of approach is representative of so much evangelical literature that is geared to deliver young people from the status of "Carnal Christian" to "the abundant Christian life".

There is something very dangerous about this. Its theology is rooted in the neo-pentecostal movement. The implication is that spiritual growth is impossible without a "spirit baptism". Mere regeneration is not enough. We need to receive more, a baptism of the spirit. This opens up the way to spiritual power, growth, and victory. Following this line of thought, young people are told that they may have been born in Christian homes, catechized by the church, had Christian instruction, yet not be Christian. In order to be sure one is a Christian he needs an "experience". We need an encounter with God. When this happens, the Spirit takes over our life and we can "feel the difference". Our whole life changes and we have a warm feeling inside and a glow of contentment. When you get this, you have what it takes to grow.

Closely connected with this is the foolish notion that such a person is able to reach spiritual perfection. You can detect this emphasis in evangelical novels, devotional materials, so called Christian movies. If you get the spirit, former appetites disappear, you are a different person, you are spirit filled. The impression is left that you reach such spiritual ecstasy that the whole world appears to be filled with love and good.

To deal with this error, we have to do two things: first, we have to ask what is spiritual growth and then consider how we grow spiritually. We will consider the former aspect in this article.

GROWTH IN UNDERSTANDING

I cannot imagine a Christian young person that is

not personally interested in his own spiritual growth. This interest is stimulated by a keen awareness that we have to face a clever and powerful enemy who would destroy our faith. If we truly love God, we are personally interested in growing up so that we can deal with these temptations lest we be destroyed.

To begin with, we suggest that spiritual growth means growing in understanding. From childhood on, you have been instructed in truths concerning God, yourself, the world in which you live, and the need for salvation in Jesus Christ. God has given to us the gift of intellect, the ability to learn, to retain ideas in our minds, to reason, to interpret the meaning of so many things. By nature this gift of the mind is completely under the power of sin. Apart from God's work of salvation, we "mind the things of the flesh," Rom. 8:5. We are "carnally minded," Rom. 8:6. When Christ works in our hearts by His Word and Spirit, this is changed. We are able to put on the new man which after God is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, Col. 3:10. Hence, Paul exhorts, "And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ," Philippians 1:9.

Spiritual growth involves understanding. The opposite is also true. Ignorance destroys. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee," Hosea 4:6. This lack of knowledge was not due to the fact that no one informed Israel. They were informed, but they didn't want what they heard. Their ignorance was rooted in outright rejection. What a warning for young people. You have every opportunity to grow in understanding. You have Christian parents in the home who guide you in understanding life. You sit under the pure preaching of the word and have this further explained in catechism. Some of you go to our own Protestant Reformed high school, others to Christian schools. What are you doing with all this knowledge? Are you understanding it? Do you see how the Bible gives direction for the whole of our life? Bible history is essential for understanding. Bible truths form the foundation for our Christian life today. With the Word of God as our key to interpretation, we can understand God's purpose with history, we can

recognize that the times in which we live serve for the development of sin and the salvation of the Church.

Ask yourself seriously, are you growing in understanding? You have more than facts — you can interpret these facts and understand the whys of life. This must be your goal with all the instruction you receive.

GROWTH IN CONVICTION

Closely connected with understanding is conviction. Understanding is foremost a matter of the mind as controlled by the heart. Conviction is a matter of the will as controlled by the heart.

To grow spiritually, we must reach a point at which we *believe* what we are taught. There is a difference between nodding your head when your teacher, minister, or parent tells you that this or that is right. Little children are the best at doing this, so much that Jesus used their implicit faith as a model for our Christian response, Matt. 18:3. You must come to believe that what they say is *right*, not just because they say it but because you believe it.

This conviction is expressed in two ways. First, it is a response of faith to the knowledge you have come to understand. Most of you young people know what truth is taught in our Reformed confessions. It is summarized in our catechism books. Spiritual growth takes you beyond a simple understanding. It leads you to a response. You become convinced that it is the only truth faithful to God's Word. Such conviction leads you to put great value upon it, for when we act out of conviction, we act responsibly. Then we will not leave the faith, but will continue to confess that which we are convinced is true. Secondly, conviction is expressed as assurance of our personal salvation. Salvation is not a matter of the mind. It involves the mind, but is not limited to it. Salvation is ultimately a matter of the heart. The heart influences our will so that we respond personally and say that we are included in the blood of Christ that taketh away the sin of the world, we are one of God's elect, we are also going to go to heaven, the hope of the redeemed. Such growth leads us to confess, "I will *delight* myself in thy commandments which I have loved," Ps. 119:47. Paul also expressed it this way, "I am *persuaded* that neither death nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. 8:38, 39.

GROWTH IN LOVE

Since salvation is rooted in our hearts, the basic spiritual growth is that of love. Our heart is the fountain of love. Isn't it significant that God's first work of salvation is in the heart? Regeneration is God's act of implanting a new seed in our hearts. So significant is this that Jesus said, "Except a man be

born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven," John 3:3. This rebirth is a demonstration of God's love to us. No one can be born of his own will, no more than it was possible with our natural birth. God freely in love gives us a new heart. As this influence of love grows in our hearts, our understanding becomes enlightened and our will becomes activated to do God's will. All of this is rooted in the heart.

Hence spiritual growth involves our response to God for His love. The apostle John suggests this response, "We love him, because He first loved us," I John 4:19. Paul in the Spirit expresses it so beautifully, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and the length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that ye might be filled with the fulness of God," Eph. 3:17-19.

This love of God in Christ is expressed personally in the desire to be right with God. We know that God is a holy God and He has established His will for us in His Word, especially in the commandments. We know that our place in the covenant is a free gift of God to us through Jesus Christ. In our response of love to God, we must desire God's friendship. We thrill to hear Him speak to us through His Word. We desire to please God and do His will. We desire to see His smile of approval upon us. We desire to have the assurance that He is blessing us. All this is rooted in our love of God.

Look at your life as a young person. Are you growing in your love of God? Does the fact that God has included you in His eternal covenant cause you to respond in love to God? Is God precious to you? Does your prayer life show that you love God? (You know it is easiest to speak to a real friend.) Do you do this while at the same time you reverence God's holy name?

GROWTH IN OBEDIENCE

This is the final aspect of spiritual growth. It follows the preceding three. As we intimated, growth in love is not some sentimental feeling for God, but is a *spiritual* response of joy in His covenant friendship. That love can best be tested by our conduct. This is true in our experience with one another. How do you show your parents that you love them? Yes, by telling them so, but more significantly, by obeying them.

Growth in love means two things.

First, we believe what God says in His Word and hold that for truth. Imagine the contempt, when man presumes that God is not able to reveal His will to us without making mistakes, without having proud man to decipher the message. This is the boldest effrontery

of man upon God's love. How can anyone truly say that he loves God, and turn right around and distort or deny His Word? He can't. So young people, spiritual growth means that we always reverence God's Holy Word. Love requires this of us. We recognize God's greatness, His ability to reveal His truth to us, the value of God's Word for us. Spiritual growth requires of us diligence in reading and studying God's Word and receiving it as the Word of God.

Secondly, we must do more than read the Bible. We must obey what God commands. Love requires this of us. "We walk by faith not by sight," II Cor. 5:7. To walk by sight means we ignore the Bible and do things our own way. To walk by faith means we

guide our lives according to the will of God given to us in the Bible.

It is this last idea that produces the best objective proof of our spiritual growth. Are you able to turn away from the devil, to resist temptation, to *delight* in doing the will of God and find peace in His way? As we grow spiritually, this should be true of each of us. The more we are on the way of spiritual growth, the easier this will become. Not one of us is able to do this perfectly. We all must strive daily; yet the outcome of such striving differs from one child of God to another.

That difference is the degree of spiritual growth.

How much are you growing?

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

[Note: This article should have appeared in the October 15 issue. The article which did appear in the October 15 issue under the same title should have *followed* this article and should have carried the title, "Faltering Faith And Guiding Grace." The mix-up is neither the fault of the author nor the fault of the editor, but of our typesetter, who apologizes for the error. HCH]

Sovereign Separation

Rev. John A. Heys

He lived to the southeast of the site of the unfinished tower of Babel, and he had no intention of moving away. But when the word of the Lord came to Abram, he left Ur of the Chaldees to go, as Hebrews 11:8 states, "to a land which he knew not." It was one he had never seen, and from which he had received no reports. And on his journey to that land he passed close by that tower of Babel in its unfinished state. What is more, God called him to leave the area where the descendants of Shem, whose God Jehovah would be, had settled after the confusion of speech, and led him to where the children of cursed Canaan had firmly settled and filled the land.

The mistaken notion that has gained ground is that God did all this to preserve the true religion. A wrong answer so often sticks where the truth is easily forgotten. We remember back in the days of our catechetical instruction as a youth that our book asked the question, "Why did God call Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees?" And the answer we committed to memory, and that still sticks there today was, "To preserve the true religion."

This is incorrect, and behind it is the notion that has not one word of proof in Scripture, namely, that Abraham's life was in danger because he believed in

God, and that the large majority of those around him were his enemies who were ready to stamp out the true religion by killing him. And although it is true that God did take Noah and his family out of such a situation and saved them *by* water, yet He kept Noah there for one hundred twenty years and protected him from the hands of the enemy that despised him for his preaching of righteousness. He could have done the same thing for Abram in Ur of the Chaldees, and in fact did do that now in Canaan.

Canaan was full of unbelievers, and so vile were two of the cities that God destroyed them with fire and brimstone. God did not bring him to a land that gladly gave him freedom of religion, but in the midst of an enemy that wanted to kill him, and that God kept from doing as it desired. It was neither virgin soil where no man had tilled before, and where no one had staked out a claim, or where few had done so; nor was it virgin in its dedication to the living God. Idolatry abounded. So evil was the country that Abraham had to send for a wife for his son, Isaac, outside of its citizenship. And we had better be careful not to read into the Scriptures what God has not written there. Abram was not called out to preserve the true religion. His separation from the other descendants of Shem was sovereign, but it was

not to preserve the true religion from the danger of being exterminated.

Besides, there is that constant principle in Scripture that the calling of the child of God is not world flight but world fight. We are always called to live the antithesis, to walk as children of light in the midst of the children of darkness, to be witnesses of God among the ungodly. And to do that God called Abram, neither to flee from some persecutors, nor to have it easy to serve God among men of like mind.

We do well to note what God says Himself and what reason He gives for this call. In Genesis 12:1-3 we read, "Now the Lord had said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed." And although it may be admitted that Abram's father served idols, as we read in Joshua 24:2, yet this is not mentioned here at all as the reason for calling Abram from the house of his father. In fact his father went with him a good deal of the way. And the correct answer to the question as to why God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees is: to establish the covenant with him and his seed after him. Note that last statement from the mouth of God, "And in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Subsequent history, as it is recorded in the Scriptures, also shows without a shadow of a doubt that God's purpose in calling Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and in sending him all that way into the very heart of the descendants of cursed Canaan, was to establish with him the covenant which He first made known to Adam after his fall. Up until the day that God sent the New Testament Church to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, it is the line of Abram that is traced and that is always on the foreground in Scripture. And what we see thus far — or should see at least — in the first twelve chapters of Genesis is a sovereign and very distinct narrowing down of the line of the covenant.

God in His mercy came to His covenant breaker, Adam, and in his hearing told Satan that He would take out of the fallen human race a seed in whose hearts He would again place the love of God and hatred against Satan and his whole kingdom, a people to whom He would give the victory, and set aside for His own. It appeared at first as though this seed would continue in Abel's children, but he was brutally murdered by his brother before he could bring forth any children. God gave Adam and Eve another Son, Seth, in whom the line continued until the day that Noah and his family were separated from

all the human race by the waters of the flood and Noah was told that in him and his children the covenant was established. It would run in the line of his children. Here God's church would be found. Then came a sharper drawing of the line to point out the descendants of Shem as those whose children would be called the children of God. And now God narrows that lineage of Shem down to Abram and his seed. God called Abram to set him and his children aside as the generation wherein the believers of the Old Testament dispensation would be found. For that reason God called him away from all the rest of Shem's descendants. And though there were still for a time believers of Shem's descendants living there in Ur of the Chaldees not only, but also in other sections of the area where Shem's and even Japheth's descendants dwelt, and also in fact in Ham's — for we must not forget the Ethiopian eunuch — God chose and called Abram to be the father of the seed that would bring forth the Christ. And therefore it is that God declares here that in him all families of the earth shall be blessed. They shall be blessed in Christ, Who comes out of the loins of Abraham and not from any other descendant of Shem and of Noah.

This raises an interesting question. Why Abram? Why a man whose wife is already sixty-five years of age and proven to be barren? Why this man among all the other descendants of Shem? Was he stronger in faith? Did God find a man more suitable, more worthy than all the rest living in that day? Why must the rest of the line of Shem be eliminated and one man and his wife be removed to such a wicked region to fulfill in them all the covenant promises of a seed of the woman that would crush the head of the serpent and his seed, and would work in the hearts of a multitude that no one can number enmity against Satan and his whole kingdom?

Certainly we can rule out any worthiness on Abram's part. And it is quite obvious that God did not choose Sarai because she promised to be so very fertile that a seed and a church is sure there in that land of Canaan. Abram was no more worthy than Sarai was fertile. Sarai could not conceive a child, and Abram could not originate a spiritually righteous activity. What faith Abram had, and is recorded in Hebrews 11:8, came from this same God that called him. In fact before God called him to leave Ur of the Chaldees, God called him to faith. God called faith into him, instilled in him the spiritual power whereby he would believe and would obey. It is not Abram's worthiness that singled him out. It was God's sovereign grace. And that sovereign grace also gave him this barren wife, Yes, that was God's gift to Abram. From eternity He had chosen just this wife for Abram; and He called him with that kind of wife knowing full well her hopeless barrenness. He made her that way and wanted her to be that way. And He

wanted this particular Shemite with that kind of wife to be the root out of which *He* would bring forth an innumerable host, and the Christ Who brings blessings to every family of the earth.

It was sovereign grace that planned and executed all this. In God's grace Abram became the father of all believers. He did not become the father of all believers and therefore become the object of God's grace. It all began with God, eternally and sovereignly. At no point of our salvation does any part begin with us. That salvation, in every part, reaches back into eternity.

We must not, as is often done, stress how much Abram gave up in heeding this call. Faith looks always at what he got! Read again that "Faith Chapter" of Hebrews 11. Read verses thirteen through sixteen, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

Did you note that the stress is not on what they left behind, and upon what they did without? It is all

upon what they looked for and on which their faith was firmly attached. They sought a country and did not look back at the one they left at God's command.

What a lesson here for us when this world's goods will be taken away from us, and the forces of darkness will crowd more and more into our spheres of life pretty soon to deny us the right to buy and to sell, to eat and to live, to follow our livelihood and to retain our few earthly possessions. Look not back at what you gave up for the cause of Christ, but in faith look forward to the city which hath foundations, the heavenly country, the land to which God calls all His people, and where He blesses us in Christ, The Seed of Abraham.

And then thank God for calling you in His sovereign grace, you, who by nature are not better than those who belong to the kingdom of the prince of this earth. It is grace that separates us from the world. It is grace that makes us pilgrims and strangers amid a larger host that has nothing but this earth, and has it for such a short time. Thousands upon thousands will stay behind when Christ comes to gather His own into His kingdom with its glory. Thank God for sovereign grace that included you in the number of those whom He calls to enter this country you have never seen, but is your inheritance through His Son Who gave up all, His very life, that we might have the right to this better life and better country.

FROM HOLY WRIT

EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS 11:35-38

Rev. G. Lubbers

We now must consider the power of faith as this comes to manifestation in the great suffering of the people of God in this world. It is difficult to give adequate interpretation of such suffering of the saints. Here we see the "patience of the saints." There will be such a display in the final and great tribulation; however, such is also the daily and constant experience of the saints. For the sake of God and Christ they are killed all the day long. Principally they suffer and are hated without a cause. Only because the saints loved the Lord their God above all else were they destitute, afflicted, tormented!

We do well to take a closer look and take the shoes from off our feet. For the Lord's way leads through the holy place both in grace and in judgment of the wicked.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD SUFFERING GREAT THINGS BY FAITH (Hebrews 11:35-38)

It is said of the suffering saints "of whom the world was not worthy." What is this world which is not worthy of these suffering saints in the Old Testament Dispensation as well as in the New Testament Dispensation? Our Lord Jesus characterizes this "world" as something very hostile to the saints. Says he "in the world ye shall have tribulation." In this world the place of God's people is made very narrow and small. They have very little room to live. They are pilgrims and strangers and would only like to pass through; however, they receive hardly enough room to live and to have their being, because of their relationship to Christ, who died for them and rose again.

This "world" of which Hebrews 11:38 speaks is the entire creation of God from the viewpoint of its being under the dominion of the prince of this world, the Devil. He is the murderer of man from the beginning, and he is the great instigator against the people of God. And he rules in the hearts of both demons and wicked men. His world was destroyed by God in the days of Noah in the flood. God did not spare the ungodly but caused them all to perish. (II Peter 2:5) This is the world which passes away (I John 2:17) and we are not to love this world neither the things which are in the same. The friendship of this world is accounted to be enmity with God (James 4:4). This is the world, whether this be within the church or outside of the church, which is not worthy of the very saints which they cause to suffer unto death.

This is also the world which Christ has conquered. Satan and his angels are cast out. At the cross Christ made an open shame of them. They can never more be the accusers of the brethren. (Rev. 12:10) The legal ground for such accusation is taken away from them. Who shall bring any charge against the elect of God? God it is who justifies. Who shall condemn? Christ it is that is risen, Who is even at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Rom. 8:33-39).

Christ has so completely conquered the world, both for the saints of the Old and the New Testament, that they are more than conquerors through him. Writes Paul, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:37-39)

This truth we see exemplified in the lives of the suffering saints of which Hebrews 11:35-38 speaks.

We are given to see the great power of faith in the suffering saints, but we also see that it is not unusual and strange that God's people suffer in the world. According to Hebrews 11:35-38 such suffering is not the exception, but it is the general rule for the life of the church in the world. The seed of the woman constantly is persecuted and killed by the seed of the serpent. Such is the rule from Abel, who was killed by Cain because his works were righteous, till Zacharias the son of Berachias who was slain between the altar and the temple. (Matt. 23:34, 35) And it is for that very reason that the Hebrew saints in Christ Jesus must stand unmoveable, walk in faith and not fall back through unbelief into perdition. For thus

walking in faith we are of the people of God of whom the world is not worthy, the very apple of God's eye; nothing can pluck us out of the hand of the God when we walk in faith. Yea, in this faith we conquer the world!

THE EXAMPLE OF BELIEVING WOMEN WHO RECEIVED THEIR CHILDREN FROM THE DEAD. (Hebrews 11:35)

The first woman which comes to mind as fitting this description is the woman in Zarephath in the land of Zidon. Elijah, the Tishbite, had been sent to her as a prophet who was rejected in his own country. She had a son who became ill unto death while Elijah was staying there in flight from Ahab and Jezebel. And this son died. And this believing woman received her son again from death by faith. She had great faith in giving Elijah to eat when there was not enough left for herself and for her son. She had faith that Elijah's God would constantly replenish her store. And she had faith when Elijah raised her son, and exclaimed "Now I know thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." (I Kings 17:1-14) This woman is remembered by the Lord Jesus in his sermon in the synagogue in Nazareth. The people did not believe in Him. He rebukes their unbelief by calling attention to this woman as being received of the Lord, although she was a heathen woman, a Zidonian.

The second woman who was evidently in the mind of the writer to the Hebrews is the Shunamite woman, who is called a "great woman." (II Kings 4:8) This woman prepared a room and table and bed for the prophet Elisha so that he might have a place to rest while he passed through in his labors. She was a friend, too, of the prophet of the Lord as was the woman of Zarephath. Only she was not a heathen woman, but one who was content "to dwell amongst" her people. She had no child, but upon the prophets announcement she received a child in faith. Howbeit the Lord caused the child to die due to exposure to the sun. However, this woman walked in faith and pressed on to see Elisha at Carmel and upon the return of the prophet she received her child from the dead in faith! This was a faith which believed in the power of Christ to raise the dead to life. And in this type of Christ's work the believers of the Hebrews must press on.

THE CRUEL TREATMENT OF "OTHERS". (Hebrews 11:36-38)

Faith stands up not only in the mighty deeds of the saints by which they slay kingdoms and nations, but also in the patient suffering in hope of the glory of God. (Rom. 5:1-4) That is what we see here in this catalogue of suffering saints taken from the pages of Israel's history.

1. They were "tortured." The Greek term for tortured is one which means: a breaking on the wheel. To give much hurt and pain with studied cruelty. Death and suffering were made as long and hard and as difficult as possible. "It describes a punishment like breaking on the wheel. The extremities of the sufferer were fastened to a frame, and his limbs then broken by heavy clubs, beaten to death." (Westcott) But their faith shown brightly in such sufferings. They refused to accept the proffered deliverance from such sufferings by denouncing their faith or by connivance. An instance of this we have in II Maccabees 6:18-31 where we read of the venerable Eleazar, who was compelled by Antiochus Epiphanes to eat swine's flesh. He refused to open his mouth and eat. When the man who had charge of this forbidden sacrificial feast took him aside and told him to eat meat "such as was befitting to him" he refused to pretend that he was eating swine's flesh. Rather he chose to die "by manfully parting from my life" to "leave behind an noble ensample to the young to die willingly and nobly to the glorious death for the reverend and holy laws." This was at the time of the "abomination of iniquity in the holy place" of which Daniel spoke. Eleazar lived and died under the types and shadows in the Old Testament. He clung in faith to the Christ in these shadows. Even though he might not fully understand, he yet died in faith and looked for a better resurrection. And the Hebrew Christians, who read the Septuagint and also these books of the Maccabees, understood this reference. If there is a glorification here of a "hero" the fact is that he died as one who lived by faith. That is the tacit assumption in Hebrews 11.

Another instance we have in the mother who had seven sons who died at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and his desecration of the temple. This mother saw her sons slain and tortured before her very eyes. These sons, too, were offered the

opportunity not to die if only they would eat the flesh. They had their tongues cut out, they were shorn of the hair on their head, yet they died rather than deny the faith; and they looked for a better resurrection. This mother is reported to have spoken to her son saying, "My son have pity on me that carried thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee such three years, and nourished and brought thee up unto this age, and sustained thee. . . . Fear not this butcher, but, proving thyself worthy of thy brethren, accept thy death, that in the mercy of God I may receive thee again with thy brethren." II Maccabees 7:1-29

In a later period in the history of the church we think of a Blandina who in the great spectacle in the arena under the persecution of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 A.D.) was the last to die. By the most horrible tortures they tried to make the Christians deny their faith. In Lyons and Vienne of Gaul (France) the spectacle took place. From far and near the unbelievers flocked to see this spectacle of the killing of the Christians. History tells us that these all met their death with great joy. Blandina, we are told, was the last to die. "She had been a spectator of the death of many others, and she had constantly encouraged and exhorted them to remain steadfast to the end. With joy and thanksgiving she entered the arena. A net was thrown over her. Then she was exposed to the fury of the bull. Several times the bull took her upon his horns and threw her into the air. At last she was dead." (*The Church in History*, Kuiper)

Such is the power of faith to endure suffering in the hope of a better resurrection!

This truth must sink deep into the hearts of the Hebrew Christians. Nothing happens to them as saints in the New Testament which had not already befallen the saints as they lived under the shadows and types of the Old Testament dispensation.

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is in need of \$33,500.00 to finance the construction of our parsonage, and will offer the following notes:

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QUESTION BOX

About Isaiah 5

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

From a west coast reader I received the following question: "Did God come with a promise and grace to Israel when He spoke to them through His prophet Isaiah in Chapter 5 of the Prophecy of Isaiah?"

Reply

My questioner does not shed any further light on the meaning of his question and the reason for his question. Hence, it is a bit difficult for me to understand precisely what he has in mind. The question itself is, of course, very plain. It is, in fact, so plain that when you refer to the chapter mentioned, Isaiah 5, the question seems to be almost preposterous. I cannot quote the whole chapter here, of course. But if the reader will look up Isaiah 5, he will discover that there is in the entire chapter not a single note of promise and grace. The entire chapter is a chapter which speaks of severe judgment and vengeance upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah — the church of the old dispensation. There are many such passages in Scripture, especially in the prophetic books of the Old Testament. And such passages which seem to be completely negative, which speak only of judgment, present a problem. For after all, these pronouncements of judgment are addressed to the church of the old dispensation. And then the question arises how this is possible. For is not the church the object of God's love? And is not the promise of salvation for the church? And are not all the blessings of grace for that church?

In order to understand this, we must hold fast to the organic idea of the church and of God's covenant. Writing in connection with this very passage, especially the first seven verses, the Rev. H. Hoeksema says the following in *Believers And Their Seed*, pp. 118-120:

"If you do not hold fast to the organic presentation which you find throughout Scripture, you have here in this one passage a firm basis for all the errors of Arminianism. You have here then, first of all, a clear proof for the assertion that grace is resistible and that it is in last instance dependent upon the free will of those to whom it is offered. God says here that He has done all that He could do to His vineyard. There is nothing more to be done. But His grace is simply rejected by the free will of men. You

have here then the presentation that God is disappointed in His own work. He expected good fruits; wild grapes are brought forth. You have here the presentation that God's people fall away, and that God Himself is changeable. For the same people which He once loved, He will reject and destroy. In a word, you have here then all the dreadful errors of Arminianism together. And do not say now that here we have the one line and that the other line is that of eternal election and irresistible grace. For those two lines are simply mutually exclusive. To wish to maintain both is impossible. That is the juggling which the Christian Reformed Churches attempt.

"But if you hold fast to the organic idea, then all the difficulties disappear. Then you have here the one people which is nevertheless two-fold; one vineyard which nevertheless brings forth a two-fold fruit. From the viewpoint of its good kernel, that vineyard is the object of God's favor. For the sake of that good kernel the Lord cultivates that vineyard. He does all that there is to be done to a vineyard. Thus the Lord did with Israel. Thus He also expected good fruits. Nor was He disappointed in that expectation by that good kernel. But at the same time there grew in that vineyard a great many bad branches, which grew so luxuriantly that it sometimes appeared as though there was nothing good in the entire vineyard. Thus it was in the time of Isaiah. From that viewpoint now — not from the viewpoint of that good and elect kernel — but from the viewpoint of that reprobate element, the vineyard is here addressed. Also that evil element in Israel, along with the good kernel, was cultivated. In the outward sense of the word they had together received the same labor. They had the same sign of the covenant; they were in the same manner delivered from Egypt; they had the same giving of the law, the same fathers, the same covenants. They had the same temple, the same altars, the same offerings. They dwelt in the same land, and they enjoyed the same benefits of the land. The same prophets were sent unto them, and the same word was directed to them. And all these things caused the same outcome to be expected: the bringing forth of good fruits of righteousness. But that reprobate element in Israel brought forth the wild grapes of unrighteousness. Therefore the Lord shall presently destroy and curse

His vineyard, considered now from this viewpoint. But when all this has happened, has God then cast away His people? Indeed, you know better. God never casts away His people. The vineyard may be pruned and sometimes apparently wholly destroyed; the remnant according to the election of grace is always preserved. And the Lord receives the expected fruit from His own work."

It is only, I believe, if you bear in mind this organic idea, that you can understand a chapter such as this,

which contains no single element of promise, but is filled with pronouncements of judgment from beginning to end. You must bear in mind, however, that it is precisely through these judgments and through the execution of these judgments that the Lord nevertheless saves His people. For "Zion shall be redeemed through judgment." Once again, I hope I have shed some light on this subject for my questioner. If I missed the point of his question, he is welcome to write again.

From Our Business Manager

Esteemed Editor:

I wonder if you could find a little space in our STANDARD BEARER for a few lines from your Business Manager. If so, will you please print the following?

At our recent annual R.F.P.A. meeting you spoke to your audience regarding historical events concerning our organization. Your speech was most interesting! Hopefully it will be printed in a forthcoming issue of THE STANDARD BEARER.

One interesting fact you presented was that only *one* of the charter members of the R.F.P.A. is still living who is with our churches. That is indeed remarkable, and according to our files, Mr. John Rust, residing in Kalamazoo, Mich., is to this day a subscriber, a member of the R.F.P.A. and a faithful contributor to our magazine.

However, it occurred to me while listening to your speech that evening, that *many* of our Protestant Reformed people have been reading THE STANDARD BEARER these many years. But — do you know that of all the homes to which our magazine has been mailed these past 50 years, only ONE has been sent to the *same address*?

I wrote Mr. Rust, asking him if he had changed his residence during the past 50 years. Mr. Rust wrote back to me the following: "Dear brother Vander Wal, Thank you for your letter. I was born in the Netherlands and come to the United States in 1907 at the age of 17 years. I am 84 years old and two weeks ago I spent a week in the hospital for the first time as a patient for test and examination. Yesterday I was able to attend church services again. I attended the first meeting of the R.F.P.A. in the basement of the First Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo. I have been a subscriber and reader of THE STANDARD BEARER for fifty years. For your records we lived at 628 W. Paterson Street from 1922 to 1951. In 1951 we moved to Jenks Blvd. Sincerely, John Rust."

So, Mr. Editor, you now have another interesting fact you can add to the history of our STANDARD

BEARER! That fact is this: the only address to which (at least to the best of my available information) our STANDARD BEARER has been sent the past 50 years is 843 Logan St., S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

843 Logan St. is only a stone's throw from the Eastern Ave. Chr. Ref. Church. Fifty years ago this home was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Dirk Karsies and family. Mr. Karsies was known by many of the "Hollanders" here in Grand Rapids by the nickname of "Bakker Karsies". He was a baker by trade — hence the term "Bakker". He was well known for his excellent Hollandse *roggebrood* (Dutch rye-bread) and also for his *krentenbrood* (raisin-bread). No doubt, Mr. Editor, your father and mother, and perhaps you also, enjoyed his delicious varieties of baked goods.

At the present time THE STANDARD BEARER is still mailed to 843 Logan St. Miss Jennie Karsies still resides at the home in which she was born — more than 50 years ago.

After I phoned Miss Karsies, she remarked: "Dear Mr. Vander Wal: From our recent interview I learned this old family home has made 'Historical Heritage'. I am one of the three remaining of eleven children. So with father and mother making 13, there has been 'plenty of living' here. But best of all, we have the memory of Godly parents. Training us in the ways of God's covenant is a 'spiritual legacy' to us. My father was 'voorlezer and voorzinger' and also in the consistory of the Eastern Ave. Chr. Ref. Church before we became the Protestant Ref. Church. Now that they have joined the Church Triumphant and we stand in their shoes, the question is what are we leaving to this generation as a legacy? How long THE STANDARD BEARER will still be sent to 843 Logan St. — well?"

We thank our faithful Covenant God for faithful subscribers such as Miss Karsies and Mr. Rust.

Respectfully submitted,
H. Vander Wal

Report of Classis East

October 2, 1974
Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church

Classis East met in regular session on October 2, 1974 at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Each church was represented by two delegates. Present also to witness and approve the primary business of this session, the examination of Candidate and Pastor-elect of Prospect Park, A. Den Hartog, were the synodical delegates *ad examina* from Classis West: Rev. D. Engelsma, Rev. J. Kortering, and Rev. G. Lanting. Rev. M. Joostens was called for the first time in his ministerial career to chair this session.

The session was begun with the preliminary matters of the reading of the minutes of the previous session, the signing of the Formula of Subscription by the first-time attendees, the report of the Stated Clerk, the report of the Classical Committee, and the appointment of committees. Part of the report of the Classical Committee was a schedule to be followed for

the examination of Mr. den Hartog. The Pastor-elect of Prospect Park began his examination with the preaching of a sermon based upon Philippians 2:12b-13 under the theme, "An Exhortation to Work Out Our Own Salvation." This was followed by his being examined in the six dogmatical loci, knowledge of the confessions, knowledge of the Scriptures, controversy, and practical matters. In all this, Candidate den Hartog gave good account of himself. Classis and the delegates *ad examina* from Classis West unanimously approved the examination and advised Prospect Park to proceed with Pastor-elect den Hartog's ordination and installation. After the reading and signing of the Formula of Subscription, pastor-elect den Hartog was presented with his classical diploma. Classis rose to sing the doxology "May the grace of Christ our Savior" and a prayer of thanksgiving was raised by Elder T. Engelsma.

(continued on back page)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The following societies of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church wish to extend their sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Brunnick in the passing of their infant child:

Ladies Aid
Adult Bible Class
Sunday School

It is our prayer that their confession may be the same as Job's, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to two of its members, Mrs. Ben Bleyenbergh and Mrs. Tom De Jong, in the recent death of their sister and mother-in-law MRS. GERBEN DE JONG.

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

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.
Mrs. Nellie Brummel, Sec'y.

NOTICE

The address of the Stated Clerk of the Protestant Reformed Churches from now until the next Synod, is as follows:

Rev. D. H. Kuiper
346 Water Street
Skowhegan, Maine 04976
Phone 207-474-9116

Church Order books, Acts of Synod and various forms may be obtained by writing to the above address.

Know the standard
and follow it.
Read the
STANDARD BEARER!

Two other items of business that were not routine were also considered by the classis. First, was the request by First Church for the approval of the temporary emeritation of Rev. G. Lubbers. Classis did so, but one could not help but note that in Rev. Lubbers' letter to First Church he expressed a desire to continue to work if God so calls him. Second was the matter of the request from our sister church in Forbes, North Dakota for permission to contact the churches in Classis East for financial help to reduce their indebtedness. Classis readily granted approval.

Kalamazoo requested classical appointments for the next three months. Classis approved this request and adopted the following schedule: October 13 - H. Veldman; October 20 - M. Schipper; October 27 - R. Van Overloop; November 3 - M. Joostens; November 10 - J. A. Heys; November 17 - G. Van Baren; November 24 - C. Hanko; December 1 - H. Veldman; December 8 - M. Schipper; December 15 - R. Van Overloop; December 22 - M. Joostens; December 29 - J. A. Heys; January 5 - A. den Hartog; January 12 - G. Van Baren.

The Finance Committee, constituted of Elders T. Engelsma and D. Dykstra, reported, and classis approved, expenses of \$690.42.

The church visitors had no final report. Prospect Park must still be visited. The question was raised again whether Prospect Park's visitation could be carried out at the time of classis to save traveling expenses. Classis, however, as in the July meeting, rejected this idea. The feeling of the classis was that by traveling to Prospect Park, the church visitors could visit with the entire congregation and thus could encourage and strengthen them all.

After the questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and satisfactorily answered, Rev. C. Hanko offered the closing prayer. Classis East stands adjourned until January 8, 1975 which meeting will be held in First Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Huiskens
Stated Clerk
Classis East

THE STANDARD BEARER

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