

The STANDARD BEARER

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Let it be considered, then, as an undeniable truth, that they who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit, feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, and that it is self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence, and ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason; but it obtains the credit which it deserves with us by the testimony of the Spirit. For though it conciliate our reverence by its internal majesty, it never seriously affects us till it is confirmed by the Spirit in our hearts. Therefore, being illuminated by him, we now believe the divine original of the Scripture, not from our own judgment or that of others, but we esteem the certainty, that we have received it from God's own mouth by the ministry of men, to be superior to that of any human judgment, and equal to that of an intuitive perception of God himself in it. We seek not arguments or probabilities to support our judgment, but submit our judgments and understandings as to a thing concerning which it is impossible for us to judge; and that not like some persons, who are in the habit of hastily embracing what they do not understand, which displeases them as soon as they examine it, but because we feel the firmest conviction that we hold an invincible truth; nor like those unhappy men who surrender their minds captives to superstitions, but because we perceive in it the undoubted energies of the Divine power, by which we are attracted and inflamed to an understanding and voluntary obedience, but with a vigour and efficacy superior to the power of any human will or knowledge.

—John Calvin, *Institutes*, I, VII, 5.

MEDITATION

Wars And Rumors Of War

Rev. C. Hanko

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

Matthew 24:6, 7a

Wars and rumors of wars. . . .

From the dawn of history man has been at war. Adam and Eve declared war against God by allying themselves with Satan, bringing death upon themselves and us. Immediately their own intimate relationship of friendship as husband and wife was sorely disrupted. Eve did not love Adam any more after she had fallen and he still stood in the state of righteousness. She lured him into joining her in her rebellion against God, so that they became companions in sin, hiding from God. Eve felt a twinge of agony in her soul when Adam sought to excuse himself for his sin by pointing to the woman God had given him. The breach of sin had already cut deeply into their lives, a breach that only grace can heal.

This breach became more violent as time progressed. Cain rose against Abel and killed his brother, because his brother was righteous and he was evil. The seed of the serpent in the generations of Cain made war against the church, the descendants of Seth. After the flood this strife became even more evident. When the descendants of Noah united themselves in alliance against God, God looked down from heaven upon their foolishness, confused their language and scattered them over the earth. As they spread, they grew into tribes and nations which were soon making war with one another, each trying to gain supremacy over the other. The history of the old dispensation cannot be read without shuddering at the cruelty of the sword, which cut up mothers with child, mutilated prisoners, and wiped out whole generations. We read of horses running around without hoofs, of kings under the victor's table, trying to snatch food that was thrown to them, even while their thumbs had been cut off. Israel, representing God's covenant people, was always in the center of the conflict. First they were victims of Egypt's oppression, then threatened by Syria's pride, then sorely wounded by Assyria's onslaughts, led into captivity by haughty Nebuchadnezzar. Yet Babylon's insatiable greed for power was soon imitated by the

Medo-Persian lion with eagle's wings, then by the Macedonian empire as a bear with three bones in its mouth, followed by the Roman Empire, the leopard with fowl's wings, as described in Daniel 7.

All of these conflicts were only the preliminary skirmishings of the wars and rumors of wars in the new dispensation, which Jesus speaks of as signs of the times. These wars were still limited to a small area of the globe. As the nations spread farther and farther, covering all the ends of the earth, the wars also take on a far broader scope. The red horse of Revelation 6 follows wherever the gospel is preached; and soon bloody conflicts arise, as one nation tries to gain supremacy over others, as one king sets his throne upon the ashes and ruins of his predecessor. More and still more tribes, nations, and kingdoms are involved. Larger and more destructive instruments of war are invented as history rushes toward its end. More recent times bring up such names as Napoleon, Stalin, Hitler, and their imitators. Our present generation has known two world wars, a Korean war, a war in Viet Nam, constant turmoil in the Mid-East, disturbances in South America, in Asia, and even in the tribes of Africa.

Wars and rumors of wars, and the end is not yet.

War is a horrible thing.

Although many of us have never had to pass through the anxiety of real warfare, we do know something about it. We have read about it, and heard of the horrible experiences of those who were involved in World War II with the invasions of Hitler. Our young men have been called into service, have seen actual conflict, have lost their friends, have suffered wounds; some have not returned. Many families have felt the care of anxious waiting, the bitter loss of a dear one.

War is horrible. Heated passions, bitter wrath, lust for gain, envy and hatred lift their foul heads. Sirens scream; men, women, and children, stricken with

fear, flee to the nearest bomb shelter to sit huddled together, dreading the outcome. War planes thunder over head, bombs scream and burst into fire, houses and factories, dams and bridges, whole cities crumble under their devastating blast. Cattle, and crops are destroyed, fields are ruined for years to come. Dead bodies lie unburied on the streets, others are maimed, crippled, to become basket cases the rest of their lives. Who can estimate the damage of a single war? Think, for example, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki left in total ruin only thirty years ago.

War wreaks unimaginable physical destruction, but the ruin it does to man's soul is even worse. War is accompanied by dishonesty, deceit, treachery, stealing, as if they were to be condoned. Drunkenness, drug addiction, rape, the vilest immoralities are taken for granted. Men become worse than beasts, as if there were no God in heaven.

The aftermath of war brings the misery of hunger and starvation, the onslaughts of various diseases and uncontrollable epidemics. Today doctors are still puzzled by some new virus that makes its appearance from time to time. All modern medicine cannot cope with these judgments that God sends upon the earth. It has been said that "war is hell"; although this is a bit of exaggeration, it surely reminds us of the reality that awaits a rebellious world steeped in iniquity.

These modern wars are still nothing compared to the conflict that must still come, when all the world's ingenuity will prepare armament and weapons to be used in an all-out war involving all the nations and peoples of the earth. The last battle of Armageddon still remains to be fought. The end is not yet.

What causes war?

Jesus says, "All these things *must* come to pass." Why the "must"?

Wars, rumors of wars, fear, death, destruction, all are in the eternal counsel of God, fulfilling His purpose. The Church shall be purified, protected and gathered from the Babylon of this world. The eternal day must come in the fullness of time. The cup of iniquity shall be filled. Wicked man must indulge his final vanity, sin his final sin, wreak destruction in his final war.

Why does man war?

The cause of war, as far as man is concerned, lies in his unbelief. Unbelief is always the root sin out of which all other sins must follow. Eve preferred to believe Satan rather than her God, even when the devil flatly contradicted God with the bold falsehood, "Ye shall not surely die." Having put God out of her thoughts, the next step was easy. How that tree charmed her! How strong became that proud desire to be as God, knowing good and evil. How irresistibly her hand went out to the forbidden fruit!

Having done away with God, the fallen human race disposes of God's law to set up its own standard of right and wrong. Today every person decides for himself what his moral standard will be and how far he will live up to it.

James says (4:1, 2), "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

Man first makes war against God, then against his neighbor. In his heart is always that sinful ambition to be as God. Man lives only unto himself, to seek himself, to satisfy his pride, his lusts, his evil passions. Bitter hatred, cruel jealousies, cold vengeance must follow. Many kings and rulers have actually set themselves up as if they were God, worthy to be worshipped by men. Think of Pharaoh who defiantly asked Moses: "Who is God that I should obey Him?" Think of Nebuchadnezzar, who set up a golden image with its dimensions according to the number six of Revelation 13, demanding that every prince and ruler in his kingdom bow down and worship the image. How Nebuchadnezzar's fury burned when he discovered three Hebrews, whom he had exalted to positions of authority in his kingdom, publicly refusing to bow down and worship their benefactor! The hottest furnace was not sufficient to pacify his rage — no, not until he saw the presence of the Angel of Jehovah protecting His servants was his fury abated. Even then Nebuchadnezzar refused to bow down before the living God. He still boastfully said: "Is not this the great Babylon that I have built?" The Caesars and Herods wanted to be recognized as God, even as the Savior of the world. They are the fulfillment of Psalm 2: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." In their representatives the kings of earth join with the chief priests and rulers of Israel to crucify the Christ. Throughout the new dispensation they purpose to destroy the Church, that the very name of God may perish from the earth. The kings of the earth reach their culmination in the Man of Sin, that Abominable One of whom Daniel speaks, who sits on the throne of the nations as if he were God, bringing utter ruin and desolation upon the earth as the measure of iniquity fills up.

He Who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. For, as Jesus assures us, "the end is not yet."

The disciples had asked Jesus: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

They had spoken of "end" in the sense of "finish" or "completion." Jesus now refers to that end, but uses another word which means "goal." He emphasizes that history does not merely run its course, but that the Most High carries out the purpose of His will toward His own destiny, or goal. Nations may rage, and peoples may imagine vain things; but God has eternally set His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as Lord over all in the highest heavens! All of man's strivings are vain. They may boast of fighting wars to prevent or to end all war; but as long as they stand in rebellion against God, they can only hate, defy, and oppose the neighbor. They fill the measure of iniquity unto the day of wrath.

In the meantime the white horse of Revelation 6 runs his course, gathering God's Church, conquering and to conquer, until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ forever and ever. God is King forever, let the nations tremble!

"See that ye be not troubled."

Our Lord impresses upon us a double admonition. The first is: "See, take note." The second is: "Be ye not troubled."

Do not let your heart be troubled as if some strange thing has come to pass upon you. Do not let your soul be troubled, as if Satan and evil men have control of the affairs of this life, as if God were not on the throne.

Our Lord understands the thoughts and the

imagination of our hearts, even better than we do. He knows our doubts, our fears, which arise from our shortsightedness, especially when trials and affliction are our lot, or when our hearts bleed because of the ragings and tumults of the nations. The Lord warns us: "Be ye not troubled, but find your peace in God alone."

God has the hearts of kings and rulers in His almighty hand, to turn them at His will. God reigns supreme in the heavens, over Satan who does his worst because he has a little while, and over the enemies that would wipe God's name from off the earth. Nothing happens, not even in that broad arena of warfare in which nations clash in mortal combat, that God does not determine and control, so that even war serves His purpose toward the gathering and purifying of His saints, and the hastening of His eternal day.

Be alert; watch in prayer.

Let the Word of God always be your guide, the lamp before your feet and the light upon your pathway. Only when we search the Scriptures and recognize the signs of Christ's coming can our hearts rest in peace in God, even during wars and rumors of war.

Hear Christ say in the ragings of the nations: "Behold, I come quickly."

Be able to respond: "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, quickly."

EDITORIALS

What Riches?

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In the *Clarion*, the Canadian Reformed Magazine (Oct. 19, 1974), Editor W. W. J. Van Oene writes some reflections in connection with the golden anniversary of *The Standard Bearer*. As might be expected, these reflections are written from a typically Liberated point of view. And frankly, I do not have much expectation, when I read Rev. Van Oene's article, that a journalistic exchange between us can bear any positive fruit. My reason is, chiefly, that I have detected no more real willingness to listen and to treat seriously the views of others on the part of the Liberated today than was evinced some twenty or twenty-five years ago. When and if there

should be a change in attitude and evidence of a real willingness to discuss and to have an exchange of views on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions, rather than the typical Liberated readiness to write everyone else off, then I will have some hope of positive fruit. Nevertheless, I will make an attempt at fruitful discussion.

I will pass by the several inaccuracies and inconsistencies in Editor Van Oene's account of 1924 and of our contacts with the Liberated Churches and the Liberated immigrants in the late 1940's and early 1950's. If Mr. Van Oene would like me to point these out to him, he may say so, and I will do this upon

request. But I assure him now that his presentation of this history is far from correct.

However, I wish to concentrate at present on the last part of the editorial in *Clarion*. It reads as follows:

We do not know whether we should congratulate or not. It would be very difficult to do so when, basically, the stand taken by the Protestant Reformed Churches in the matter of the Covenant of God and the promise of the Covenant constitutes a rejection and condemnation of the riches which were re-discovered in the struggle for the freedom in Christ through which the older ones among us went in the days of the Liberation.

The best wish we can express at this occasion is that the Protestant Reformed Churches may see these same riches. Then there is no need for a specific "Protestant Reformed Truth", for such a specific truth means an extra-Scriptural binding; then there will also be a positive attitude which, at present, is not completely absent but tends to be overshadowed by a feeling of being called upon to always fight off whatever might constitute a threat to that specific, cherished, characteristic mark. Then there also may be a time when we have to come to the conclusion that the unity of faith is there and should also be shown in a closer relationship.

Now I can understand Mr. Van Oene's difficulty about congratulating us. In fact, he might just as well have written that it is *impossible* for him to congratulate us.

But there is one item in the above quotation which I have never yet been able to comprehend. And that is the reference to those "riches which were re-discovered in the struggle for the freedom in Christ through which the older ones among us went in the days of the Liberation." The reference is, of course, to riches with regard to the "matter of the Covenant of God and the promise of the Covenant." Van Oene expresses the wish that the Protestant Reformed Churches "may see these same riches."

Now I believe that I may say without boasting that I am rather well acquainted with the so-called Liberated view on these matters — although they always asserted that there was no binding Liberated view concerning the covenant. I am rather well acquainted both because I lived through the history of our contacts with the Liberated and because I read most of the writings in books and brochures and papers. I remember well when the first reports of the Liberation began to filter through to this country. I remember well when the first copies of *De Reformatie* reached us after World War II. I remember well when the late Rev. Vos came to my father's house with those copies, and when they simply shook their heads in amazement at the fact

that the Liberated leaders embraced the views of the American Prof. Heyns concerning the covenant and the promise of the covenant, even to the extent that they quoted him with approval. I attended both of the conferences with the late Dr. K. Schilder in 1947. I followed avidly the journalistic exchange between our *Standard Bearer* and *De Reformatie* concerning the covenant and later concerning the so-called "condition controversy." I lived through and participated in the controversy that shook our churches in those days. I remember well when the immigrants in Canada received advice from the late Prof. B. Holwerda to smuggle their Liberated views into our churches and when, to his lasting credit, the Rev. G. M. Ophoff exposed this matter. I recall the reaction of shock among our people to the views expressed in Prof. C. Veenhof's *Appel*. In the heat of the controversy which shook our churches in the early 1950's I resided in Classis West, the hotbed of plotting and intrigue on the part of the pro-Liberated faction in our churches in those days. All these things I will never forget.

But there is one thing that I have never been able to understand and that I cannot understand today. That is the matter of those alleged "riches."

You see, Editor Van Oene, we had a liberation also, long before yours in the Netherlands. In 1924 we were liberated from the very principle to which you are now in bondage. For the Heynsian idea of a general, conditional promise to all who are baptized is nothing less than a refinement of the general, well-meant offer of grace of the First Point of 1924. To us of the Protestant Reformed Churches that view does not constitute riches, but a terrible impoverishing — yea, principally, a denial — of the Reformed truth of God's covenant and promise. No, do not suggest that we are in the camp of presupposed regeneration: we repudiate that, too.

Hence, in conclusion, let me put it very plainly. In the first place, if by "riches" you mean a view which is basically the same as the Heynsian view which we have repudiated from the very beginning of our existence of a separate denomination, forget it: you will never convince us of any "riches" of that view. In the second place, however, if you can make plain that there is a fundamental difference between the Liberated view and the Heynsian presentation of covenant and promise, and that we have missed something important, you are welcome to do so. We will listen.

And we will judge what you have to say in the light of Scripture and the confessions.

For we have neither an extra-Scriptural nor an extra-confessional binding. To us, "Protestant Reformed" and "Reformed" are identical.

The Issue Confronted

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Some of our readers will undoubtedly recall that when Dr. S. Woudstra was loaned by the Christian Reformed Board of Foreign Missions to the Reformed Theological College at Geelong, Australia, we warned (in February, 1973), on the basis of his erroneous view of Scripture as manifested in a sermon preached in this area, that the college and the churches there would be confronted by one of the same issues as they were with Dr. Klaas Runia. In the case of Dr. Runia, they failed to meet the issue, and in effect (although some were altogether dissatisfied and although others attempted compromise) upheld Dr. Runia. Later events have certainly shown that to have been wrong.

Recently from various correspondents in Australasia we have received reliable information that in the case of Dr. Sierd Woudstra the issue was confronted head-on by the Board of Directors of the Reformed Theological College at Geelong, with the result that Dr. Woudstra has been dismissed.

Dr. Woudstra was loaned to the Reformed Theological College by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Christian Reformed Church, and originally went to Geelong as Professor of Old Testament to replace Dr. G. Van Groningen. Later, however, he was appointed as Professor of Systematic Theology to replace Dr. Runia; and Prof. A. M. Harman was appointed as Professor of Old Testament. According to more than one correspondent in Australasia, the matter of Woudstra's position has been in question now for some time. I was aware of this, but refrained from publishing anything until I was certain that this was public knowledge. From recent correspondence I learned that the following announcement appeared in the bulletin of the Reformed Church of Geelong (Rev. J. W. Deenick, pastor):

"Several church members have approached the session and others have asked Prof. Woudstra about the recent developments at the Reformed Theological College and about Dr. Woudstra's position at the college. As yet the session has received no official communication from the Board of the RTC but there is no reason why the members of this church should not know that the RTC Board has requested the Board of Foreign Missions of the Christian Reformed Church in the USA to terminate Dr. Woudstra's services at the college.

"It is up to the Board of the RTC to publish the reasons for this decision and no doubt this will be done. There is therefore no need for speculation about it, but obviously the reasons are related to the

doctrinal direction of the theological college here at Geelong.

"It is clear that for all concerned this whole matter has caused deep discouragement and disappointment, for Prof. Woudstra himself in particular, and that in all this the church and the college, the Woudstra's and all who work at the college, need your prayerful and helpful concern."

The fact, therefore, of Dr. Woudstra's dismissal is confirmed by the above announcement. Evidently the author of the announcement knew more about the reasons than he chose to divulge. In fact, it would be safe to say that the author knew what the reasons were: for he is able to state that "obviously the reasons are related to the doctrinal direction of the theological college here at Geelong." Whatever that last statement means to suggest — and it seems to suggest that the author is not pleased about the "doctrinal direction of the theological college" — from other sources I have learned that these reasons are, indeed, doctrinal. I have not yet received a copy of the Board's reasons for their decision. And some of the details concerning the events which led up to Dr. Woudstra's dismissal I have not yet been able to confirm. However, the following is, I believe, reliable information:

1. The initiative for this action against Dr. Woudstra came from the student body at Geelong.
2. There were complaints from the student body concerning deviations on the part of Prof. S. Woudstra from the Standards of the College with respect to: a) the doctrine of Scriptures; b) the doctrine of election; c) church government and office bearers.
3. The Board of Directors and the representatives of the supporting denominations were made aware of these deviations; and at least one of these deviations of Dr. Woudstra concerned Genesis 1-3, according to correspondence which I received from a brother living in Geelong.
4. Upon request of the students the Board of Directors examined their grievances, and my correspondent informs me that "during the meeting of the directors and Dr. Woudstra on these complaints, Dr. Woudstra was told 'to pack his bags and return to the USA.'"

If at a later date I receive the official grounds of Dr. Woudstra's dismissal, I will make the readers aware.

More than one correspondent has informed me that the initiative for Woudstra's dismissal seemed to come more from the Free Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia than from the Reformed Church of Australia. Whether, in the light of the evident sympathy for Woudstra among the clergy of the Reformed Church of Australia, this spells trouble for the Reformed Theological College I do not know. Of one thing I am convinced, and that is that this was a move in the right direction on the part of the Board of Directors. If they continue in this direction, there is hope for the college at Geelong. And the Reformed Church of Australia and the Reformed Church of

New Zealand would do well to follow the lead of the Board of Directors in this doctrinal direction. And although I have little expectation of this, they would do better yet to review their past stand with respect to Dr. Runia and make amends. Particularly would it be salutary, even at this late date, if the Reformed Churches of New Zealand would do this and thus bring about reconciliation between themselves and the brethren who are now outside of their communion.

Further comment on this matter will have to wait until more information is received.

QUESTION BOX

About Praying For Those In Authority

This question comes from a Grand Rapids area reader who is concerned about the meaning of I Timothy 2:1-4. He would like an explanation in connection with the fact that this passage is rather frequently appealed to for the support of the rather common custom of praying — usually in public prayers — for the president and his cabinet.

Reply

Those who possess the bound volumes of our *Standard Bearer* and who check in the index will discover that this is one of the passages about which questions have been raised many times over the years. Questions have been raised both in connection with this matter of praying for those in authority and in connection with the fact that the text tells us that God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” In the latter connection this passage has more than once been brought up by those who seek support for the idea of a well-meant offer of salvation and grace to all who hear the gospel. It is well, therefore, that we get the passage before us, first of all. It reads as follows: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

In the first place, we may note that the text undoubtedly has in view public prayers in the gatherings of the congregation. The exhortation is

that supplications, prayers, intercessions, giving of thanks, be made for *all men*. And then the emphasis is laid especially on the fact that such prayers shall be made *for kings and for all that are in authority*. We ought to notice that the text does not say *the king*, nor does it speak of *our government*. This is the usual application that is made of this text. We pray for *our* president, for *our* congress, for *our* governor, etc. But this is not the point. The text is speaking of that *class* of men which is in authority. It does not have in view certain individual rulers whatsoever, whether those rulers are the rulers of our country or the rulers of another country. It does not have in view individuals whatsoever, but simply *classes* of men. And that particular class of men we may not systematically exclude from our prayers, as though they are *per se* excluded from salvation. This is the first significant fact that we should note in connection with this question. Those who wish to apply this passage individually must then pray not only for our president, but for the prime minister of Canada, the president of Mexico, the prime minister of the Netherlands, and also the premier of Russia, and the ruler of Red China. But the simple fact is that the text does not have in view individual rulers, but rulers as a *class*.

In the second place, the prayer which the apostle has in mind is a prayer for their *salvation*. In the light of vs. 3 and 4, this is the only possible explanation. As is plain from the word “for” in vs. 3, a reason is given in these two verses why such prayers should be made. And that reason is that it is pleasing to the Lord to pray for men that are in authority because

He wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. While our questioner is not particularly concerned about that aspect of the text, I must point out that "all men" cannot possibly refer to every individual man, but refers to all classes, or kinds, of men. And I am supported in this interpretation by many a Reformed commentator, including Calvin. The point, therefore, is that God wills that all kinds of men, all classes of men, be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. He wills not only that servants and slaves, but also masters and free men, not only subjects but also kings and rulers shall be saved. The purpose of the exhortation is therefore that the church in its intercessions and prayers and giving of thanks for the salvation of all men (all classes of men) shall not exclude kings and those who are in authority, but also remember them. Here we have the second significant point in connection with the question raised. This prayer is not a prayer for some kind of blessing of God upon rulers and governors in their capacity as rulers. It is not a prayer for God's blessing upon some king or president or governor, so that he may be able to rule wisely and well. This has nothing to do with the text. In fact, the text does not speak here at all of these kings and those who are in authority from the point of view of their ruling and governing. And once again, let me remind you that if this is the intention of the text, then we must not pray merely for our own president and our own governor, but also for the ruler of a foreign nation and even of an enemy nation. For example, that would have implied such a prayer for Hitler in World War II as well as for our own government. No one would have wanted to accept such a consequence. But I repeat: this is not the point of the text at all. The text has to do only with a prayer for the salvation of all classes of men, kings and those who are in authority not excluded.

In this connection, in the third place, we may notice that the text speaks of the fruit of such prayers: "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." We must be careful to understand that this does not mean that the fruit of such prayers of the church will be that no war comes,

or that political peace shall be established. Nor does the text mean that the church shall be preserved from persecution on the part of the ungodly world-power. Both Scripture and history teach the contrary. The church does not escape the sword of persecution. Besides, such an interpretation would be in conflict with the expression "in all godliness and honesty." The text refers to a quiet and peaceable life on the part of the congregation *as such*. Quietness and peaceableness would characterize life *in* the church, and the name of the church would be honorable among those who are outside the church. This must undoubtedly be understood in the light of the peculiar attitude which the church, or many in the church, assumed over against the rulers and those in authority at that time. We must remember that the latter were the persecutors of the saints in those days. They were the enemies of the church of Christ. And the danger was not at all imaginary that there would be those in the congregation who would allow themselves to be tempted to be bitter and to be opposed to kings and those in authority, as though kings and those in authority were *per se* enemies of Christ, and as though as a class they were necessarily opposed to the cause of Christ, and therefore were excluded from salvation. In such circumstances, an attitude of contempt and of rebellion and revolution would very easily come to manifestation. And if such an attitude were present in the church, this would be precisely the opposite of a quiet and peaceable life. Besides it would be the opposite of a life in all godliness and honesty, and would tend to bring the church of Jesus Christ into disrepute in the world, and would thus bring reproach upon the Name of Christ Himself. Hence, instead of this wrong attitude, the apostle exhorts the church that supplications, prayers, intercessions, giving of thanks, be made also for kings and those in authority. For it is God's will that all men, that is, all classes of men, inclusive of kings and those in authority, be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Thus, briefly, I would explain this passage. As usual, if there is some point that is still not clear to my questioner, he is welcome to write in again.

It must be maintained, as I have before asserted, that we are not established in the belief of the doctrine till we are indubitably persuaded that God is its Author. The principal proof, therefore, of the Scriptures is every where derived from the character of the Divine Speaker. The prophets and apostles boast not of their own genius, or any of those talents which conciliate the faith of the hearers; nor do they insist on arguments from reason; but bring forward the sacred name of God, to compel the submission of the whole world.

—John Calvin, *Institutes*, I, VII, 4.

ALL AROUND US

Prof. H. Hanko

Women In The Ministry

The following item is somewhat old news, but it is worth a passing notice nonetheless. The reason why it is old is simply that there has been no room in this column up to now to include it.

The situation is this. Calvin Seminary has a few women studying in the regular Seminary course. The Seminary has, from time to time, assured the Christian Reformed constituency that this is not for purposes of introducing the idea of women ministers. Nevertheless, one wonders if this assurance is given in all candor. In the April, 1974 issue of "Grace Notes" (the paper of the Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism), the following notice appeared.

VACATION PULPIT SUPPLY — Many of you are beginning to think about this. If you are retired and available, let the GRACE office know and we will put

you in touch with pastors seeking a substitute. If you are looking, check with us, we may be able to help. Mrs. Marchiene Rienstra, a student at Calvin Seminary in the Master of Divinity program is available to preach this summer. She comes very highly recommended. Further information can be obtained by calling Rev. Martin D. Geleynse at the seminary.

We do not know whether or not this student actually preached this summer; but apparently, she was licensed to preach by the Seminary itself. Surely this means that the Seminary has officially gone on record as favoring women preachers. Is this a first step to its acceptance in the Christian Reformed Church?

The Abortion Question Again

The whole question of abortion is gradually being silenced in our day. After abortion was legalized, there was a loud cry made against its horrors. But gradually the cries have stilled, abortion becomes increasingly accepted as a way of life, and the issue of its rightness or wrongness is a rather ho-hum thing. This is the way it is with sin. Gradually consciences are hardened, the horrors of the sin are forgotten, the voices of opposition are stilled. The world goes on to yet greater and more terrible sins.

It is the greater reason for sadness therefore, when one hears voices in the Reformed community openly advocating abortion. Here of all places there should be a strong and unceasing testimony to the terrible wickedness involved in this matter. But instead one finds abortion defended. I refer to an article which appeared in the September issue of *The Reformed Journal* written by William Hasker, entitled: "Abortion and the Definition of a Person".

Our readers may wonder why we should return to a discussion of this matter in these columns. We have discussed the whole question in previous issues, and have set forth our stand. Why now again bring up the matter? There are several reasons for this. In the first place, the sin is so dreadful and the consequences of

the sin so great that we must continue to raise our voices in protest against it. In the second place, it is possible that even among us, consciences are soothed by the very common-placedness of the sin so that we ourselves no longer see clearly its evils. This would be disastrous for us. In the third place, when a writer in a "Reformed" periodical openly advocates abortion, something ought to be said about it, for the support of such a position in a "Reformed" periodical certainly shows in what grave danger at least a segment of the Reformed Church stands.

Let us then turn to the article.

The argument of the author is a bit different from the usual run-of-the-mill arguments. The author argues against the position of those who hold that abortion is murder by showing what consequences this stand leads to; and by disassociating himself from the consequences, and therefore from the position itself.

Apart from the rather poor logic of an argument of this sort, it is interesting to follow what the author has to say and see whether his conclusion is valid.

He argues that those who are opposed to abortion on the grounds that it constitutes murder, base this argument on the fact that the fetus, from the

moment of conception, is a person. This, of course, is correct. What consequences follow from this position? His first consequence is that the only acceptable grounds for abortion is that it "is the only way to prevent the otherwise *certain* death of the mother." Although the author does not say so, he apparently disagrees with this. Further, he argues that this is unacceptable. Hence, the position of those who condemn abortion is wrong, for this consequence is wrong.

But we accept this consequence. This is indeed the only ground upon which abortion can be condoned.

The second consequence of our position is, according to the author, that one who performs an abortion is guilty of pre-meditated murder, and the woman who allows an abortion of her child commits pre-meditated murder. This conclusion too, the author says is unacceptable. Hence, our position against abortion is wrong.

But here, too, we indeed accept the consequence. In fact, we insist that this is precisely the case. The abortionist and the mother seeking an abortion are both guilty of murder. The law of God forbids this. It is sin.

The third consequence of our position is, according to the author, that all birth control devices which destroy the fetus after conception has taken place, such as various drugs and so-called IUD devices, are to be forbidden because a fetus is aborted by their use. He finds this consequence also to be unacceptable. His only ground is: "Indeed, by distributing such devices the United States government has committed mass murder on a scale to make the Nazi atrocities pale by comparison!

This consequence, too, we accept. It is indeed true that such birth control devices which abort the fetus are also instruments of murder. It is also true that in our country mass murder is being committed on a scale such as the world has never seen. We agree with the conclusion.

The final consequence of our position is a theological one. Arguing from the viewpoint that each personal human being has an eternal destiny, the author writes: "What, then, is the eternal destiny of the estimated one-half of all such human beings which fail of implantation? Surely they cannot be damned, and, lacking a doctrine of limbo, there is no escaping the conclusion that heaven is full of these creatures! Is any further comment necessary?"

Yes, a great deal of further comment is necessary. One question which comes to mind is this. Does not the author who professes to be Reformed believe in the thoroughly Reformed doctrine of predestination? If he does not, he ought not to be speaking on behalf

of Reformed people. Another question is this. Cannot God save those fetuses of believing parents which are spontaneously aborted? Cannot He perfect them in glory so that they are glorified along with the Church? Cannot He perfect them just as he does the elect child of believing parents who dies in infancy? Is God's arm shortened that it cannot save? To speak of such infants as "these children" is a contemptuous dismissal of the sovereign power of the God of our salvation.

But even the author is somewhat reluctant to come out forthrightly for abortion. And so, towards the end of his article, he tempers somewhat his position. He argues that it is impossible to tell when a fetus becomes a person. But always we must consider such a fetus as "a being which could, in time, become a human person, capable of seeing the light of the sun and of knowing God in the light of His Son. The fetus is not that person as yet, but also it is not nothing; it has a value and a dignity of its own, just as each of God's creatures — a bird, a flower, a blade of grass — has its own value and dignity." Hence we must be careful. We must not be too hasty with abortions. If we give complete approval to abortions then we "open the door to treating the retarded, the chronically ill, the senile, and the generally nonproductive members of society as nonpersons." And this is morally repugnant. But the author, in this argument is guilty of the same error with which he accuses us: he will not accept the consequences of his own position.

When ought we then to consider a fetus a person? Since God has not told us, the author argues, we must do this when the fetus "reaches the stage of development at which it is capable of independent existence as a human organism, supported by the care which is normally given to newborn children." He presents this as being an advance in the search for a solution to the problem. But this very position has repeatedly been taken by many advocates of abortion, and is very similar to the position taken by the Supreme Court in its legalization of abortion.

What lies behind all the arguments however is a refusal to recognize that the Word of God is authoritative for us in this matter as well as in all other matters of faith and life. The author, without proof, simply affirms that God does not tell us when a fetus becomes a person. We insist that the Word of God does tell us. And God's Word is very specific on the point: a fetus becomes a person at the moment of conception.

The evils which this country brings upon itself and the fury of the wrath of God which shall come upon such terrible sins may not yet be evident. But such evils and such judgments are as sure to come as the Word of God is true and faithful.

The GKN A Modality Church

The following article appeared in the September 10 issue of the *RES Newsletter*.

The association "Scripture and Witness", a group of members of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) who are disturbed by developments within their church, have published a declaration which calls on the congregations to take a stand against the direction of the GKN Synod. "Bar straying pastors from the pulpits and from the catechism classrooms", it warns. It also advises members within churches where Scriptural preaching and fellowship no longer exist, "to form temporary emergency congregations in which the offices of the church will be instituted and the sacraments administered."

Commenting in *Centraal Weekblad*, Dr. K. Runia admits that he can easily identify with many of the resolution's aims and admits that "indeed, a great amount of erosion has taken place with regard to the Reformed character of our churches." The action, he also grants, is based on the reluctant recognition of a sorrowful fact: a spiritual division has taken place. The declaration would discover a way which deals with this division without dividing the church. It emphatically denies that it desires a schism, wants only to preserve the unity of the church.

Dr. Runia nevertheless finds the declaration very confusing. It is unclear which decisions of the synod

the churches are called to oppose. Who is to make this choice: consistories or individual members? Is it possible to choose position against synod without breaking ecclesiastical bonds? Although the unity of the church may be formally maintained, what is being asked is that a "spiritual" separation be allowed to assume organizational form within the church. It calls on the "concerned" (*verontrusten*) to form a modality within the GKN. Thus, those who have long uttered strong objections against the formation of a 'modality church', now are asking that such be given institutional form.

"Scripture and Witness", says Dr. Runia, is highly unrealistic if it expects the synod to accede to its request. Unrealistic also is the declaration's expressed hope for a truly Reformational church which it seems to be expecting to arise from contacts within the Reformed Family (*Gereformeerde Gezindte*), which includes the Reformed Alliance within the Netherlands Reformed (*Hervormde*) Church and various smaller Reformed denominations. At least a couple of leaders from these (sympathetic) groups have reacted to the declaration with strong criticism. Runia argues that legitimate ecclesiastical channels have by no means been exhausted. "As long as the 'way of the church' is still wide open, we may not strike off into 'side trails'".

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

Blessing In Willing Obedience

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land."

Isa. 1:19

The more remote context, as we saw, reveals Jehovah's people as in an utterly hopeless state of total depravity and spiritual death. In that state they were adjudged unthankful, evil, corrupt and hypocritical. They proudly thought themselves *the* people! After all, they reasoned, they approached God in proper outward form, with religious preciseness and regularly, and without fail performed the rites of purification. Yet the Lord found them vile, filthy, putrifying, stinking in their sins. For with all their proper religiosity, they had no love for God. They had neither the desire nor the ability to love

Him. They were too in love with their sins and with themselves. They were too deeply involved in brazen revolt against the Holy One of Israel (how blasphemous!), against the mighty One of Israel, v. 24, (how futile!).

The immediately foregoing context introduces a much brighter picture. It introduces the theme of the salvation of the Lord and the conference He calls to discuss it together with His people. For it is by grace in doing so that sinners are set right in their thinking and doing with respect to pardon and redemption.

Scripture calls that redemption "eternal redemption." They who are redeemed by it are forever the Lord's purchased possessions. The redeemed, too, according to the word of the Lord here, are a people zealous of good works. Verse 18 tells us that the title and right to salvation are the work and gift of God alone. Verse 19 tells us that the actual possession and enjoyment of that salvation lie in the way of faithfulness to the command of God.

I. *The Meaning* of the text concerns our willingness. Consider this first of all manward. The Lord had been very reasonable to say to us what He had in v. 18 about full pardon and cleansing from sin. It is just as reasonable now for Him to demand and insist on our being willing from the heart. But certainly it does not follow from this that God enjoins willingness — that, therefore, man's will is free to will or not to will the will of God. We must not be fooled by the proponents of "free will" and their supposition that man can make himself willing. For though man is a free agent, and his will is free in a certain direction, it is more bound in slavery (to sin) than free. He is free only to do evil; to do good he has no knowledge. So there is a great difference between free agency and free will. An agent is one who acts or has power to act. Man is still a free agent: he still has power to act according to his nature. But the trouble is, that since the fall his nature is sinful and corrupt, and so he is free to act only according to a fallen nature. A dead cat is free to do one thing — decompose! A boulder rolling down the mountain side is free, goes leaping in its freedom, freely speeding and bounding on its way. But it is not free to roll back up again to the top of the mountain. It rolls down, for it is bound to crash down; but it is not free to go back up. So with the will of man ruined by the fall: it is no longer free to good, but to only evil continually. "Free will" is a slave. It is in moral, spiritual and ethical bondage. So when the Lord says, "If ye be willing," the implication is not that man can make himself willing. For the regenerate are *made* willing in the day of God's sovereign power.

Consider this also Godward. Fallen man is not and cannot be willing except as "it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." The Spirit regenerates dead sinners, giving them a new heart and a new will. There is not a word or passage of Scripture that ascribes the renewed act of man's will to himself, but it is all produced by the mighty power of God. "You hath *He* quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." The will to do nothing but sin comes from fallen nature; the will to do good comes from grace. Now notice that here we have an "if" clause — "If ye be willing. . ." If-clause sentences are of two kinds: (1) the conditional if-clause and (2) the non-conditional if-clause. What we have here is a

non-conditional if-clause sentence containing (1) a dependent clause and (2) the main clause. It would be a twisting of grammar to make the main clause depend on the dependent clause. This would also be twisting Scripture into its very opposite. Indirect statements may not be used to nullify direct assertions; the subjective may not be used to invalidate the indicative; the conditional sentence to void the absolute; nor may an "if" cancel the force of a positive declaration. When Jesus commanded the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth thy hand," He was not implying that it was within the power of the man to do the impossible. But Christ's word is a word of power which sends forth with it the power for the fallen sinner to will and to do. No "if" in Scripture stands in conflict with the truth that *God* creates in us a new and willing heart, and renews a right spirit within us. Nor is there any contradiction between "if ye be willing and obedient. . ." and "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). For all our willing and obeying is the fruit of the direct agency of the Almighty God alone who works in us to will and to do His good pleasure.

II. *The Duty*: "If ye be willing and obey." Consider this obedience as to its nature. If ye be willing, the promised blessing will follow. The conditional particle does not signify a penance to be performed for former inconsistencies and stubbornness, as though man by his own will and works can voluntarily suffer punishment for his faults and so render satisfaction for them. The meaning is that the Lord exhorts men to throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him, bow to His sceptre and take His yoke upon them. He demands no less than unconditional surrender to His will. Only so can we walk in obedience to Him. Nor is it correct here to say that the Lord does not demand perfect obedience, but only willing obedience. For the fact remains that God everywhere in His word demands personal, perfect and perpetual obedience. We are held accountable to the supreme standard of perfect obedience and perfect willingness. It is, however, all too true that even though regenerate, we do not render to God all His due. But "if there be a willing mind, (i.e., one with the *spirit* and *principle* of obedience) it is accepted."

Consider this obedience as to its purpose. It is to teach us to listen to God, that when He speaks to us through His Word we may immediately respond. For the word comes from the verb "to hear." But we are by nature so distracted by the things of the flesh and of the world that we do not always hear wisdom crying aloud in the streets. But by obedience we learn to hear, to give our attention to the Word of the Lord. By nature we are like the deaf adder which

cannot be aroused though it be charmed ever so wisely. The redeemed must first be enabled to all holy obedience, and then go on to exercise themselves in it and practice it. It takes practice. Insofar as we are out of practice so far does the voice of our Redeemer become dimmer, fainter. By obedience we keep in touch with God, we keep short accounts with Him, we hear Him, heed Him. By nature we are children of disobedience, and like the heathen, from God afar off, not even within calling distance. But if we really and spiritually hear His most holy Word we will not simply be saying, "Lord! Lord!", but we will be doing the things which He says.

Then follows a warning against disobedience. "But if ye refuse and rebel, by the sword ye shall be eaten; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it" (1:20). This is fulfilled in God taking vengeance on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:8). It is more than a threat or warning; it is a sure prediction of judgment. Exemption from the terror of judgment comes not merely in the way of professing the gospel, but in obeying the gospel. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," and the gospel, contrary to the way it is with many others, was not ashamed of him, for he lived according to the gospel, and, principally, according to the whole moral law as adopted into the New Covenant in the words, "the grace of God . . . teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Tit. 2:11, 12). This judgment the mouth of the Lord, not man's mouth, hath ordained. The word of Jehovah so decreed. Judgment falls on all disobedient to the gospel. Faith implies obedience. "But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Isaiah saith, 'Who hath believed our report?'" (Rom. 10:16). "Unto you (the Church) it is given . . . to believe on Him" (Phil. 1:29), and to the Church it is

given to know the mysteries of the gospel (Mt. 13:11), and those mysteries are made manifest for the obedience of faith (Rom. 16:26). The judgment comes by the sword consuming the rebellious and disobedient, the sword of divine justice and wrath in the form of the sword of their enemies used as God's battle-axe and weapons of war (Jer. 51:1, 20). This shows the end of going on in sin without repentance. It especially came to pass when the Jews, refusing and rebelling against their Messiah, were devoured with the sword of the Roman armies under Titus in the destruction of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.

The promise is, "Ye shall eat the goodness of the land," or the best of the earth. Materially this is so, not in the sense of crass materialism, but the promise is of a land, the land of promise, of a new heaven and new earth. The meek shall inherit the earth. This will not be an ethereal "beautiful isle of somewhere," but the physical universe regenerated and glorified in the restitution of all things in the Day of God. The atheist likes to deride the Christian faith by calling it a "pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die-by-and-by" fantasy. The truth as to that pie is that we begin slicing it now! For God the Father hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heaven in Christ (Eph. 1:3), and for this we "rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4). We have right and title to the New Earth. We look forward in faith to actual possession-day. For we declare plainly that we seek that country. For we desire a better country than that which *this* world affords, namely, a heavenly country, wherein is that metropolis which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God! All the best of that country is ours: all its beauty — and Christ is its loveliness and perfection; all its gladness — and the Song of Moses and of the Lamb is its joy; all its prosperity — for our happiness and wellbeing *there* shall be constant and full in the riches of His grace.

. . . For as God alone is a sufficient witness of himself in his own word, so also the word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit. It is necessary, therefore, that the same Spirit, who spake by the mouths of the prophets, should penetrate into our hearts, to convince us that they faithfully delivered the oracles which were divinely intrusted to them. And this connection is very suitably expressed in these words: "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my word which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, for ever."

—John Calvin, *Institutes*, I, VII, 4.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Eschatology--The First Period--The Resurrection

Rev. H. Veldman

Irenaeus, too, wrote on the subject of the resurrection. Polycarp had sent Pothinus into Celtic Gaul at an early date as its evangelist. Pothinus was joined there by Irenaeus as a presbyter, having been his fellow-pupil under Polycarp. When Pothinus had closed his life by a martyr's death, Irenaeus naturally became his successor. The work of Irenaeus *Against Heresies* is one of the most precious remains of early Christian antiquity. It is devoted, on the one hand, to an account and refutation of those multiform Gnostic heresies which prevailed in the latter half of the second century; and, on the other hand, to an exposition and defence of the Christian faith.

Declaring his faith in the resurrection, Irenaeus writes, and we quote:

For our Lord and Master, in the answer which He gave to the Sadducees, who say that there is no resurrection, and who do therefore dishonour God, and lower the credit of the law, did both indicate a resurrection, and reveal God, saying to them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." "For, touching the resurrection of the dead," He says, "have ye not read that which was spoken by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" And He added, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him." By these arguments He unquestionably made it clear, that He who spake to Moses out of the bush, and declared Himself to be the God of the fathers, He is the God of the living. For who is the God of the living unless He who is God, and above whom there is no other God? Whom also Daniel the prophet, when Cyrus king of the Persians said to him, "Why dost thou not worship Bel?" did proclaim, saying, "Because I do not worship idols made with hands, but the living God, Who established the heaven and the earth, and has dominion over all flesh." For if He be not the God of the dead, but of the living, yet was called the God of the fathers who were sleeping, they do indubitably live to God, and have not passed out of existence, since they are children of the resurrection. But our Lord is Himself the resurrection, as He does Himself declare, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Irenaeus, in the following quotation, is of the opinion that man's original creation by God is much more difficult and incredible than that work of God

whereby the Lord raised him from the dead. This may surely be disputed. But let us hear what Irenaeus has to say about this:

Those men, therefore, set aside the power of God, and do not consider what the word declares, when they dwell upon the infirmity of the flesh, but do not take into consideration the power of Him Who raises it up from the dead. For if He does not vivify what is mortal, and does not bring back the corruptible to incorruption, He is not a God of power. But that He is powerful in all these respects, we ought to perceive from our origin, inasmuch as God, taking dust from the earth, formed man. And surely it is much more difficult and incredible, from non-existent bones, and nerves, and veins, and the rest of man's organization, to bring it about that all this should be, and to make man an animated and rational creature, than to reintegrate again that which had been created and then afterwards decomposed into earth (for the reasons already mentioned), having thus passed into those (elements) from which man, who had no previous existence, was formed. For He Who in the beginning caused him to have being who as yet was not, just when He pleased, shall much more reinstate again those who had a former existence, when it is His will that they should inherit the life granted by Him.

Irenaeus wrote several chapters in which he affirms his belief in the resurrection of the dead. We read these writings of the church father in Vol. I of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, in his writings against heresies. In chapter XV he calls attention to proofs of the resurrection from the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel:

Now, that He Who at the beginning created man, did promise him a second birth after his dissolution into earth, Esaias thus declares: "The dead shall rise again, and they who are in the tombs shall arise, and they who are in the earth shall rejoice. For the dew which is from Thee is health to them (Is. 26:19). And again: "I will comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem: and ye shall see, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish as the grass; and the hand of the Lord shall be known to those who worship Him (Is. 66:13). And Ezekiel speaks as follows: "And the hand of the Lord came upon me, and the Lord led me forth in the Spirit, and set me down in the midst of the plain, and this place was full of bones. And He caused me to pass by them round

about: and, behold, there were many upon the surface of the plain very dry. And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I said, Lord, Thou who hast made them dost know. And He said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and thou shalt say to them, Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord to these bones, Behold, I will cause the spirit of life to come upon you, and I will lay sinews upon you, and bring up flesh again upon you, and I will stretch skin upon you, and will put my Spirit into you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. And I prophesied as the Lord had commanded me. And it came to pass, when I was prophesying, that, behold, an earthquake, and the bones were drawn together, each one to its own articulation: and I beheld, and, lo, the sinews and flesh were produced upon them, and the skins rose upon them round about, but there was no breath in them. And He said unto me, Prophecy to the breath, son of man, and say to the breath, These things saith the Lord, Come from the four winds, and breathe upon these dead, that they may live. So I prophesied as the Lord had commanded me, and the breath entered into them; and they did live, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great gathering." And again he says, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will set your graves open, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall open your sepulchres, that I may bring my people again out of the sepulchres: and I will put My Spirit into you, and ye shall live; and I will place you in your land, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." As we at once perceive that the Creator is in this passage represented as vivifying our dead bodies, and promising resurrection to them, and resuscitation from their sepulchres and tombs, conferring upon them immortality also (He says, "For as the tree of life, so shall their days be"), He is shown to be the only God Who accomplishes these things, and as Himself the good Father, benevolently conferring life upon those who have not life from themselves.

TERTULLIAN

Tertullian, too, wrote extensively about the resurrection of the body. We conclude our discussion of this doctrine of the resurrection of the body in the period, 80-250 A.D., by quoting from this church father. We now present to our readers some excerpts from his writings. In Vol. III of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, we read that he wrote against the heretics who maintained that the God Who created the world and gave the Mosaic dispensation, was opposed to the supreme God. Hence, these heretics attached an idea of inherent corruption and worthlessness to all His works — amongst the rest, to the flesh or body of man, affirming that it could not rise again, and that the soul alone was capable of inheriting immortality. And so this church father writes at great length about the dignity of the flesh or body.

In chapter 1 of his treatise, he writes the following:

The resurrection of the dead is the Christian's trust. By it we are believers. To the belief of this article of the faith truth compels us — that truth which God reveals, but the crowd derides, which supposes that nothing will survive after death. And yet they do honour to their dead, and that too in the most expensive way according to their bequest, and with the daintiest banquets which the seasons can produce, on the presumption that those whom they declare to be incapable of all perception will retain an appetite.

Tertullian, as did Irenaeus, alludes also to the chapter in Ezekiel on the resurrection of the body. We cannot, and need not, quote extensively from the writings of this church father. May the following quotation suffice (chapter XXXIV):

Who will any longer doubt of the safety of both natures, when one of them is to obtain salvation, and the other is not to lose it? [Tertullian is speaking of the body and the soul — H.V.] And, still further, the Lord explains to us the meaning of the things when He says: "I came not to do My own will, but the Father's, Who hath sent Me." What, I ask, is that will? "That of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Now, what had Christ received of the Father but that which He had Himself put on? Man, of course, in his texture of flesh and soul [this, of course, we dispute; what Christ has received of the Father was His own — H.V.]. Neither, therefore, of those parts which He has received will He allow to perish; nay, no considerable portion — nay, not the least fraction, of either. If the flesh be, *as our opponents slightly think*, but a poor fraction, then the flesh is safe, because not a fraction of *man is to perish*; and no larger portion of man is in danger, because every portion of man is in equally safe keeping with Him. If, however, He will not raise the flesh also up at the last day, then He will permit not only a fraction of man to perish, but (as I will venture to say, in consideration of so important a part) almost the whole of him. But when He repeats His words with increased emphasis, "And this is the Father's will, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day," — He asserts the full extent of the resurrection. For He assigns to each several nature that reward which is suited to its services: both to the flesh, for by the Son was "seen"; and to the soul, for by it He was "believed on." Then, you will say, to them was this promise given by whom Christ was "seen." Well, be it so; only let the same hope flow on from them to us! For if to them who saw, and therefore believed, such fruit then accrued to the operation of the flesh and the soul, how much more to us! For more "blessed," says Christ, "are they who have not seen, and yet have believed"; since, even if the resurrection of the flesh must be denied to *them*, it must at any rate be a fitting boon to *us*, who are the more blessed. For how could we be blessed, if we were to perish in any part of us?

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

The Belgic Confession, An Expression of the Faith of the Church

Prof. Robert D. Decker

Introduction, cont.

We discussed the value of creeds generally and some of the objections commonly lodged against the creeds in the previous article. Perhaps the single and most significant objection against the Belgic Confession is that it is the work of just one man, Guido de Bres. It has been alleged that this creed does not, strictly speaking, partake of the nature of a genuine creed. A creed ought to be the expression of the common faith of the members of the Body of Christ, whereas the *Belgic Confession* is the work merely of one man. It is true that there is something unique about the origin of the *Belgic Confession*. The Heidelberg Catechism was written by Ursinus and Olevianus at the express order of Elector Frederick as a means of instructing his people in the fundamentals of the Reformed Faith. The Canons of Dordrecht were composed and adopted by an international Synod as a statement against the errors of Arminianism. But the *Belgic Confession* was written by de Bres. Commenting on exactly this point, Dr. Peter Y. DeJong writes: "Often the creeds are superficially judged to be the work of one or a few men. Nothing is farther from the truth. The *Belgic Confession* expressly manifests the earmarks of the faith which was commonly received by the people of the Netherlands in those days." (*The Church's Witness To The World*, p. 26) With this we concur; only we would add that the *Belgic Confession* expressly manifests the earmarks of the faith which is even today commonly received by believers of Reformed convictions.

We have noted in our brief description of the life of de Bres that he was deeply influenced by the greater Reformer of Geneva. It is possible that somewhere between the years 1552 and 1559, when he was in Geneva, de Bres studied under Calvin. Whether he actually did or not makes little difference. The fact is that he was influenced by Calvin. A comparative study of the Belgic Confession and the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* indicates this beyond any doubt. Even from the point of view of the purpose of de Bres in writing the Confession he was deeply influenced by John Calvin. Calvin had a dual purpose in composing his *Institutes* and states

this eloquently in the first two paragraphs of the "Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France" which is found at the beginning of the *Institutes* proper:

When I first set my hand to this work, nothing was farther from my mind, most glorious King, than to write something that might afterward be offered to your Majesty. My purpose was solely to transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness. And I undertook this labor especially for our French countrymen, very many of whom I knew to be hungering and thirsting for Christ; but I saw very few who had been duly imbued with even a slight knowledge of him. The book itself witnesses that this was my intention, adapted as it is to a simple and, you may say, elementary form of teaching.

But I perceived that the fury of certain wicked persons has prevailed so far in your realm that there is no place in it for sound doctrine. Consequently, it seemed to me that I should be doing something worthwhile if I both gave instruction to them and made confession before you with the same work. From this you may learn the nature of the doctrine against which those madmen burn with rage who today disturb your realm with fire and sword."

(John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
The Westminster Press, vol. 1, p. 9)

From this statement it is obvious that Calvin wrote the *Institutes* for the purpose of transmitting the rudiments of the faith to especially the French believers and as a confession, an apology for the true nature of the doctrine before the king. It is certainly more than merely coincidental that de Bres composed the *Belgic Confession* for the same dual purpose: an apology before the rulers and for the instruction of the believers. Guido de Bres had learned his lessons well at the feet of Calvin. This is also obvious from the title which he gave to his Confession: "Confession of Faith Made With One Accord for the Faithful that are wandering in the Low Countries According to the Purity of the Gospel, Who Desire to Live of Jesus Christ." de Bres certainly wrote as well for the purpose of showing the authorities that the Protestant doctrines were nothing else than the truth of the Holy Scriptures. Even as early as 1562 the

Belgic Confession was presented to Philip II: "... in the vain hope of securing toleration, and with an address which breathes the genuine spirit of martyrdom. The petitioners protest against the charge of being rebels, and declare that notwithstanding they number more than a hundred thousand, and are exposed to the most cruel oppression, they obey the government in all lawful things; but that rather than deny Christ before men they would 'offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to the fire, well knowing that those who follow Christ must take his cross and deny themselves.' " (Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 1 p. 505)

From the point of view of its contents the *Belgic Confession* clearly bears the stamp of John Calvin. In fact it may safely be said that the *Confession* really amounts to an eloquent summation of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. It follows the same general outline and deals with the same truths though, of course, much more briefly.

But apart from that, there is an even closer connection between Calvin and the *Belgic Confession*. Among the large group of Protestants in France there was a congregation at Pontiers in which disagreement arose concerning the doctrine of predestination. Evidently all agreed that the doctrine was taught in the Scriptures, but the dissension arose concerning how this truth ought to be formulated and believed. To resolve their difficulty the congregation sought the advice of neighboring French Churches. It was the opinion of these churches that the French congregations needed a common confession in order to preserve the churches against error. A delegation was sent to Geneva to secure the advice and help of Calvin. Calvin prepared a rough draft of a confession which was a summary of his more lengthy and comprehensive *Institutes*. A Synod met in Paris during 1559 while persecution raged throughout France, threatening the very lives of the delegates. So pleased were the delegates of this Synod with the draft offered by Calvin that they adopted it without significant change. This became known as the *Gallican Confession*. It, too, was composed to preserve the peace and unity of the French Churches of the Reformation and later came to be used as an apology for the faith before the authorities. A comparative study of this *Gallican Confession* and the *Belgic Confession* indicates conclusively that de Bres leaned heavily on this creed in the formation of the *Belgic Confession*. On this ground it cannot be alleged that the *Belgic Confession* is merely the work and statement of faith of one man. It was clearly and significantly influenced by John Calvin; and it expresses the faith held by the French Churches as well, through its relationship to the *Gallican*

Confession. Concerning this relationship Schaff remarks: "The *Belgic Confession* contains thirty-seven Articles, and follows the order of the *Gallican Confession*, but is less polemical and more full and elaborate, especially on the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Church, and the Sacraments." (*Creeds of Christendom*, vol. I, p. 506)

Besides all this, de Bres was not alone in the writing of this creed. He was aided by several leaders of the Reformation. Among these were Adrian de Savaria, who served as professor of theology in Leyden and later Cambridge, H. Modetus, who for a time was the chaplain of William of Orange, and G. Wingen. While de Bres must be regarded as the chief author, these men served in the formulation of the *Confession*. It was revised by a certain Francis Junius of Bourges, who had studied under Calvin and was at the time a pastor of a Walloon congregation at Antwerp and who later was professor of theology at Leyden. This man abridged Article 16 and sent a copy of the creed of Geneva and other churches for their approval. The first printing appeared in 1561 and was followed by other editions in 1562 and 1566 in the French language. Later the creed appeared in Dutch, German, and Latin. In this light it can hardly be maintained that de Bres was the only author.

That the *Belgic Confession* was a faithful expression of the faith held by Reformed believers in the Lowlands is obvious from the widespread and enthusiastic acceptance it enjoyed among the churches. As early as 1566 the *Belgic Confession* was adopted publicly by a Synod which met at Antwerp. Later it was adopted by the Synods at Wesel (1568), Emden (1561), and by a national Synod at Dort (1574), and by another national Synod at Middelburg (1581). Finally the great Synod of Dort on April 29, 1619 adopted the *Belgic Confession*. Thus this creed became one of the three confessional pillars upon which the Reformed churches stand. It was also the great Synod of Dort which carefully revised the French, Latin, and Dutch texts.

Certainly, the *Belgic Confession* is the product of the great Reformation and stands to this very day as an eloquent testimony of the faith of our fathers. As we shall see, D.V., in our expository study of this creed it adequately sets forth the faith for our own times. Surely, it speaks to the need of today as well as it spoke some four hundred years ago. A careful and prayerful study of this beautiful symbol of the Reformed faith will lead us into a deeper understanding of the "faith once delivered to the saints." This will surely be the fruit: for this creed is, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." (Eph. 2:20) It ought to be our heartfelt prayer that we as Reformed believers and Churches

may be as committed to the truth of God's Word set forth in the *Belgic Confession* as were our fathers who wrote it and adopted it as their standard. They were willing to "offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to the fire, well knowing that those who

follow Christ must take his cross and deny themselves!" So deep was their conviction, so firm was their faith. In that faith and on account of that testimony many of them died the death of a martyr. So deep and so firm must be our conviction of faith.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

"Watchman, What of the Night?"

(Isaiah 21:11)

Rev. G. Van Baren

Daily, disturbing reports are presented in the news media of impending calamities in this world. One must ask himself, "How do these fit in with the signs of the times? How do they indicate the nearness of the coming again of Christ?"

We know, of course, that before Christ returns, the antichrist must appear (II Thess. 2:8-10). In some ways, that coming of the antichrist seems far in the future — still, events today indicate that perhaps such coming is not far away.

Recently, I read a report in *Time* on the economic crisis of our time. This was related to the so-called "oil crisis" as well as to other problems of the world. Among other things, this report stated:

The root problem is the enormous cost of imported oil, now more than \$11 per bbl., a fourfold inflation in only one year. The increase has enabled the oil exporting countries to earn an almost inconceivable amount of foreign currency: about \$100 billion this year . . . By the end of this decade, the 13 nations of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) could have a surplus of gold, dollars, pounds, marks, francs and other foreign currencies amounting to \$650 billion; by contrast, the U.S.'s reserves are now \$15 billion . . .

In chancelleries and countinghouses nearly everywhere, officials fear economic crisis leading to political instability. The evidence of this gloom was clear and plentiful last week . . .

There was a deepening perception of the potential impact of continued high oil prices: accelerating inflation that indiscriminately threatens both industrial and developing nations; increasing strains on and a collapse of the international banking networks; widespread recessions (or even a worldwide depression) with levels of unemployment unprecedented since the 1930s; and ultimately, perhaps, a corrosion of democratic political institutions . . .

The OPEC nations cannot argue that the price of oil is set by production costs. They do not actually "produce" petroleum; they merely — by a quirk of geography — possess it. Foreign technologists found and developed the oil, and foreign risk capital built most of rigs, pumps, refineries, pipelines and harbors. Only the existence of the OPEC cartel, with its ability to impose prices by fiat, keeps up the cost of oil . . .

Of course the oil-deficient but otherwise potent industrial nations would never permit themselves to become impoverished. They would first act boldly through energy sharing and saving and political and economic boycotts to stem the drain of money and transfer of power . . .

Perhaps the above illustrates somewhat the bind into which the world and the United States particularly have come. Of the energy consumed by the world, one third is consumed in the United States (consisting of only 6% of the population of the world). There have been threats, or implied threats, that no country has the "right" to withhold sources of cheap energy. The reference in the *Time* article indicates this. Only a "quirk of geography", say they, has given the Arabs the oil we need.

But how will the difficulty possibly be solved? Who is going to allocate the available energy so that the peoples of the world have their fair share? Will the United States be able to do this? Will Russia?

The only answer today is that one centralized power, perhaps one man, must be in a position where energy resources are equitably divided among mankind — and men may be forced to use only their allotted portion. Many people are beginning to acknowledge this.

Other problems have arisen. There is the so-called food shortage. Have you noticed the pictures, even live presentations on T.V., of people who are literally starving to death? We complain here in this country about the high cost of food, yet we have more than

enough. But millions of people today are starving to death. Either, there is not produced enough food, or it is not being properly distributed, or peoples refuse to share because of a fear that this will drive already high prices, higher still.

The end result is gross inequity. Poor nations become poorer, and their population dies off. Rich nations hold on to their riches, convinced that they have a "right" to that which they possess.

The answer? One centralized power, perhaps one man, must come on the scene in order to see to the proper distribution of food. He must take from the rich and distribute to the poor of the earth. And no doubt but that the masses of mankind shall hold him in high esteem.

There is the problem of preserving our environment and the removal of the causes of pollution. Everyone is in favor of this — provided that the other fellow stops his polluting. If the other fellow stopped, the air would be cleaner, the water purer. Countries too recognize that other countries do this much. The United States causes much of the pollution. Other countries can understand well that the U.S. ought to stop. Other countries, meanwhile, pollute in other ways. Something must be done.

The solution seems rather obvious. One centralized power, perhaps one man, can regulate even nations so that the world itself will become "a better place in which to live." Only with such centralized rule, can universal law be established which all men and all nations must observe.

There is the problem of control of the resources of this earth. These resources are being depleted at a fantastic rate. And most of them are being used by a minority of the people; about a third of these by the 6% of the population of the United States. Is that fair? Is it right? How long will the people of the world generally accommodate themselves to the demands of the few? Who will regulate all of this?

One centralized power, perhaps one man, will be able to allot the resources of this earth among all. He will see to it that nations do not use undue amounts and will give something to everyone. What better solution could there be?

There are the dangers of war. Now nation rises against nation. The mid-east threatens to explode in a war which will involve perhaps all nations. What is the solution for all of this? Who will arbitrate between nations? Who will enforce solutions? Who will prevent that nuclear war of which man has been so frightened the past thirty years?

One centralized power, perhaps one man, can do that. He can regulate the relations between nations. He can enforce settlements in difficult situations. He

can establish that sort of peace among men for which the nations have so long desired.

There is also the question of endangered species. We read of nations which hunt to excess the great whales. Others kill off other species without regard to the fact that the "balance of nature" is disrupted.

Or there is the matter of the control of the weather. Nations seek to increase or decrease their average rainfall. These seek to improve growing conditions in their lands. Perhaps their action adversely affects weather patterns over the whole earth. But no matter — as long as one gets enough rain and sunshine himself.

Or there is the troubling question of population control. The earth, it is said, already has too many people. Within the lifetimes of most people living today, that population will double — unless drastic steps are taken. There must be control of conception; there must be abortion. There must perhaps, it is said, be enforced regulations concerning number of children any family may have. Yet if one city, or one nation, only regulates its population; if one race does while another does not; then the whole concept of preventing "population explosions" must fail. All must be compelled to abide by clear-cut standards.

And the answer for all of this is a centralized power, perhaps one man, who can lay down the rules and enforce these. The world can not be divided up anymore into segments — each independent of the other. The world can not afford anymore to allow certain parts of the whole to go on its own. The world must insist on control and regulation of the entire earth — for the "safety" and "preservation" of the earth itself.

Increasingly, people are beginning to acknowledge that this is the only solution. Even the "churches" are emphasizing this. The W.C.C., in one of its conferences (World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, Switzerland, July 12-26, 1966) expressed opinions which become increasingly popular. At this conference, the following was suggested:

The world is like a jungle with each nation a "cold beast" prowling around devouring whom it can. We know that justice and order within a nation depends upon the establishment of just laws and institutions and coercive power; how then can man ever develop a just and ordered world community without the same basic essentials, applied universally? Yet such "structures" hardly exist at all today and the Christian is called to maintain the ones that do (the United Nations for one) and to help develop new ones — to find the "cracks" in the hard pan of present world system and plant there the seeds of new "structures." This requires reduction of national sovereignty, and at its merest mention some

participants begin to squirm and cavil. But these were the few. . . .

I have spent most of my adult life working with people at the very fringe of civilization, with the simplest people that the world knows. . . . From that point of view I can appreciate how far we have come, as we learned first to be a tribe, then a city state, then a nation, and now seek to build a world society bound together by law. . . .

Shades of Babel!

And does not the Word of God, albeit from the opposite viewpoint, remind us of the same thing? Rev. 13 says, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. . . . And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death;

and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? . . .

"And I behold another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men . . ."

We live in the times of the fulfillment of this Word of God. Watch — and know that the time of our deliverance is at hand.

GUEST ARTICLE

The Prayer That God's Will Be Done

Rev. Richard G. Moore

The Lord wonderfully instructs His church in prayer by means of the "Lord's Prayer." In the first three petitions He teaches the church to use prayer to glorify God, to extol Him, and to be concerned above all with that glory. This is especially true of the third petition. And as we turn our attention to the will of Jehovah, we will note that the will of God eternally is to glorify Himself in the highest possible way through Christ and His church. And all things in this creation, as well as all creatures, come under this eternal purpose of our God. Further this is the peculiar calling of the church of Jesus Christ. She exists in Christ to glorify God, to serve Him, to love Him, and to obey Him unto the end that God may be all in all, that unto Him alone may be the glory! Thus, as the church prays concerning the will of God, she of necessity must pray for grace to be humble, contrite of heart, to confess sin, and for grace to submit to that high purpose of God with all things. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches us this truth in question and answer 124, where it treats the third petition of the "Lord's Prayer."

If we are to understand the significance of this petition, it is necessary that we come to an understanding of God's will as it is used in our Lord's prayer. Jesus teaches us to pray, "Thy will be done." What is this will of God? To answer this question we

must assume the position of Scripture that God is perfectly and completely a willing Being. The God which Jesus instructs His children to address is not some cold, abstract power, far removed from creation. But Jehovah, Whom you and I are instructed to address in prayer is the willing God! He is our God Who wills and brings to pass His will in time! And as for His will, it is always in perfect harmony with all of His infinite perfections and virtues. And He is the Sovereign God Who does whatever He pleases, cf. Ps. 115:3. This will or pleasure of God is good, righteous, just, and all-wise, according to Paul in Rom. 12:1 and 2. Dear readers, it is this will, the perfect, all-wise, good, acceptable, and sovereign will of God by which all things are brought to pass. Jehovah's will encompasses all of creation and is complete. It is concerning this will that Jesus instructs us to pray, "Thy will be done."

This will of God has a two-fold aspect. When we speak of the will of God we necessarily speak of God's eternal counsel. We must turn our attention to His eternal purpose with all things. Thus as Jesus teaches us to pray, "Let Thy will be done," He teaches us to pray that God may carry out His eternal purpose and counsel. This will of God of His eternal decree we come to know by His revelation to us. And it is true we cannot search out the depths of His will, nor all the mysteries of the fulness of God's counsel

concerning the creation; but God does reveal His eternal will in so far as His children must know it.

Central to the will which He has revealed to His people is His Son, Jesus Christ. God has revealed to us that all things have their significance in Christ. All things are subservient to Christ! And through Christ all things serve the glory of God! It is concerning this Divine will of God centered in Christ that the Lord teaches us to pray "Thy will be done." This prayer upon the lips of the old dispensation saints was, "Lord, bring to pass all things that Thy promise may be fulfilled, bring to pass all things that the Christ may come!" For they looked for the One Who would deliver the elect children of God from their sin, and Who would bring them to glory. And they looked for this salvation through Christ, to the end that God's Name may receive all the glory.

In the new dispensation the prayer of the saints has not essentially changed. It is the prayer to God: "Bring Thy perfect will to its final realization, bring to pass all things in this new dispensation, that Jesus Christ may come upon the clouds of heaven, bringing His elect to final glory. And further so rule, O God, through Thy Son that also Thy enemies and my enemies may fill their cup of iniquity to the full, so that in final judgment they be cast into that everlasting lake of fire and desolation." The child of God prays to God in this dispensation to glorify Himself through the salvation of the elect church in Christ Jesus; and we pray that God's will be done concerning the reprobate as they must serve the church in Christ also unto the glory of our God. You and I are thus instructed to pray, "Lord, let Thy will be done."

However, Jesus also instructs His church in this petition to pray concerning a second aspect of the will of God. We must be concerned in our prayer with God's will for His elect, the will of His command. Thus, when the Lord teaches us to pray this third petition, He teaches us to pray for grace to walk in harmony with His will according to the commandments He has set before us. The Lord teaches the church she must pray for grace to be obedient unto the Father. Not all shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those that do the will of my Father which is in heaven, states our Lord as it is recorded in Matt. 7:21. The true seed, elect in Christ, receiving His Spirit, alone do the will of God and enter glory. Thus the church must pray for grace to walk in harmony with the will of God for His moral, rational creatures. This aspect of God's will which concerns our moral, ethical walk in this life requires the prayer: "Lord, grant us grace to obey Thee, and to serve Thee, and to walk before Thee in the way of love, that we may, as Thy children, be brought into the eternal dwelling place with Thee in and through

Christ Jesus and for Thy Name's sake."

Our Catechism teaches us to pray for grace to renounce our own will in order properly to pray the third petition! Nor is it difficult for the child of God to understand this explanation. The need to pray for grace to renounce his own will becomes very clear for the elect. For the child of God, chosen in Christ and regenerated by His Spirit, and who has come under the efficacious testimony of the Word and Spirit under the preaching of the gospel, is brought to a very certain conviction. It is the conviction of sin and depravity. Such a conviction that it causes the elect to confess, "I do not will to serve thee!" The law and the word of God as it is applied by the Spirit unto the heart of the elect causes the child of God to confess that naturally we do not want to walk in harmony with the eternal will of God. We are not content at all to be satisfied with the will of God for all things. We rather walk in the way of iniquity and sin. Thus when the elect is confronted with the testimony of the Scripture he comes to understand that he cannot seek the will or do the will of God in his own strength. The testimony of God's Word brings the child of God to confess that his natural inclination and ability are such that he is incapable of seeking God's will in his life. For the result of your sin and mine is that naturally our minds are carnal minds which are set in enmity against God! By nature we have a hatred for God's ways and His commands! We are not content in the way of Jehovah naturally! All one must do to see the truth of this statement is observe his own life. How often haven't we complained with our portion even today. How easy it is to become bitter with the portion we have received when the way becomes difficult for the flesh. How easy it is to cry out when God demands that we be pilgrims and strangers in the midst of this world, for our flesh and natural desire is for the things of this world.

When the child of God under the preaching of the gospel is brought before the testimony of Jehovah's Word, he is convicted of sin! And the elect, convicted of sin by the Lord Himself, is instructed by Jesus to pray for grace — that he might renounce the will of the old man of darkness, and that he might put on the new man of light. That prayer, beloved, is a very wonderful and precious prayer for the church. And it is also a very necessary prayer for each one of us. The child of God sincerely prays for grace to renounce his will, and this means he prays sincerely unto God by grace for the testimony of the cross. His prayer thus becomes: "O Jehovah, bring me to the cross of Jesus. Thou hast shown me my terrible sinfulness. Now Lord, as Thou hast convicted me of my sins, bring me before the cross of Christ, my Lord. Open and reveal the cross to me that I may see there the Firstborn of Thy children, that I may see there my Elect Head. Bring me to the cross that I may see Jesus there as my

only hope of salvation and my Redeemer. Bring me to the cross, Lord, that I may see that the bondage to sin and the slavery to Satan has been broken. Bring me there, that its testimony be mine, that He hath freed me from the testimony of Thy law that my sin brings me to desolation. Make the power of the cross dwell in my heart. Cause, Lord, that I may repent of those terrible sins that brought Thy precious Son to that accursed death. And, my God, pour forth the blessings of His cross unto me in Thy mercy that I may serve Thee, to do Thy will."

Beloved readers, as by grace the child of God

empties Himself before the Lord and seeks the precious testimony of the cross of Calvary, he will be given the strength to pray, "Thy will be done." And he will begin by grace to do the will of God. For God hears this prayer of His children and pours forth the Spirit of obedience upon them. Never because they somehow are or have become worthy of this work of God in themselves; but Jesus in their stead did the will of the Father, obediently saying yes over against the no of our sin! May God grant that the obedience of Christ may so dwell in us that we pray, "Lord, let Thy will be done."

News From Our Churches

October 31, 1974

Rev. Kortering has declined the calls extended to him from Kalamazoo and Pella.

* * * * *

The ordination of now Pastor Arie den Hartog took place during the evening worship service on October 6, in Prospect Park, New Jersey. On hand for the occasion was our former church news editor. Mr. Faber, who has hardly lost his touch for reporting news of this sort, kindly sent us a copy of Prospect Park's bulletin for that day, along with a few observations concerning the day's events. I suspect that his little note was prepared rather hurriedly, and that it was not written with a view to its being used, verbatim, as an account of the ordination. But I could do worse, I'm sure, than pass along a report from the past writer of this column. So, from the pen of our "See you in church, J.M.F.," the following:

"We were very fortunate to be able to worship with this congregation on this joyous occasion. Prof. Hanko preached two wonderful sermons! There were about 35 people in attendance this evening, among which were 5 from 1st church in Grand Rapids! Us! The people of the congregation were very happy and gave us a royal welcome. One family provided the noon dinner (at their house, of course) and we met everyone after the service when they served a light lunch at the get-together to welcome their new minister. The ordination service was very impressive, bringing tears to many eyes!"

* * * * *

Mr. Faber mentioned that he also "stopped at the Skowhegan parsonage when Rev. and Mrs. Kuiper were straightening out the boxes of household goods two days after arriving there." Those two days, and, for that matter, the two weeks around the beginning of October, must have been extremely busy ones for our missionary and his family in Maine. Some of the

things which occupied his attention during that eventful period, were recounted for us by Rev. Kuiper himself. He mentioned, first of all, the installation service in Hudsonville on September 25. The service, the capacity audience, the coffee hour — all these, he writes, were "very encouraging to me as missionary." Friday morning of that week, found Rev. Kuiper at Hope School, where he spoke for the chapel exercise. On Sunday, September 29, he preached in Hudsonville. His sermon topic was "Praying for the Missionary of the Gospel" — based on Ephesians 6:18-19. The following day he left for Maine, arriving in Skowhegan late Tuesday night, after 1100 miles of travel. The people there, he writes, "had cleaned and painted a rented house that proves very adequate." The remainder of the week was spent in unpacking, enrolling his children in a Christian school of Baptist background in nearby Canaan, Maine, and in preparing to preach on the coming Sunday. On Monday he commenced "the labor of the missionary, in calling on various individuals."

Our missionary's address, by the way, is: 346 Water Street, Skowhegan, Maine 04976.

* * * * *

We also have a little news from and concerning our missionary on the other side of the United States. Our first source is a newsletter addressed by the council to the congregation of Hope Church (the calling and sending church, as far as Rev. Harbach is concerned). The letter contained the essence of the first of Rev. Harbach's bi-monthly reports to the Mission Committee and to Hope's council.

According to the letter, Rev. Harbach has made "many personal calls both to interested people not yet regular attendees at the services and to those people who are and have been associated with the

(continued on page 96)

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.

ATTENTION TEACHERS!!!

The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School in Redlands, California, is seeking a Principal (Grades 5 thru 9) and a teacher (Grades 1 thru 4) for the 1975-1976 school term. Send inquiries to:

Mr. Otto Gaastra, Sec'y.
917 Campus Ave.
Redlands, CA 92373

Know the standard
and follow it.



Read the
STANDARD BEARER!

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Radio Committee of the Reformed Witness Hour expresses sincere Christian sympathy to their president, Don Faber, in the Lord's taking to glory his beloved mother, MRS. JOHN M. FABER.

We are assured that he, his father and relatives will find our covenant God faithful in His promise, as found in His Infallible Word, that nothing, even death, is able to separate us from the love of God which is eternally founded in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Peter Reitsma, Vice Pres.
Pat Schipper, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Priscilla Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby express their sincere sympathy to their Bible Leader, Mr. John M. Faber and to Miss Esther Vander Vennen, a fellow member, in the death of MRS. JOHN M. FABER, his wife and her sister.

May they be comforted by trusting in the God of all wisdom who doeth all things well.

Mrs. P. Decker, Pres.
Jessie Dykstra, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Mich. mourns the loss of one of its members, MRS. JOHN M. FABER whom the Lord took home on Oct. 22, and hereby express our sympathy to the bereaved family.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Cor. 5:1)

Mrs. T. Newhof, Pres.
Mrs. C. Pastoor, Sec'y.

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group for some time." Other labors include mid-week classes dealing with Reformed confessions other than the Heidelberg Catechism, which is preached regularly every Sunday. Rev. Harbach "realizes the need for instruction in the Reformed faith and its practical consequences. And, this is the instruction that he is giving."

In light of the fact that he does all of this "in addition to all the normal work of a minister," it's apparent that Rev. Harbach "is a very busy man and bears much responsibility." But, it is apparent, too, that "the work is enjoyable to our missionary. He experiences daily the joys of those who are being newly founded in the Reformed faith and is encouraged when the truths of God's Word find ready entrance into the hearts of the people there. But the work is not without its heartaches. Interested people suddenly become disinterested and much effort and time often appear to be wasted. But, no matter the outcome, Rev. Harbach knows and expresses the truth that the work in Houston is the Lord's work and that the Lord gathers and the Lord hardens."

In describing his own work, in a letter to the Hope congregation, Rev. Harbach mentioned the Sunday preaching of the Word and the mid-week class, and, in addition, three catechism classes, a Sunday School class, hospital visits, a funeral, calling and visiting wherever he can to present the cause of Reformed truth, having guests into his apartment for long talks about that truth, distributing literature material, talking with other ministers about Protestant Reformed doctrine, and advertising our meeting place and services in two local newspapers and in one of the two giant Houston papers.

Rev. Harbach closed that letter with a request to the congregation of Hope — a request which could as well be received by all of us, and which surely has application to both of our missionaries. Here it is: "Your prayers on our behalf are greatly appreciated for at least two reasons, (1) because spiritually we need the Lord's strength and mighty grace, and (2) because we live in a bad place — we live in this world, which is fraught with terrible dangers, physical, intellectual and spiritual!

"May the Lord bless us all, you there, and us here, in faithful labors unto the triune God."

D.D.

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