

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

But far more important and wonderful is the fact that God has preserved His truth among us. Consider that with me: in an age of doctrinal apathy He has kept us doctrinally sensitive! In an age of almost unprecedented departure from the truth, He has kept us faithful to it. In an age of compromise and conformity, He has kept us standing fast. He continues to sanctify us in an age of immorality and lawlessness that knows no bounds. He, the God of our salvation, has done all of this! The praise and thanks belong to Him alone. But don't you see that our calling in this light becomes the more serious? The gospel of Jesus Christ must be preached.

[See: Peace, A Sword, And Our Seminary, page 10]

MEDITATION

“When Shall These Things Be?”

C. Hanko

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.

Matt. 24:4, 5.

It was Tuesday evening of the passion week, just three days before our Lord surrendered Himself to the death of the cross to bring the ransom for our sins. It had been a busy day, since it was the last time that Jesus would be teaching the people. Feelings were running high, for the chief priests and rulers would gladly have silenced Him, even as they were secretly plotting to kill Him, but they feared the people. Jesus in full confidence of His victory through the cross, spoke in parables concerning His second coming and the final judgment. He concluded His witness, shaking, as it were, Jerusalem's dust from His feet, with the terrible indictment, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Deeply impressed by what they had just heard, the disciples are concerned about the temple, which for so many centuries had been the center of Israel's worship, the very dwelling place of God among His people. Anxiously they ask: "What about these buildings when the Holy City is destroyed?" To which Jesus answers, "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

In silent pondering they follow their Master, leaving the Holy City behind, to spend the night on the Mount of Olives. As they sit on the mount, overlooking the city, now bathed in the golden splendor of the sunset, they take up the subject once more. Mark informs us that particularly four of them, Andrew and Peter and James and John become the spokesmen for the rest, asking: "When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?"

These things!

These terrible judgments of God. The wrath of the Almighty poured out upon a rebellious nation that can piously keep its holy days even while their hands are stained with the blood of God's servants, the prophets. Jerusalem in ashes, not one stone left upon another, a silent testimony that it will never be restored. When?

Surely there must be a connection between all this and the return of their Lord. They were convinced now more than ever that He was indeed the Christ, the promised Savior. Yet they were equally convinced from all that they had seen and heard that soon He would be torn from them. Yet He would return. He must return to restore the kingdom of Israel. But when? And how would they know?

Give us a sign! A sign of Thy coming and of the end of the ages.

Jesus complies with their request by giving them not just one sign, but many. He bears with their weaknesses by patiently pointing out that the destruction of Jerusalem and of its temple will not mark the end of the ages, but belongs with the signs of the end. This, as well as many, many other things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. He offers them signs, yet not only them, but also us, to whom belongs the fulness of time. For these signs are always present throughout this dispensation, ever increasing in number and in intensity as the end approaches. He who has eyes to see, let him see.

Take heed!

Be alert. Watch! Let no man deceive you.

For already the first of these signs carries with it all the cunning treachery of the devil. He will come as an angel of light. He will say through His representatives: "I myself am the Christ, the only real one: follow me."

The Christ of Scripture is the Anointed of God, sent with the authority of God to speak His Word with an absolute "Thus saith the Lord."

Already in the early church there were men who professed to have certain God-given powers, as sent of God. We read of Simon Magus (Acts 8:9), who through sorcery bewitched the people into thinking that he was a great power of God. Later he was exposed by Peter when he wanted to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. Peter did not spare him, but laid God's curse upon him.

We are all aware of the proud pretensions of the Romish pope, claiming to be the real successor of the apostle Peter and vicar of Christ. Although he plays the friend with his "erring brethren", the protestants, whom in times past he anathematized and even caused the gutters to flow with their blood, he has never yet retracted any of his contentions as "head of the universal church." The fathers referred to him as the antichrist in person. No doubt they were mistaken in that, since antichrist is a political figure, yet history may prove that he plays an important role in the reign of the beast of Revelation 13.

The chief pretender of the Christ as Saviour of the world is, of course, antichrist himself. His very name describes him as opposed to the Christ, setting himself overagainst the Christ of God in his attempt to destroy Him. He is described to us in Revelation 13:1-4, as the beast that arises out of the sea of the nations, having great power, so that the whole world wonders after the beast, accepts his blasphemy, and worships the dragon who gives him his power. He exerts such great power that no one dares to make war against him. He is hailed as the only real Savior of the world, the only one who ever has been able to solve the world's problems and bring universal peace and blessedness.

Jesus warns us that these pseudo-christs also have their prophets, who are just as deceptive as they are. In verse 14 of this chapter He says, "And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many." And again in verses 23 and 24, "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Of these we read in II Peter 2:1, 2, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them (the atonement of the cross), and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

False teachers bringing false doctrines are prevalent everywhere. The plea for ecumenism has helped to break down denominational walls and wipe out doctrinal differences. The word "love" is the slogan of the day, yet not love for God or for the truth is meant, but rather a sentimental love for humanity to make this a better world and to introduce a universal peace among men. Arminianism, Pelagianism and Modernism walk as companions together, despising all those who interfere with this friendship. The infallibility of the Bible is denied, while all kinds of pseudo-Bibles under appealing names are being introduced to replace the time-tried versions. The market is literally flooded with deliberate corruptions of the inspired Word of the living God. And these corruptions are written in such a way that they have a strong appeal to the unwary. Along with this there is a growing yearning for the mystical and emotional. The neopentecostals, for example, boast of living in a higher sphere than the common believer, where they sin no more, where they can indulge in speaking in tongues, faith healing, and driving out devils.

Our Lord forewarned us, "Many shall arise and say, I am Christ." Today this Scripture is being fulfilled before our very eyes.

Be not deceived!

Jesus wants us to know that their earmark whereby we may recognize them is *deceit*. They are sincere in the sense that they deliberately seek to deceive. And, Jesus warns, they also succeed, for they deceive many.

They deceive. They come as wolves in sheep's clothing to devour the sheep.

We should see the picture. Outwardly they have a strong appeal. They call themselves pastors, or radio pastors, or Christian psychologists, sent of God. They hold an open Bible in their hands. Maybe they are supported by an impressive choir, soloists, or other attractions. They draw huge crowds from miles away, for who is like unto this preacher, and who can appeal to so many? They have an appealing message. Jeremiah said of the false prophets of his day a word that can well be repeated here, "They heal the breach of the sin of my people lightly by crying 'peace, peace,' when there is no peace." They want to win the whole world for Christ, or they aim at banishing all warfare, poverty, and race hatred from the earth, to make this a wonderful place to live. It is often not even as much what they say as what they do not say. They have a form of godliness, yet they deny the work of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word, which is the power thereof. Outwardly they seem very pious, as if they would put true believers to shame. They speak of a zeal, an enthusiasm as can be found nowhere else. The crowds follow them, at

least for a time. And sneeringly they ask the small minority that objects, "Do you think that you have a monopoly on the truth?" False prophets, blind leaders of blind followers, who are the instruments of darkness to introduce the false church of antichrist.

Now then, with that general description in mind, what are the fundamental errors that we must look for? With Scripture as our criterion what must we look for as characteristic of all their messages? The answer is: all the emphasis falls on man, with God disappearing ever farther in the background. All that the fathers fought, bled, and died for at the time of the Reformation is consistently denied. They want nothing of the truth of sovereign predestination. They consider election a cold doctrine, while they shudder at the very mention of reprobation. God's justice and holiness are hardly mentioned, especially because they preach a God who loves all men and wants all men to be saved. They deny man's depravity. 'Sin' has become a nasty word. Many may have faults, frustrations, or problems, but let's not talk about sin. There is much good in the worst of men; we should strive to improve on that. Christ died for all men. It is considered rank heresy to maintain that Christ laid down His life only for His sheep. Even substitutionary atonement is become foreign to the average preacher. A Christ who died only to save sinners is not the full and complete Savior they seek. They want a Jesus Who also works toward social reform, world betterment, exerting His influence in every sphere of life. They deny that salvation is solely the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. If they speak of the work of the Holy Spirit at all, they insist on a cooperation between Him and man. But they prefer to stress what man must do to overcome all the misery he sees round about him. From all this must follow that a teaching of eternal security simply does not fit. One must persevere; he must be active in society, doing good to all men. Heaven seems to be a matter of concern only when one dies.

Along with all this, the church seeks to make friends with the world, so that the antithesis between light and darkness becomes obliterated. The office in the church becomes a function, which women can fill as well as men. The preaching of the Word is substituted with dialogue, congregational participation, or even movies. The sacraments are desecrated to a love feast of sorts. Church discipline is not exercised any more, so that the keys of the kingdom have fallen into disuse. The portal of Sion's fortress stands wide open for free access of whoever cares to enter.

Be not deceived. For the deceiver of men also knows how to seal his testimony with signs and wonders. Revelation 13 tells us of the second beast who has the appearance of the lamb, yet he speaks as

a dragon. Although he calls himself the Christ, or representative of the Christ, he is instigated in all that he says by Satan from hell. "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. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." (Rev. 13:12-15.)

He appeals to his many converts. Or he tells of his ability to speak in tongues, to heal sicknesses and diseases, even to cast out devils. He penetrates the homes of thousands, if not millions, with his radio and TV programs. But a mere glance at some of our modern inventions gives us some idea of the powers he will exert in the future. Today what we see and hear is instantly recorded. A few seconds later a replay can be made of that very happening. This can be preserved indefinitely to be played back at will, anywhere, at any time. Powerful computers are now being used to store information and to produce it at will with uncanny accuracy. We cannot help but marvel at what these modern machines can do. Surely the time is not far off when those in authority will know more about us than we can remember of ourselves, and may know every move we make or every word we utter, whether in public or in the privacy of our homes. The devil is doing his utmost, since he knows that he has but a little while. He does all that he can to prevent the return of Christ and the final judgment, when he and his followers will have their own reward in utter darkness.

But God is King forever; let the nations tremble. He who sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord will hold them in derision. For already He has exalted His Christ as Lord over all. And Christ Himself assures us, "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give unto every man as his works shall be."

Take heed! Beware! Be alert!

The church of Jesus Christ must keep her spiritual eyes wide open. We must recognize and be able to interpret correctly the signs of the times.

To do that we must know the truth. And to know the truth we must diligently study the Scriptures. The unfaithful perish because of lack of knowledge. The foolish virgins sleep the sleep of death even while they know they lack the oil of preparedness. The

admonition of Scripture applies to all of us, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

But we must do this also with our families. Our children will see more precarious times than we see. They will undoubtedly face more severe trials than

any of us have known. They must be equipped now with the whole armor of God, helmet, breastplate, girdle, shoes, sword and shield, to fight the battle of faith against all the onslaughts of the evil one in a day when the apostasy will be so great that they stand virtually alone. He that endures unto the end shall be saved; more than conqueror in Christ Jesus our Lord!

EDITORIALS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Our readers will recall that our June issue carried an editorial entitled "A Realistic Response To 'A Dream'" – a reply to an editorial by Rev. John Vander Ploeg in *The Outlook*. As you were informed in an earlier note, *The Outlook* promised to reprint my editorial, and Rev. Vander Ploeg promised a reply. I was informed by letter that both my editorial and Rev. Vander Ploeg's reply are scheduled to appear in the September issue of *The Outlook*, which, as of this writing, has not yet appeared. Rev. Vander Ploeg graciously furnished me an advance copy of his reply; and so the *Standard Bearer* is able to carry his reply and my comments in this issue. I give first place in our editorial columns, therefore, to Rev. Vander Ploeg. My reply follows his article.

A Dream, A Response, And A Request

Rev. John Vander Ploeg
Managing Editor, *The Outlook*

"The church", Calvin says in his *Institutes*, "is called 'catholic', or 'universal', because there could not be two or three churches unless Christ be torn asunder – which cannot happen!"

But where is the visible manifestation of this?

The lack of this is a cause for deep sorrow.

And to be comfortably unconcerned is sin.

Of course, this is no plea for that counterfeit and unscriptural ecumenism which is the idol of modern churchmen. Churches riddled with heresy may try to recoup their waning fortunes by one merger after another; but ultimately they will produce nothing else than the great Babylon of apostate Christendom. To this we must be and remain unalterably opposed.

But we must also be *positive*.

Reformed Christians are to be in the forefront among the advocates of inter-church fellowship, cooperation, and also church union – but only when this can be achieved on the basis of Scripture. For

this we are not only permitted but we are also obligated by our Lord to hope and pray and work.

And now let's face it!

When we think of how little we are doing to pursue and to promote a truly Scriptural ecumenicity, can we deny that we have done little more than merely scratch the surface, if we are doing anything at all?

We are opposed to affiliation with the NCC and the WCC. We have our serious misgivings about our continued relations with the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands; even though we may think that we have taken ourselves somewhat off the hook by the use of a different name for the relationship since the CRC Synod of 1974. And so we remain opposed to ecumenical ventures that are of a dubious nature or even worse.

Fine! But we must also be *positive*.

It is because of that conviction that, in my judgment, it was justifiable when recently I proposed

that, as conservatives of various denominations, we join together in fostering an ecumenical undertaking that should, we hope, be able to stand the test of Scripture.

A Dream – To repeat in its entirety what I wrote last May under the title, “I Too Have a Dream”, is not necessary because a resume’ of it appears in the editorial by Professor H. C. Hoeksema in the June issue of *The Standard Bearer* – which we have reprinted, and to which I am taking the opportunity to reply. Briefly and simply, there were three things in my dream and these may bear repetition.

First, it was proposed that we call together a Congress of Conservatives, that we meet for a day or two, and that we ask spokesmen for various groups or bodies to address the gathering on what each one would envision as “The Path to Unity”.

Second, it was suggested that possibly a working organization might be brought into being with *Conservatives United* as a possible name for such a body.

Third, the thought was thrown out that eventually, by the sovereign grace of Him Whose guidance we will implore, that the outcome of all this might even prove to be a *United Reformed Church* in the United States and Canada.

A Response – There were several responses to what I had written, largely favorable. However, Professor H. C. Hoeksema’s editorial was the only published response and it is for that reason that it is being acknowledged by our reprinting of it, by making some comments about it, and also by adding a request.

1. First, let me express appreciation for the brotherly spirit in which his editorial has been written and for the consideration he has given and is further willing to give to what I have attempted to say. The approachable stance he evinces encourages me to believe that fraternal discussion should be possible and also that it ought to be pursued.

If anyone is wondering about my delay in replying to Professor Hoeksema’s editorial, let me say, what I have already relayed to him in correspondence, that the Reformed Fellowship board wished to see my reply before it was published. Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me add to this, however, that not once has the board ever tried to tell me what to write editorially and what not to write. However, if the Congress of Conservatives proposed is to be a Reformed Fellowship venture, it makes sense that the board and the editor should be agreed on a plan of action in as far as possible.

2. Professor Hoeksema makes an alternate proposal. He writes: “I believe I have a better plan. To put it in your words, Editor Vander Ploeg, I can

honestly say that I know a better way to do it.” He adds: “I propose a conference (as long as necessary) of concerned (or conservative) Christian Reformed brethren and Protestant Reformed brethren (We are, of course, all ‘conservative’)”. About this let me now offer the following observations:

a. It would be unfortunate indeed if this proposal of Professor Hoeksema would sidetrack us from getting together with conservatives from other denominations. The danger is that we together might exhaust our time and energy and efforts in a futile effort to resolve a controversy that is of fifty years’ standing.

If PRC and CRC brethren do meet for discussion, can we do this with the assurance that a possible failure to remove our mutual differences of long standing will not stymie our further efforts to get together with conservatives of our churches? Frankly, I do not welcome any prospect of coming to an impasse only to find ourselves on a dead-end street with respect to what we originally had in mind.

b. Will our PR brethren, if we come together, have anything new to say to us, anything different from what they have been saying to us since 1924? Lest this be misunderstood, let me add that I honestly respect the doctrinal convictions of our PR brethren as well as their perseverance in adhering to them regardless of what the cost may be.

But is there absolutely no possibility for those who affirm the so-called doctrine of “common grace” and those who deny it to live in closer church fellowship and union? Is this difference so basic and serious that it is impossible for us to tolerate each other as we seek to join hands in trying to promote the union of all who have so much more in common with us than our difference at this particular point?

c. Are we willing to meet with our PR brethren as Professor Hoeksema proposes? Definitely *yes!* Like Calvin we must be willing to cross seven seas (or did he say ten?) to unite the church. We are willing to meet according to the plan that Editor Hoeksema proposes. Of course, we can meet only as individuals and not in any official CRC capacity.

And, in view of the fact that Professor Hoeksema has proposed this plan, we now leave it up to him and his colleagues to take the initiative and to make the arrangements. Although we would prefer to have this get-together subsequent to the proposed Congress of Conservatives, we are willing to accept the time our PR brethren prefer to meet. Our understanding is, however, that this is not to be a substitute for the Congress of Conservatives now being planned.

A Request – Professor Hoeksema has addressed a proposal to us and, as already stated, we have decided to comply. Now we in turn make a request to him

and his colleagues, and it is our hope and prayer that they also may find it possible to comply with our request.

The request is this: that, as we approach each other, they may find it possible and also signify a willingness to view our common battle for the historic Christian faith in a broader perspective than just the "common-grace" controversy and the record of 1924.

As conservatives we wish to assure our PR brethren that we are as wholeheartedly and adamantly committed to the Scriptural teachings on the Antithesis and Sovereign Grace as they obviously are to a denial of "common grace". We may also grant, in as far as comparisons can be made, that in our Reformed structure of theology the former is more basic than the latter. And it is also possible that as CRC conservatives not all are necessarily committed to the teaching of "common grace" as we are to the conviction that the Antithesis and Sovereign Grace are clear as broad daylight in the Bible.

Professor Hoeksema entitled his editorial, "A Realistic Response to 'A Dream'". Allow me now to be just as *realistic* in repeating and underscoring a request. It is this: that we do not make mutual agreement on 1924 a sine qua non or a fixed prerequisite for further progress toward a meeting of minds and closer fellowship among ourselves. Can you, Professor Hoeksema, see any possibility of moving toward a healing of the breach or a closing of the gap between us in spite of certain difference that may remain with respect to our evaluation of 1924?

Professor Hoeksema's loyalty to the PR Church and his aversion to schism are understandable because

of his convictions. However, it does seem to me to be premature or much too early in the day to make accusations of schism. To cherish the vision or goal of having all those who are Scripturally conservative or genuinely Reformed in a United Reformed Church hardly calls for an indictment or an apology. As prophets, priests, and kings, are we not all entitled and also obligated to cherish and also to pursue such an ideal, even though we do it unofficially?

Is there not sufficient evidence in Scripture that such an ecumenical goal is fully warranted? And that it is our right as well as our duty to seek this, to work for it, and also to pray for it?

True, our efforts may lead to an impasse and to frustration. But let's venture forth together in this ecumenical undertaking — guided, of course, by Scripture and our Reformed confessions. Editor Hoeksema, what do you say?

This is our request.

Hopefully and prayerfully, we ask you to proceed with us in this way.

We are looking forward to meeting with you at a mutually agreeable time and place and according to an acceptable plan we are asking you to propose.

We are confident that as we mutually draw closer to our Lord we will also draw closer to each other for the welfare of His church and for the honor of His Name!

We gladly give the same permission to *The Standard Bearer* to reprint these lines as was accorded to us in reprinting the editorial of Professor Hoeksema.

Analysis and Response

First of all, I want to express my thanks to Rev. Vander Ploeg and *The Outlook* for reprinting my editorial response to Rev. Vander Ploeg's proposal to call a Congress of Conservatives, as well as for his words of appreciation concerning my "brotherly spirit" and "approachable stance." In my opinion, it is at least a step in the right direction when we can have an editorial exchange such as this; and I hope that this can be continued, so that this matter of a possible meeting may be resolved. For that reason I again invite *The Outlook* to reprint my editorial, and I invite Rev. Vander Ploeg to reply. And let me say from the outset that if I express myself forthrightly in this response, this must not be understood as implying that my spirit is any less brotherly, nor my

stance less approachable. I believe that clarity and forthrightness are essential in understanding one another, lest either party should be disappointed in case of a future meeting, due to the fact that the meeting does not live up to what he had expected of it.

In the second place, frankly I am rather disappointed at *The Outlook's* reply to what I thought was a clear-cut proposal, a very open-hearted proposal, and a positive proposal. I had hoped that by this time at least the preliminary meeting on arrangements for a conference might have been held. But in the hope that my proposal may still meet with acceptance from Reformed Fellowship, I make the following analysis and response.

Analysis

Permit me briefly to mention what I consider to be key elements in Rev. Vander Ploeg's reply. They are as follows:

1. Editor Vander Ploeg says that we must be *positive*, cooperation, and also church union – but only when “Reformed Christians are to be in the forefront among the advocates of inter-church fellowship, this can be achieved on the basis of Scripture.” On this I agree completely. Only that basis should be defined a bit more precisely by adding: “and the confessions.”

2. About my proposal Editor Vander Ploeg makes some observations which seem to me to be rather grave reservations:

a. He fears that the effort to resolve a controversy that is of fifty years' standing will be futile.

b. He fears that an impasse in a possible CRC - PRC conference will stymie efforts toward a Congress of Conservatives.

c. He asks whether we will have anything new to say at a conference, as also whether there is no possibility of those who affirm and those who deny common grace living in closer church fellowship and union.

d. He agrees to the meeting which I proposed, BUT with the important reservation that I and my colleagues make the arrangements. And again: “We are looking forward to meeting with you at a mutually agreeable time and place *and according to an acceptable plan we are asking you to propose.*”

3. Finally, under the heading *A Request* Rev. Vander Ploeg makes some more observations connected with his request:

a. He claims that he and his conservative fellows are “as wholeheartedly and adamantly committed to the Scriptural teachings on the Antithesis and Sovereign Grace as they (the PRC) obviously are to a denial of ‘common grace.’”

b. He is willing to grant that “common grace” is not as basic to the structure of Reformed theology as are the antithesis and sovereign grace. He suggests the possibility that not all CRC conservatives are not all necessarily committed to the teaching of “common grace.”

c. He takes exception to my objection against the last element of his “dream,” i.e., that of working toward a United Reformed Church.

d. And Rev. Vander Ploeg's request is: “that we do not make mutual agreement on 1924 a *sine qua non* or a fixed prerequisite for further progress toward a meeting of minds and closer fellowship

among ourselves.” He poses the direct question: “Can you, Professor Hoeksema, see any possibility of moving toward a healing of the breach or a closing of the gap between us in spite of certain difference(s?) that may remain with respect to our evaluation of 1924?”

Response and Comment

1. Permit me to answer that last question first. My answer is No. My reasons are as follows:

a. Rev. Vander Ploeg himself spoke in his first article of the possibility of removing obstacles (*The Outlook*, May, 1974, p. 8). It was in that same spirit that I proposed a CRC - PRC conference. I want obstacles *removed*, not ignored or stepped over or stepped around.

b. The differences of 1924 were considered of such importance by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 that common grace was elevated to the status of official church doctrine, binding upon all officebearers and members, so that we were expelled on account of refusal to subscribe to this doctrine. In 1959-'62 this same position was maintained when certain ministers and churches which left us sought affiliation with the CRC.

c. This is obviously contrary to my proposal in the June issue of the *Standard Bearer*. I proposed the subject, “The Path to Unity.” And in point 3 under my reasons I wrote: “It is no secret that I believe that all of their (the CR brethren) troubles are related – historically, doctrinally, church politically, and ethically – to 1924. They may not believe it, and they may not agree. But I would like the opportunity to be enlightened by them and proved wrong if I am wrong. Can we not discuss? Need we be afraid of discussion, even if we may seem at first to be poles apart?”

d. My position with respect to CRC - PRC relations is essentially the same as that which you stated in an editorial about the CRC - RCA “budding romance” in *The Outlook* of November, 1972: “What's wrong with this budding romance? The same thing that is wrong with a boy and a girl who are head over heels in love and go blissfully on with their courtship while they close their eyes to their basic religious differences or sweep them under the rug for the time being as if sometime, somehow, somewhere these differences will resolve themselves.” And again: “What's wrong with this budding romance? Amos hit the nail right on the head: ‘Shall two walk together except they be agreed?’” I would not want to have written – and you, too, would not want to have written – about any possible “budding romance” of CR and PR brethren what you felt impelled to write in *The Outlook* of February-March, 1973, pp. 8, 9: “With no interest in discussing the real issues that

have kept the CRC and the RCA apart, everything at the meetings was sweetness and light with a budding romance as a likelihood and hardly a cloud in the sky. At least for the time being, sticky issues were comfortably set aside.” Or again, (*The Outlook*, Nov., 1972, p. 4): “*Well, where do we go from here with all this?* Refuse even to talk together? Of course not. Just turn our back on any and every ecumenical suggestion or venture? Not that either. It was John Calvin, to the best of my memory, who said he was ‘willing to cross seven seas’ to promote the unity of the church. And, although we should shun counterfeit and unscriptural ecumenicity like the proverbial plague, we too should be willing to do no less. *But to follow the primrose path of walking and working together before we are agreed on the basics is shortsighted and irresponsible.* (italics added) ‘Timid,’ someone says. Don’t you believe it; this is *realistic.*” With these thoughts I agree. Perhaps – and some of your comments seem to indicate this – you do not think that our differences about common grace belong to the *basics*. We do not agree. But at a conference you would have the opportunity to demonstrate that they do not belong to the basics, and that, too, on the basis of Scripture and the confessions. We believe – and we shall continue to believe and teach until you show us to be wrong – that the Three Points strike at the very heart of the truth of our Reformed confessions. Or, as my late father put it in one of his brochures: they are a triple breach in the foundation of the Reformed truth.

2. You have not accepted my proposal. That is, you accepted it with the important reservation of leaving the planning to us. This is not acceptable to us. And here are my reasons:

a. This venture, if it is to succeed, must be *mutual* from the outset. *We* – you and I and our colleagues – must agree together to call a conference to remove the obstacles which separate us. If we are not agreed on this, and agreed to act jointly, there is no use in making a beginning. Besides, I am afraid that the outcome of a unilaterally arranged and called conference will be that we are accused finally of attempting to foment schism in your churches; and I will not give occasion for such an accusation.

b. How can the meeting be “at a mutually agreeable time and place and according to an acceptable plan” unless it is mutually planned and arranged? Besides, I proposed that this joint planning committee should also take care of the “ground rules” for the conference.

c. If I may put it rather bluntly, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. In your dream you called for joint planning, as I understood you. I also am calling for joint planning. And I gave you full

liberty to name the Christian Reformed and the Protestant Reformed representatives on the planning committee, if you wish, besides you and myself.

Rev. Vander Ploeg, I would like a simple Yes or No answer to the complete 4-point plan which I proposed, together with the 3 reasons which I adduced. You quote John Calvin as willing to cross seven seas for the sake of the unity of the church. My proposal is much more simple: you need only cross the city of Grand Rapids to 4949 Ivanrest Avenue.

3. You ask whether we will have anything new to say. And you express fear that a conference will be futile. My reply is:

a. I could reverse the question: will *you* have anything new to say? You see, brother Vander Ploeg, questions like this are premature. Let us *confer* on the basis of Scripture and the confessions. *We* claim that the Three Points are an essential denial of the antithesis and of sovereign grace. *You* claim to hold to both, and even to hold adamantly to the antithesis and to sovereign grace. Let us try to resolve that difference.

b. There has never really been either a written discussion or a face to face conference about these matters. For years your leaders would not so much as answer what we wrote. And the one attempted conference (at the Pantlind Hotel in 1939) was a dismal failure for two reasons: 1) None of your men were prepared, although Rev. Hoeksema came with a thoroughly prepared position paper. 2) None of the Christian Reformed men would discuss, although both our men and Dr. Schilder implored them to discuss. I was only 16 years old at that time, but I can still remember Dr. Schilder coming to my father’s door on the evening of that day and saying in utter disgust, “*k heb de smoor in.* (I’m thoroughly annoyed, or exasperated.)” Hence, I propose that we should do what for fifty years has not been done.

c. And to your fears of futility I answer: let us be *positive*. Let us not talk about futility before we even plan to confer. Do you claim to stand on the basis of Scripture and the confessions? So do I. You convince me on that basis, or allow me to convince you. I assure you that if I prepare a position paper for such a conference I will conscientiously document everything that I say. I would expect the same of a Christian Reformed position paper. And if we openly meet on the basis of Scripture and the confessions, and do so prayerfully and in dependence upon the Spirit Who leads His people into all the truth, laying aside any prejudices, cannot such a conference succeed – even as that which you propose? I would say that it *must* succeed.

4. Finally, you inquire whether I will agree to a broader conference even if the conference which I

proposed would not succeed, or even *before* the conference which I proposed. My answer is as follows:

a. I will not commit myself beforehand to a broader conference. I want to know what the nature of that conference will be, who will be present, who are to be counted as conservatives, how the conference will be conducted, etc.

b. I *did* express willingness to attend a preliminary planning session such as you suggested. And I promised to raise my questions and make my suggestions. I am a man of my word. To that promise I will stick — provided I and one or two of my colleagues may have full opportunity to speak.

c. I am of the firm conviction that we Protestant Reformed and Christian Reformed conservatives should walk together to the broader conference which you propose *agreed*. For how can two walk together except they be agreed?

d. I am open to conviction with respect to the idea of working toward a “United Reformed Church.” To me, it would be schism. What it is for you, I leave to your conscience and judgment. You see, brother Vander Ploeg, for me as of this moment a United Reformed Church would have to be a Protestant Reformed Church. Such is my deepest conviction!

Again, you have my permission to reprint this in *The Outlook*. And I look forward to your reply.

SEMINARY CONVOCATION:

Peace, A Sword, And Our Seminary

Prof. Robert D. Decker

*[The text of the address given at the convocation of
the Protestant Reformed Seminary, September 4,
1974]*

There are some statements in Scripture which capture in just a few words the entire truth. Jesus' word recorded in Matthew 10:34 is one of these statements: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” The Savior states His purpose in coming with these words. We ought to understand that this is not the only such statement from the Lord. He tells us elsewhere, for example, that He is come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; or that He is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Hence, we must not conceive of this word as an exhaustive definition of what Jesus came to do on this earth. This word does, however, get at the heart of the Savior's purpose in coming. Jesus came to save His people from their sins by way of His atoning death on the cross as sealed in His resurrection from the dead. Thus the Son of God in the flesh fulfilled the eternal counsel of God and in Him and His Body, the Church, the glory of God shall be perfectly manifest in the new creation. But all of this is accomplished exactly in the way of Christ's coming not to send peace on earth but a sword.

The meaning of our Lord's Word is quite obvious. Christ did not come to send peace on earth, He came to send a sword, i.e., conflict, war, bloodshed. He came

to set people at variance and to cause division! What Jesus presents in these words is what has come to be called in the Reformed faith and tradition, the antithesis. By this term we mean the separation put by God between the truth and the lie, Christ and the devil, light and darkness, good and evil, sin and grace. We mean the conflict resolved at the cross of Jesus Christ. And most emphatically we mean the calling of the Christian to be not conformed to this age but transformed by the renewing of his mind in order to prove the good and acceptable will of God.

Now it is not merely coincidental that Jesus states this purpose in this context. He is commissioning and qualifying the twelve apostles to go and preach the gospel of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Nowhere does the conflict become more sharply revealed or the battle more hotly contested than where the gospel is preached. For this reason the Savior encourages the twelve concerning the opposition they will encounter and the persecution they will experience as they go preaching. They have no reason to fear for the Father cares for them. There is no cause for dismay or disappointment when the gospel they preach is rejected and opposed, for Jesus' very purpose in coming is not to send peace but a sword!

And there is the word for us as we begin another season of seminary instruction. The antithesis is maintained and realized in the church and in the lives of the people of God by means of the preaching of the gospel. It is the business of the seminary to train preachers of the gospel for the churches. Hence, we speak on the subject; "Peace, A Sword, And Our Seminary."

There is an apparent contradiction here. "I am not come to send peace on earth" appears to be the exact opposite of what the Bible says elsewhere concerning the mission of Jesus Christ. At His birth announcement the angels speak of "Peace on earth and good will among men." The prophet, Isaiah, in chapter 9 of his prophecy lists among His Names: "The Prince of Peace". There are many passages which speak of Jesus' purpose in coming in terms of His bringing peace. Ephesians 2:14, 15 teaches that Christ is our peace, that He made both one, broke down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity between us, making one new man out of two; and now notice, *so* making *peace!* In Luke 1:79 Zacharias sings of Him as He Who came to "guide our feet into the way of peace." But here Jesus states emphatically; "I am not come to send peace, but a sword." How must we understand these words? How can Jesus be "the Prince of Peace" if He came to send a sword?

There is, of course, no contradiction. The Bible is a perfect harmony. Jesus' statement of purpose is precisely according to the eternal counsel of God. God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus according to which He saved the Church, created the worlds is; war, division, strife, a sword. The revelation of this purpose of God is given already in Paradise. In Genesis 3:15 we read: "And I will put enmity (hatred) between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." This word was spoken by God to Satan moments after Satan had tempted our first parents to fall. God said there is going to be hatred between the two seeds: namely, that of the woman or the church (elect) and that of the serpent, or the world (the reprobate). There is conflict here, strife, a battle and bloodshed! And the first instance of that bloodshed soon followed when Cain slew his righteous brother Abel.

The Bible from this point on records the history of that great conflict between the two seeds. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of the impending judgments upon the ungodly and he was translated that he should not see death. Noah for a hundred twenty years was a preacher of righteousness. He testified clearly "the flood is coming" and he gained not one convert in all that time. Nimrod and the world of his day built their tower of Babel in

defiance of God and His cause. The patriarchs were strangers in a strange land. The conflict was revealed in that it was Israel in Egypt's bondage. It was the heathen of Canaan against God's chosen. Finally, it was the whole world united against God's Old Testament church: Assyria, Syria and Babylon! Wherever, therefore, God revealed Himself in the old dispensation there was division, strife, a sword.

The climax to this battle came in the fullness of time when God sent the promised Son into the world. The sword became obvious already at His birth, or shortly thereafter, when Herod attempted to destroy Him and it continued all through the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Wherever Jesus Christ appeared there was the sword. He was tempted of Satan after being 40 days and nights in the wilderness, He was contradicted, denied, and rejected of men. Always there was during those three and a half years of His public ministry the deliberate attempt on the part of Satan and the world to destroy the cause of God represented in the person of His Son. That became most clearly revealed at His cross where the whole world cried, "away with Him, crucify Him," and attempted to destroy Him forever! But it was at the cross that the Prince of Peace crushed the head of the serpent. The Bible tells us that at the cross Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, even the devil. And death is swallowed up in the victory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

After the ascension and return of Jesus Christ in the Spirit the battle continues even though the issue has been decided and the victory has been won through the cross. If tradition be correct only one of the twelve apostles died in bed. So it has been throughout the ages. By means of false teachers in the church, the temptations of the world, the devil and his host oppose the gospel and attempt to destroy the cause of Christ. It is a battle which rages even in the lives of the children of God. It is the struggle between the old man of sin or the flesh and the new man in Christ. A daily and bitter struggle it is. The apostle Paul's anguished confession of his own struggle against sin recorded in Romans 7 is testimony enough!

So we see there is no contradiction between this word of Christ and what Scripture says elsewhere of the purpose of His coming. Christ is indeed the Prince of Peace and He came to bring peace. But not the peace of the world — He came to bring the peace of the kingdom of God. He did not come to bring peace to the ungodly on the earth. The gospel of the kingdom of heaven is not one of earthly peace or tranquility for all men. The message of christianity is not one of reconciliation and harmony or even one of co-existence among the people of the earth. And it certainly is not one of union between the church and

the world or between light and darkness! Christ came to send a sword! He came to fight and to destroy the ungodly as God had purposed from all eternity. According to the book of Daniel He is the Stone cut out of the mountain by no human hand which grinds to powder the kingdoms of this world. He came to bruise the head of the serpent and He dealt the death blow at the cross! The cross is the destruction of the forces of unbelief under Satan. And the Word of the cross destroyed the anti-christian wisdom of this world. By that same cross Jesus Christ brought the peace of the Kingdom of Heaven to His people. And that is the significance of this word for our seminary.

God has been *very gracious* to us from every point of view. From an external viewpoint or materially we have been given beautiful facilities in which to work. All the means and resources to provide good, sound, Reformed theological education are at our disposal. But far more important and wonderful is the fact that God has preserved His truth among us. Consider that with me: in an age of doctrinal apathy He has kept us doctrinally sensitive! In an age of almost unprecedented departure from the truth, He has kept us faithful to it. In an age of compromise and conformity, He has kept us standing fast. He continues to sanctify us in an age of immorality and lawlessness that knows no bounds. He, the God of our salvation, has done all of this! The praise and thanks belong to Him alone. But don't you see that our calling in this light becomes the more serious? The gospel of Jesus Christ must be preached. The gospel which has as its content the Holy and inspired and infallible Word of God must be preached. The Scriptures must be preached. The Word which declares the kingdom of heaven is at hand must be preached. Hence, the Word which declares the absolute sovereignty of God against the background of the total inability of the natural man to do any good. The gospel which has as its theme, salvation by grace through faith and that not of ourselves – it is the gift of God, must be preached. The gospel which proclaims the destruction of the kingdom of man and the triumph of the Kingdom of Heaven to be realized at the appearing of Jesus Christ is the Word which must be preached. And the preaching of that Gospel is the *only* means by which the truth will be maintained over against the lie, our churches will continue to manifest the marks of the true church of Jesus Christ in the world, and the only means by which God's people will be set at variance with all unbelief and sin.

And let it be underscored it is the seminary's business to train faithful preachers of that gospel. This is the great need of the churches. The Church of Jesus Christ does not need all kinds of "special ministries." The church does not need psychological

counsellors or youth ministers. Neither does our seminary specialize in all these areas – and may God forbid that it ever should in the future. What the churches do need is faithful preaching. The church needs preachers who will in obedience to Jesus Christ wield the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God! Preachers who will proclaim, "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," preachers who will not corrupt the Word by coming to the church with excellency of speech and worldly wisdom, but preachers who will speak out of sincerity in Christ and who will be determined to know nothing but Christ crucified among God's people – this is the great need of the churches. And to train such faithful preachers and to be trained as such faithful preachers of the gospel God calls us together tonight as Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

God's Word to us is plain. Professors of Theology, teach these students the Word of God, vindicate sound doctrine over against all heresy repugnant thereto. Let these students see the Reformed Truth of the Holy Scriptures in all of its power and beauty. Give these students just that, nothing less and nothing more. That is your charge from God Himself. And this charge from God means you will be opposed. The gospel does not appeal to men. The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, it cuts and divides asunder, and pierces even to the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts of the heart. For the truth we are called to teach many have given their very lives. Be encouraged by the Word of Christ Who said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Students, as preachers some day, the Lord willing, you will stand in the vanguard, you will be in the front lines of the battle! You may be sure that battle is going to increase in its intensity for sin is developing and the man of sin is more and more becoming evident in the world in which we live. All things are obviously rushing madly toward the end. Study! Work hard! Pray! The gospel for which you are training and being trained to preach *demands your all!*

Church of Jesus Christ, pray for us. We are grateful to God more than we are able to express for all your prayers, gifts, and words of encouragement in the past. We beg you to continue to remember the seminary. It needs the support of God's people. And all of us together ought to set ourselves to the task with joyful zeal! In the face of the inevitable opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ which we shall surely encounter we are not afraid. We fear none of those things which shall come to pass, for the very hairs of our head are numbered and we are of more value than many sparrows for whom our heavenly Father cares. Our Father in heaven Who numbers the

hairs of our head will surely provide for us. We shall be hated of all men for Jesus' sake. But Jesus said: "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me." And in all the battle as we bear

the sword which Christ came to bring we have His reassuring word: "He that endures to the end shall be saved."

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

... OF THE ...
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

4949 IVANREST AVENUE, S.W.
GRANDVILLE, MICHIGAN 49418

PHONE: (616) 531-1490

October, 1974

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

It has been some time since we have written to you; and with a new semester of school begun, we have a good opportunity to bring you up to date on the news at Seminary.

You will probably be interested to hear that all the work is finished at the Seminary Building. Doors have been installed on the classrooms. Outside, the landscaping is done and the attractiveness of the premises is enhanced by a beautiful lawn and various shrubs and flowering trees. The lawn is watered by an underground sprinkling system. A new sign of brick and silver lettering has been set up by the road. With the changing of the leaves from summer green to autumn's blaze of color, it is truly beautiful on "Seminary Hill".

Our new semester began with public convocation in Southwest Church. The auditorium was full; Mr. Arnie Dykstra sang several appropriate songs; and Prof. Decker delivered a stirring speech which is reprinted in this issue of the Standard Bearer. We are off to what should prove to be an exciting year. We have the largest full-time student body which we have had in all the school's history, with the possible exception of the very first year or two of the Seminary's existence. The breakdown in the student body goes like this. There are, in the pre-seminary department, two students in the freshman class, one in the sophomore class, five in the junior class, and four seniors. There are four students in the Seminary, all in their first year. Of the total of sixteen, four students are from outside the denomination.

Already last semester we began something new in Seminary. Every Wednesday morning between second and third periods, the whole Seminary comes together in the Assembly Room for chapel. The faculty members take turns leading chapel exercises.

Now that we have much more room, we are giving special attention to the expansion of our Library. Those of you who have been in the building have seen how inadequate our library is. A great deal of work has been done to put the library on the Dewey Decimal System. This work is just about completed. We are now concentrating our attention on expanding the library to make it the help it ought to be for students and faculty. But books are expensive; and so if any of our readers would like to help, donations of either money and worthwhile theological books are much appreciated.

We hope to write you again soon. Brethren, pray for us, as we do for you.

With Christian greetings,
The Faculty

ALL AROUND US

The Lausanne Congress On Evangelism

Prof. H. Hanko

Lausanne, Switzerland is about forty miles from Geneva, the home of John Calvin during most of the years of his reformatory labors and the site of the headquarters of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Gathered at Lausanne were some 2400 official participants and a large number of observers for the International Congress On World Evangelism. Members of the Congress came from over 150 nations to consider together the calling of the Church to bring the gospel to every creature.

The idea of such a Congress was born in the mind of Billy Graham, who also functioned as honorary chairman, and was put together by a planning committee of twenty-nine members with the help of 150 international evangelical leaders functioning as convenors. The Congress met for ten days for speeches, conferences, discussions of position papers and strategy papers – all for the purpose of uniting evangelicals to get on with the task of “evangelizing the world.” The Congress climaxed with the signing of a rather lengthy document called “The Lausanne Covenant” by most of the participants and some observers in which was expressed “an evangelical consensus on matters” affecting evangelism.

The Congress was obviously in competition with the World Council of Churches. Many evangelicals have become disillusioned with the WCC. The areas of disagreement are two. Many are unhappy with the WCC because of the increasing emphasis which this organization puts upon social involvement. Others express concern over the fact that the WCC more and more leans towards the position that the Christian faith ought not to enter into competition with pagan religions and Jewish orthodoxy. Leaders of the WCC have expressed the conviction that faith in Christ is not essential to salvation, but that the convictions of any man, regardless of his religion, are sufficient.

The competition into which the Lausanne Congress entered was evident in various ways. The mere fact that the Congress met so near WCC headquarters was intended to serve notice to the WCC that it had better change its stance on various issues if it wants evangelical co-operation. There were also various articles in the “Covenant” which were quite obviously aimed at positions in the WCC. E.g., in Art. 4 the Congress stated: “We also reject as derogatory

to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies.” Further, in Article 5 we find the statement: “. . . Reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation . . .” While the Congress did not become a self-perpetuating body and did not set up an official structure, nevertheless, a Continuation Committee of thirty members will be chosen to carry on the work of the Congress. And it was the expressed hope of many delegates that a permanent organization would result which would, in time, replace the WCC in the allegiance of evangelicals.

An evaluation of the Lausanne Congress would show that it was a rather typical evangelical meeting. The “Covenant” shows that there are some strengths in the evangelical movement. There are parts of the Covenant which are basically sound. E.g., Article 2 deals with “The Authority and Power of the Bible.” The committee to draw up the preliminary document did not present as strong a version as was finally incorporated into the text. The strengthening of this article was due to the suggestion of Francis Schaeffer, the well-known leader of ’L Abri in Switzerland. It reads:

We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God’s word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all mankind. For God’s revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy Spirit still speaks today. He illumines the minds of God’s people in every culture to perceive its truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole church ever more of the many-colored wisdom of God.

Furthermore, the Congress, by its “Covenant” repudiated such modern heresies as Universalism, Syncretism, and Humanism. As a slap at the WCC, it reaffirmed its intention not to support the social gospelism of that organization.

But there are many weaknesses. If the Congress had met in Lausanne during the days of John Calvin

and he had been an interested observer from his vantage point in Geneva, he would have left the Congress with a heart saddened by the colorless and bland Arminianism of the "Covenant".

As is characteristic of evangelicalism, the "Covenant" is an Arminian document. This is true from two different points of view. On the one hand, the "Covenant" fails entirely to set forth the truths of sovereign grace rooted in sovereign election. The closest that the "Covenant" comes to anything resembling this is a statement in Article 14: "We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father sent his Spirit to bear witness to his Son, without his witness ours is futile. Conviction of sin, faith in Christ, new birth and Christian growth are all his work." But on the other hand, even this mild and bland statement is contradicted by other statements which set forth clearly the Arminian position. While liberal Universalism is rejected, the "Covenant" nevertheless affirms: "... God loves all men ..." (Article 3) Or again, in the same article: "To proclaim Jesus as 'the Saviour of the world' is not to affirm that all men are either automatically or ultimately saved, still less to affirm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God's love for a world of sinners and to invite all men to respond to him as Saviour and Lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith."

It is not surprising that, within this context, the Arminian ideas are set forth of a gospel which is "an offer", "an invitation", a means of "persuading people to come to (Christ) personally and so be reconciled to God." (Cf. Article 4 on "The Nature of Evangelism") There is no mention whatsoever of the gospel as the *power* of God unto salvation; as the sovereign means whereby God calls His elect out of darkness into light, and as a means to harden the reprobate in the way of their impenitence and unbelief.

Such Arminianism is, after all, a form of Universalism insofar as a "gospel offer" is a manifestation of a *universal* love of God. It is a peculiar thing that evangelicals cannot seem to get it through their heads that this "mild" form of Universalism is after all a fundamental concession to the most liberal Universalism; and that therefore, Arminianism is incipient modernism. The path which the Lausanne Congress has chosen to walk is the path which leads, in a matter of a short time, into the arms of the WCC which organization they have tried so hard to condemn.

Another interesting facet of the Congress was the struggle over the question of the social calling of the Church. There were many so-called "Third World" representatives present. Especially these pushed hard to bring the Congress to the position of taking a

social stance towards the world's problems. According to reports, a great deal of the discussion and debate of the Congress centered exactly in this question. In fact, there were many "rump sessions" of representatives who were not satisfied with the direction the Congress was moving in this area.

But the position of the "Covenant" is ambiguous. On the one hand, the "Covenant" explicitly repudiates the trends found in the WCC. But on the other hand, a rather strong statement on the Church's social responsibility was included. Article 5 is entitled "Christian Social Responsibility", and reads:

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society (This second statement is supposed to be a conclusion from the first, a conclusion indicated by the use of the word "Therefore". But how this statement follows from the first is more than I can see. Why does the fact that God is both Creator and Judge of men necessarily imply that God is concerned for justice and reconciliation throughout human society, and why does it follow that we must share that concern? Of such *non sequiturs* are heresies made. H.H.) and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression. Because mankind is made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.

The difference between this statement on social responsibility and the position of liberals is only one of degree. There is no basic doctrinal difference between the two positions. Evangelicals are simply not yet prepared to go as far as liberals and modernists. But when one sets himself upon a given path, he will move ahead. He cannot stand still. The official delegates at Lausanne are walking down a road that leads to WCC headquarters in Geneva.

And so, in conclusion, we ought to observe that once again evangelicalism has taken a giant stride in the direction of using evangelism as a means to further the cause of ecumenicity. This was begun

with the whole Key '73 Program; it is continuing at Lausanne; what shall be the next step in that direction time will tell.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

“Hyper-Calvinism” and the Call of the Gospel (4)

Rev. David Engelsma

Throughout their history, up to the present day, the Protestant Reformed Churches have been misrepresented as hyper-Calvinists, because of their denial of the well-meant offer of the gospel. This has been done by charging that they preach only to the elect, by charging that they refuse to call everyone to Christ, by charging that they do not believe in missions, and by outrightly referring to them as hyper-Calvinists. In various ways, men have represented their opposition to the well-meant offer of the gospel as a denial of the serious call of the gospel to all who hear the preaching and a weakening of the Church's calling to preach the gospel to every creature, commanding all who come under the preaching to repent and believe. This is total, and usually inexcusable, misrepresentation.

A.C. De Jong did this in his book, *The Well-Meant Gospel Offer: The Views of H. Hoeksema and K. Schilder*, a book that has framed the opinion that many have of the Protestant Reformed Churches' denial of the well-meant offer. De Jong criticized Hoeksema's denial of the offer as a virtual destruction of lively gospel preaching. He suggested that Hoeksema's rejection of the offer means that Hoeksema cannot, indeed does not want to, preach to all, and that Hoeksema cannot call everyone who hears the preaching to believe on Christ. For Hoeksema, preaching becomes “the communication of a certain group of logically interrelated doctrines” (*The Well-meant Gospel Offer*, p. 110). “There is in Hoeksema's theology a subtle mutation of preaching into a report of an objective and fixed set of circumstances” (p. 111). Hoeksema merely “admits that all sinners are called to repent and believe” (p. 111). But his denial of the offer really makes this impossible: he can only call men “to a decision for or against a set of truths . . .” (p. 111). Because he denies the offer, Hoeksema is guilty of “restricting the proclamation of the good news that whosoever

believeth on Christ shall not perish but have eternal life. He cannot personally address the good news” (p. 123). De Jong speaks of Hoeksema's “depreciation of genuine responsibility and real decision” (p. 177). In short, Hoeksema is a hyper-Calvinist, unwilling to preach the good news promiscuously, and unable to call all sinners, in all seriousness, to repentance and faith.

We must refrain from taking up De Jong's amazing assertion that preaching is not “in the first moment the communication of a certain group of . . . doctrines,” and that preaching is not “in the first instance an explication of an objective set of circumstances (or) a communication of a certain truth,” but that preaching is “in the first moment” and “in the first instance” a “summons to share in Christ's victory over sin” (pp. 110, 111). Let it suffice to say that we regard preaching differently. “In the first instance,” preaching is exactly the communication of doctrine and truth, that is, the announcement of that which God has done and will do in Jesus Christ. It is the official declaration of *news*, the good news of God's gracious salvation. It is “the explication of an objective set of circumstances”. “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures . . . and he rose again the third day . . .” (I Cor. 15:3, 4). Good, apostolic gospel-preaching is, in addition, a declaration of “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Then, and only then, it is also a “testifying . . . repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). To construe preaching as “in the first moment” in the imperative mood (telling man what he must do), and not in the indicative mood (telling man what God has done and promises to do), is to produce the monstrosity that passes for gospel-preaching today: a few minutes about Jesus followed by a twenty minute altar call. But we let this go. Our concern is only to show that Hoeksema's

denial of the offer had nothing to do with any hesitancy on Hoeksema's part to give a summons to all who come under the preaching to believe on Christ, and that his denial of the offer implied no restriction of full, lively gospel-preaching.

What it is that the Protestant Reformed Churches object to in the well-meant offer of the gospel, what the issue really is in their denial of the offer, is made crystal-clear in Hoeksema's book, *Een Kracht Gods Tot Zaligheid of Genade Geen Aanbod (A Power of God unto Salvation, or Grace No Offer, 1930)*¹ Already in the earliest history of the Protestant Reformed Churches, men tried to leave the impression that the issue was the failure of the Protestant Reformed Churches to do justice to the call of the gospel to everyone who hears the preaching. Hoeksema insisted that this was misrepresentation, and that the issue was something quite different.

A certain Rev. Keegstra had written that Hoeksema's denial of the well-meant offer of the gospel as adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 was really a denial that the gospel must be preached to everyone and a denial that God seriously calls everyone who hears the preaching to repent and believe. Against Keegstra, Hoeksema wrote that the issue involved in denying the offer had nothing to do with the question whether the gospel should be preached to everyone:

Our difference does not at all have to do with the question, whether the gospel, according to the will of God, must also be preached to all who are in our audience, reprobate as well as elect. This is taken for granted on both sides (*A Power of God unto Salvation*, p. 20).

Note well, (the issue) is not whether the gospel must be proclaimed by the preacher to all men who sit in his audience without distinction. Every Reformed man believes this (p. 27).

Nor is this the issue, that the Protestant Reformed Churches dislike to *call* everyone who hears the preaching:

We have nothing against a universal *demand* of faith and conversion. About this there is no dispute. . . That the demand of conversion and faith applies to all, even though all cannot fulfill it and even though it is only almighty grace that enables one to fulfill it, we readily grant (p. 30).

Hoeksema expresses agreement with Calvin who taught "that through the ministry of the gospel by men, many are called in the external sense of the word; called to faith and conversion; called to the salvation in Christ; that many come under the promise: whoever believes has eternal life. But this is something entirely different from confessing that God now well-meaningly offers His salvation in Christ

to all who hear the Word" (p. 63). Almost impatiently, Hoeksema rejected the misrepresentation of his stand against the offer:

Let us keep this point firmly in mind. The question is not what God demands. The question is also not whether God wills that the gospel shall be preached to all without distinction to whom He sends it according to His good pleasure. No, the question is simply this: is that gospel according to its content a well-meaning and common offer on God's part (p. 68)? Rev. Keegstra, please, there is between us no difference over the fact that many who are called by the gospel perish in their unbelief! Nor is there any question between us about the equally firm fact that the guilt of such unbelief does not lie in any lack in Christ, but in themselves (p. 105).

What then was the issue in the common grace controversy of 1924? Why did Hoeksema refuse to subscribe to the doctrine of the well-meant offer of the gospel, even though the price he paid was expulsion from the Christian Reformed Church? Why do the Protestant Reformed Churches repudiate the offer today? Hoeksema opposed the doctrine of the well-meant offer of the gospel that was taught by the Christian Reformed Church in the first point of common grace of 1924. The teaching of that first point is that God has a "favorable attitude . . . towards humanity in general and not only towards the elect," that there is "a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general," and that "the general offer of the gospel" is an expression of that favor or grace of God to all men. With reference to this first point of common grace and its doctrine of the offer, Hoeksema wrote:

What is the real point of the first point (*het puntje van dit eerste punt*)? Only this, that the offer of the gospel is common? No, but that this offer of the gospel is *common grace* (emphasis his-DE). The preaching of the gospel, so the Synod of 1924 has taught, is God's grace, not only for the elect, but also for the reprobate, not only for those who are saved by it, but also for those who perish under it. That is the point. The preaching of the gospel is *grace for all* (pp. 16, 17).

The well-meant offer teaches that God goes out, in the preaching, to many sinners in love and grace, desiring to save them and trying to save them, but failing to save them. Concerning such a view, Hoeksema wrote:

I find this in one word, terrible. For to me it is nothing less than a direct denial of the almighty grace of the Savior, a denial of the sovereign grace of God; an enthronement of the will of man (p. 45).

The issue at stake in the doctrine of the offer is nothing less than the truth of sovereign grace: ". . . the standpoint of 1924 is Arminian. That the preaching of the gospel is common grace — this is the

Arminian conception" (p. 17). In opposition to the well-meant offer, Hoeksema held, not that there is no call to all who hear the gospel, but that "the preaching of the gospel is grace *only* for the elect, and that it is not and can never be anything else for the reprobate than a judgment and a savor of death to death." This is the issue; this is "our difference with the Christian Reformed Church" (p. 17).

The well-meant offer teaches that God's grace is universal. The Protestant Reformed Churches maintain that God's grace is particular, specifically now in the preaching of the gospel. The truth that God's grace is particular is essential for a confession of the *sovereignty* of grace — if God's grace in the preaching is for everybody, it is not sovereign grace. And the truth that God's grace in the preaching of the gospel is particular, sovereign grace is the very heart of the Reformed faith:

For him who loves the Reformed faith, the confession that God's grace is particular is of the very highest importance. He sees it as one of the most fundamental articles of faith. He maintains thereby that God the Lord is absolutely sovereign and that He alone determines who shall be saved. With this confession, as far as he is concerned, stands or falls the entire Reformed faith. By this confession, it is maintained that God is God, that no one is God except Him ("Foreword" of *A Power of God*).

The Protestant Reformed Churches have persevered in warding off the hyper-Calvinistic danger on the left hand, even as they did battle with Arminianism on the right hand. In the early 1950's, through a fierce internal struggle, they rejected the doctrine of a conditional covenant, a doctrine essentially the same as that of the well-meant offer of salvation. At that time, they adopted "A Brief Declaration of Principles" in which they confessed the doctrine of God's unconditional covenant of grace, and the truth of the unconditional promise of the gospel.² Even though they had their eye on the teaching that the preaching is a conditional promise of God to all hearers, a teaching found at that time within their own denomination, they did not react by swinging over to the other, hyper-Calvinistic extreme. In the very "Declaration" in which they condemned the doctrine of a conditional promise, they steadfastly confessed that the preaching of the (particular) promise is and must be promiscuous, and that the preaching calls all hearers to repent and believe:

This *preaching* of the particular promise is promiscuous to all that hear the gospel with the *command*, not a condition, to repent and believe."

"And we maintain:

1. That God surely and infallibly fulfills His promise to the elect.

2. The sure promise of God which He realizes in us as rational and moral creatures not only makes it impossible that we should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness but also confronts us with the obligation of love, to walk in a new and holy life, and constantly to watch unto prayer.

All those who are not thus disposed, who do not repent but walk in sin, are the object of His just wrath and excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven.

That the preaching comes to all; and that God seriously commands to faith and repentance, and that to all those who come and believe He promises life and peace.

It is indisputable that the Protestant Reformed Churches' rejection of a well-meant offer and a conditional promise is not, and never was, motivated by hyper-Calvinism, that is, by a refusal to preach the gospel to every creature, a refusal to call every hearer to repentance and faith, and a refusal to proclaim to everyone the promise that whoever believes shall be saved. This was simply not the issue. As we will see more fully in a following article, the issue in the doctrine of a well-meant offer of the gospel is this: does God love and have a gracious attitude towards everyone who hears the preaching, and does He, in the preaching, desire to save everyone? As Hoeksema never wearied of asking, "What grace does the reprobate receive in the preaching?"

Just as it is misrepresentation to set forth Hoeksema's rejection of the offer as hyper-Calvinism, so it is nothing but a caricature to portray him and others who deny the offer as men who, by virtue of their rejection of the offer, lack the ardor of the apostle Paul to gain and save many (I Cor. 9:19ff), as men who are unable or unwilling to beseech others to be reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:20), and as men who take delight in preaching men to hell. Invariably, critics of his opposition to the offer have painted Hoeksema in these colors. Essentially, it is nothing more or less than the hoary Arminian calumny of the Reformed preacher, because of his confession of the doctrine of reprobation. Everything that has been said along these lines about those who deny that God is gracious to all in the preaching holds with equal validity for those who confess reprobation. But the portrayal is false, if not malicious. In the spirit of Calvin, who called the doctrine of reprobation the "*decretum horrible*"³ (without for a moment ceasing to confess and publicly proclaim it), Hoeksema admonished his students never to take the word, "reprobation," on their lips, in their preaching and teaching, without trembling. In his book, *A Power of God*, after he has explained II Corinthians 2:14-16, Hoeksema wrote:

From a human viewpoint, a preacher may want to save all who are in his audience, and want to take

them with him to heaven. Certainly he will not, cannot, and may not seek to be a savor of death unto death. His calling is to be a good savor of Christ, and to preach God's Word faithfully. If he does this, his task is fulfilled, and he leaves the outcome to the Lord.

But the faithful preacher also "prepared himself to be willing to be a savor of death unto death, as well as a savor of life unto life. For such is the will of God. And only in this way is he always a conqueror" (p. 96).

¹The book has not been translated. All quotations from it are my translations of the Dutch.

²This "Declaration of Principles," which was intended "to be used only by the Mission Committee and the Missionaries for the organization of prospective Churches" appears in the back of the book containing the church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The book can be obtained from the Stated Clerk of the Churches.

³*Institutes*, III, XXIII, 7. Calvin is speaking of God's decree that some men perish eternally through the fall of Adam which He ordained. "Here the most loquacious tongues must be dumb. The decree, I admit, is dreadful; and yet it is impossible to deny that God foreknew that the end of man was to be before he made him, and foreknew, because he had so ordained by his decree."

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

SEPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Rev. John A. Heys

It pleased God to give to Noah and his wife three sons through whom He would replenish the earth with seed. It also pleased Him to separate the descendants of these three sons and to scatter them over the face of this earth. This occurred after these descendants had begun to build the tower of Babel.

But in seeking to understand and appreciate this work of God whereby He separated people who were blood relatives, and caused them to become fiercely national, and peoples who lived in murderous enmity and bloody warfare against each other, we must bear in mind that precious truth of Scripture that "all things work together for good to those that love God", as well as the truth that God has a sovereign, eternal, unchangeable counsel according to which all of history unfolds. And it unfolds according to His covenant promise which, Paul teaches us in Galatians 3:16, was given to Christ.

It is the Church of Christ that is in danger here when the whole human race of that day sought to unite, remain one universal kingdom in defiance of God's command to scatter, multiply and replenish the earth. Creation was for the sake of Christ and His Church. The fall of man was for that sake a fact in the history of this world. The flood was sent for that reason. And now the confusion of man's speech causing the peoples to scatter was for the good of God's Church of which Christ is the Head.

At the tower of Babel God's word to Satan became quite evident in its truth, namely, that there would be two seeds, two kinds of people from a spiritual point of view in the world, that the one would seek to destroy the other in a hatred of God, while the other would have the victory through Christ Who, by His cross and Spirit, fills this people with love to God and

enmity against Satan and his whole kingdom. When, then, the seed of the serpent sought to build this universal kingdom of the Antichrist so shortly after the flood, the hatred of that seed against God displayed itself; and the heel of the seed of the woman was in danger of being crushed. Behind it was Satan himself seeking to keep this Seed of Abraham, namely, Christ, from being born and from receiving His kingdom. And let it never be forgotten that the church is always smaller than the world. The number of God's people — although an innumerable host — is always a little flock in comparison with the hordes of Satan's spiritual seed.

And for the sake of His Church God divided the power of the enemy by causing the seed of Shem, Ham and Japheth to separate from each other and develop into nations, tongues and tribes. It must not escape our attention that when God confused man's speech, He did more than give them different words to pronounce for the same object. THAT is not today the difference between an American and a Chinese or Japanese. That is not the difference between a Communist and a citizen of a democratic nation.

Speech, we should remember, is the expression of what resides in the soul. Words are but tools, means, agencies for expressing what dwells in the heart and soul of man. The work God wrought there at the tower of Babel went much deeper than the tongues, the lips and even the gray matter of the brain of man. It was a work in the very souls of these descendants of Noah's three sons. And they had to cease building the tower, not because they could not understand one another's words, for that could be overcome, just as many Chinese and Japanese use our words. It takes a little while, but one can learn to use the words of another race and nation, and communicate. But there

was wrought in the builders of the tower of Babel – the Church had no part in it and did not lift a finger to lay a brick – a disagreement as to how the tower should be built. There came a difference of opinion, a conflict in the souls of the various descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth. Therefore they not only quit constructing a building on which they could not agree, but willingly, and with bitterness in their souls, separated from each other. And Nimrod's whole Antichristian kingdom fell into ruin!

Now two seeds, the one of the woman and the other of the serpent, will develop, but in different ways. The seed of the serpent will develop in sin; and sin will reveal itself in all its evil and godlessness. The seed of the serpent will now be able to develop in sin and produce sins that it could not possibly have practiced without this confusion of speech and scattering to produce separate races and nations. Each nation, tongue and tribe will now develop sin in its own way and with its own nature. Each will bring a particular aspect of sin to its full development so that when, according to God's counsel, all the nations are again united by the Antichrist of Revelation 13, the tree of sin will have produced all the fruit it can, and all the varieties of fruit that it can. Even as races and nations have their own spicy or bland foods which are peculiar to them, their own music, their own philosophies, their own crafts and arts, so they have their own sins in all these departments of their lives, and wherein they develop in sin. And when in the days of the Antichrist all these nations who have been, according to God's counsel, working at their sins and developing sin with their own natures, temperaments, resources and talents shall unite, we will have that mystery of lawlessness, that man of sin, of which Paul writes in II Thessalonians 2:3 and 4. And when they unite it is not in order to serve the living God, but it is exactly a repetition of the tower of confusion so that they seek to make a name for themselves, the name: Rebels before God! Each tribe, race and nation will try to make a name for itself apart from God with its own philosophy and world and life view. Each will rebel in its own sphere and in its own way. And when it sees, as it does today, that it cannot go on this way and that man will wipe mankind from off the face of this earth, they will agree to make a united name of rebellion against God to defy Him, sit in His temple, take over His whole creation for the lust of the flesh and build their new "tower" with the conviction that this time they are going to succeed. And it will for a time look as though they have succeeded and that God is dead! Each nation will contribute its own part to this last desperate act of defiance against the living God; and the two witnesses shall lie dead in the street, and the serpent will seem to have had the victory.

The confusion of man's speech must serve that purpose. Sin must be seen in all its sinfulness before Christ can return. And hell must become the place where the inhabitants see not a little foolishness and incorrect thinking but the desperately wicked character of the whole human race as it fell in Adam, and see the strict and perfect justice and holiness of God Who punishes sin with death and the lake of fire.

But there is another side exactly because all things work together for good to those that love God. This confusion of speech was wrought by God for the good of the Church. That positive aspect we must never forget. And that does not mean simply that the church is now safe to grow, while the rest of the human race is busy fighting itself, and while factions live in war and strife with other factions. All this is true, and as we look back on history we can see how this has benefited the church and always left a country to which the believers might flee to preserve the truth and develop in it.

God has designed a church which is the body of Christ, and a body has not only a definite number of members but a variety of members all in their own places with their own work to perform and with their own talents for the performance of this work. Together it becomes one organism in which each member contributes something to the rest and works in harmony with the other members under the control of the head. And the church of Christ, of which He is the Head, (and therefore it is His church) does consist of peoples from every nation, tongue and tribe, with different natures, temperaments and talents. It must not be, and is not, a church of Abraham's fleshly seed, even though for a time it pleased God that, with few exceptions, the members of it would be his children. Yes, Premillennialism to the contrary, Stephen as guided by the Holy Spirit, and not misguided by his own fallible mind, spoke, as recorded in Acts 7, of "the *church* in the wilderness." Yes, the church was there. The believing Jews are in the kingdom, but they are also in the church of Christ.

To change the figure and use one that both Paul and Peter use, let us think of that church, not as the body of Christ, but as the temple of God in which He dwells by the Spirit of Christ. Here again not only a predetermined size and shape is implied, but suggested at once also are materials of many kinds. Peter speaks of the believers being lively stones. The holy city, the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21, which is also called the bride of Christ, and thus His Church, is presented and pictured as made up of precious metals as gold and silver, of beautiful gems and pearls. And in Malachi 3:17 we read of Christ coming to make up His jewels.

But at any rate the church becomes the beautiful building of God, by His grace, as God in inscrutable wisdom designed it from eternity, and to realize it not only sent His Son to purchase it, but also confused man's speech, scattered the one human race into various nations, tongues and tribes to prepare His material for that holy temple.

Here the Heidelberg Catechism speaks so beautifully again in Lord's Day 21, when asking the question, "What believest thou concerning the 'holy catholic church' of Christ?" and answers, "That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and forever shall remain a living member thereof."

The Son of God gathers that church and gathers black and white, yellow and red, peoples from every country and from the islands of the sea. This He does not do equally. A temple is not all stones. A body is not all heart or legs. But enough of each nation, tongue and tribe are gathered by that Son of God to realize the church He chose. And the right members of each nation, tongue and tribe He gathers, because

He knows whose names are eternally written in His book of life.

For the glory of that church the peoples were scattered, for the believers to develop along their own lines appointed for them and with the natures, temperaments, talents and experiences divinely planned for them, so that by His grace they all contribute what He has given them; and "the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it (the holy city); and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it." Revelation 21:24, 26.

Christ by His Spirit works this unification. The evil spirit, Satan, seeks to heal that breach by education, science, treaties and alliances of men, and by fear of a war that threatens the extinction of the whole human race. For a time he will seem to have succeeded. But it is Christ by that still, small, but irresistibly powerful, voice of His Spirit Who gathers out of all these nations, tongues and tribes ONE church prepared to be one body, with one life, and one purpose in life, namely, to glorify the sovereign, all-glorious God of our salvation.

Indeed, all things work together for our good!

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Eschatology - The First Period - The Resurrection

Rev. H. Veldman

In our discussion of the history of doctrines as set forth by the church during these early years of the New Dispensation, 80 - 250 A.D., we will now call attention to the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh or of the body.

The late Rev. H. Hoeksema, in his notes on the history of dogma, observes that the teaching of the glorious resurrection of the body was general in this period, and that it was generally accepted that the same body that was buried would be raised in the last day. However, several speculative questions were raised even at this time in connection with the resurrection of the body. These questions concerned especially the form of the resurrection body and more particularly those members for which there will be no place and no function in glory, as for instance, the digestive and the sexual organs. And, as far as the latter was concerned, Irenaeus uses the rather less appealing illustration of the mule. Origen makes an

attempt to eliminate from the conception of the resurrection all those elements to which reason might object and in that way of rationalism sometimes almost loses the reality of the resurrection. As might be expected the Gnostics denied the resurrection of the body entirely.

Hagenback makes the observation, in footnotes which appear at the conclusion of his writing in his *History of Doctrines*, Vol. I, page 218, that it naturally excites surprise that, while Paul represents the resurrection of Christ as the central point of the whole doctrine, the fathers of this present period keep this fact so much in the background; at least it is not, with all of them, the foundation of their opinions concerning the resurrection of the body. This, however, does not apply to all the fathers of this early period. Some, as Athenagoras, who devoted an entire book to the subject, and Minucius Felix, are entirely silent on the resurrection of Christ, whereas others also rest their arguments chiefly upon reason

and analogies from nature, as the change of day and night, seed and fruit, etc. I am sure that it will be of interest to call attention to the writings of these fathers in connection with the glorious Scriptural truth of the resurrection of the body.

ATHENAGORUS

In Athenagoras, whose very name is a retrospect, we discover a remote result of St. Paul's speech on Mars Hill which the apostle delivered in the city of Athens (see Acts 17). Do we not recognize the name, Athens, in his name, Athenagoras? We read in Acts 17 that "when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked." But here, in Athenagoras, comes a philosopher, from the Athenian *agora*, a convert to St. Paul's argument in his Epistle to the Corinthians, confessing "the unknown God," demolishing the marble mob of deities that so "stirred the apostle's spirit within him," and teaching alike the Platonist and the Stoic to sit at the feet of Jesus. "Dionysius the Areopagite, and the woman named Damaris," (see Acts 17:34) are not longer to be despised as the scanty first-fruits of Attica. They, too, have found a voice in this splendid trophy of the Gospel; and, "being dead, they yet speak" through him.

Athenagoras has written a treatise on the Resurrection. As a firm and loving voice to this keynote of Christian faith, it rings like an anthem through all the variations of his thought and argument. Comparing his own blessed hope with the delusions of a world lying in wickedness, and looking stedfastly to the life of the world to come, what a sublime contrast we find in this figure of Christ's witness to the sensual life of the heathen, and even to the groping wisdom of the Attic ages. This treatise is the outcome of meditation on that sad history in the Acts, which expounds St. Paul's bitter reminiscences, when he says that his gospel was, "to the Greeks, foolishness." Of the Athenians, we read in Acts 17:32, that when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said that they would hear him again of this matter. The apostle had left them under the confused impressions they had expressed in the words, "he seemeth to be a setter-forth of new gods." Paul had preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection, and what did the Athenians want of any more wares of that sort, especially under the introduction of a poor Jew from parts unknown? Did the apostle's prophetic soul foresee Athenagoras, as he "departed from among them"? However that may be, his blessed Master "knew what he would do." He could let none of Paul's words fall to the ground, without taking care that some seeds should bring forth fruit a thousand-fold. Here come the sheaves at last.

Athenagoras proves, also, what our Saviour meant, when He said to the Galileans, "Ye are the light of the world."

We cannot quote, of course, this treatise of Athenagoras on the Resurrection in detail. He addresses himself to the view of wicked men that the resurrection is impossible. They, who oppose the resurrection of the dead, must show that this resurrection is either impossible for God, or contrary to His will. If they cannot do this, let them cease from their godless unbelief, and from their blasphemy against sacred things. Then, in chapter III, the writer declares that God Who could create can also raise from the dead. He writes, and we quote:

For that power which could give shape to what is regarded by them as shapeless matter, and adorn it, when destitute of form and order, with many and diverse forms, and gather into one the several portions of the elements, and divide the seed which was one and simple into many, and organize that which was unorganized, and give life to that which had no life, — that same power can reunite what is dissolved, and raise up what is prostrate, and restore to life again, and put the corruptible into a state of incorruption. And to the same Being it will belong, and to the same power and skill, to separate that which has been broken up and distributed among a multitude of animals of all kinds which are wont to have recourse to such bodies, and glut their appetite upon them, — to separate this, I say, and unite it again with the proper members and parts of members, whether it has passed into some one of those animals, or into many, or thence into others, or, after being dissolved along with these, has been carried back again to the original elements, resolved into these according to a natural law — a matter this which seems to have exceedingly confounded some, even of those admired for wisdom, who, I cannot tell why, think those doubts worthy of serious attention which are brought forward by the many.

Incidentally, we are quoting here from Volume II of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, pages 149 f.f. Here the writer declares that the living God, Who created all things, can certainly raise the dead, can certainly reunite what has been dissolved, yea even although what has been broken up has been distributed among a multitude of animals.

In conclusion, the writer sets forth his conviction that the necessity of the resurrection also follows from the purpose of man's creation. Man was certainly not created at random and in vain, but for some purpose. Besides, the resurrection of the body also rests upon the fact of a future judgment. Man must be possessor both of a body and soul in the hereafter, in order that the judgment passed upon him may be just. And he declares that the resurrection is necessary when viewed in the light of the chief end of man.

(to be continued)

News From Our Churches

CLASSIS REPORT
September 14, 1974

The convocation exercises of the Seminary were held on September 4. Prof. R. Decker gave the inspirational address, entitled "Peace, A Sword, and our Seminary." After the address, Prof. H. C. Hoeksema presented the students to the overflow crowd assembled there in Southwest Church. By the time he had finished, no fewer than fifteen young men (and one member of the student body was absent) had risen for the introduction. That in itself, as the Rector pointed out, in his remarks, made of this particular Convocation an historic one. He recalled that it had been but eleven years ago that our Seminary started the term with two professors and only one student. Now . . . twelve pre-seminarians and four seminarians — under three professors. And, in addition, for the first time in the history of our theological school, three young men from outside our denomination are enrolled for training in our Seminary Department, and one in the Pre-Seminary.

After the presentation of the students, the chairman again took the floor for the closing remarks. "What," he asked rhetorically, "do you suppose a 66 year old minister is thinking when he sees a student body of this size?" Perhaps the age marks the identity of the speaker, too, but playful witticism of that sort could only have come from . . . our Rev. H. Veldman.

Rev. R. Van Overloop closed the meeting. Before he led in prayer, however, he made a special appeal to those in the audience to remember the professors and the students, in their private prayers and in their family devotions. For a task which has, in addition to its joys, also its problems, of which we can see, as Rev. Van Overloop mentioned, only the surface, these men are much in need of our frequent and fervent prayers. And for an institution which plays such a vital role in the life of our denomination, we do well to heed that request.

D.D.

*Report of Classis West
held in Randolph, Wisconsin
on September 4, 1974*

Rev. Richard Moore, president of the previous Classis, led Classis in opening devotions. After singing and prayer, he read Psalm 127 and spoke to the Classis on verse 1: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

The eleven churches in Classis West were represented by a minister and an elder except for Edgerton which was represented by two elders. Three

ministers from Classis East were also present as synodical deputies to witness and approve the examination of a candidate for the ministry, and they were given advisory vote. Rev. Bernard Woudenberg presided over the Classis.

The main work of this Classis was the examination of Mr. James Slopsema, who had accepted the call from the Edgerton congregation. Mr. Slopsema

(continued on back page)

CONGRATULATORY ANNOUNCEMENT

On behalf of our congregation we extend to Rev. George Lubbers our hearty and sincere congratulations upon the completion of forty years of faithful ministry in the Word of God in and for our Churches, serving both as pastor and missionary.

We give thanks to our faithful Covenant God Who has given him this great privilege and the grace to serve in this glorious ministry which He has abundantly blessed. Soli Deo Gloria!

It is our prayer that the King of His Church will continue to bless and provide for Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers as they continue to serve in the midst of His Kingdom.

Consistory of First Church
Grand Rapids, Michigan
Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
James Heys, Clerk

Correction

My telephone number is incorrectly given in the 1974 Yearbook of our churches. Please write the following correction in your Yearbook, lest you "get a wrong number" if you attempt to call me: (616) 534-7308. Incidentally, if there should be other mistakes of this kind, I will gladly print corrections in the *Standard Bearer*.

— H. C. Hoeksema

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. A. Schmidt, in the loss of her husband

MR. ALBERT SCHMIDT

May the Lord comfort her in her bereavement, and may she know that He who controls all things doeth them well.

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Hull (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to two of its members, Mr. Alvin Kooiker and Mr. Glenn Kooiker in the passing of their mother, MRS. NICK KOOIKER. May they be comforted with the promise found in Rev. 14:13 — "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.
Mrs. Ken Hoksbergen, Sec'y.

preached before the delegates at a worship service of the Randolph congregation on the evening of September 3. His text was I Corinthians 10:13. Classis examined the candidate in Dogmatics, Knowledge of Scripture, Knowledge of the Confessions, Controversy, and Practical Qualifications. With the concurrence of the synodical deputies, Classis approved the examination and advised Edgerton to proceed with the ordination of Mr. Slopsema. The president expressed Classis' joy at this occasion, and the Classis prayed God's blessing upon this young man and his ministry by singing, "May the grace of Christ the Savior/And the Father's boundless love/With the Holy Spirit's favor/Rest upon him from above."

As one man was entering the Classis, another was leaving. Classis approved the "Ministerial Certificate of Dismissal and Testimonial" of the Pella consistory concerning Rev. Dale Kuiper and transferred him to Classis East. Rev. Kuiper had accepted the call of Hudsonville to be Home Missionary. The president bade him farewell on Classis' behalf, and Rev. Kuiper responded, asking that he and his family be remembered in prayer.

Pella was given classical appointments in her vacancy. Sept. 29, Oct. 6 - Bekkering; Oct. 13, 20 - Engelsma; Nov. 3, 10 - Kortering; Nov. 17, 24 - Moore; Dec. 15, 22 - Slopsema; Jan. 5, 12 - Hoeksema; Jan. 26, Feb. 2 - Lanting; Feb. 16, 23 - Miersma; March 2, 9 - Kamps.

The cost of the Classis was \$2,452.81.

Classis will meet next in South Holland on March 5, 1975, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma
Stated Clerk
Classis West of the
Protestant Reformed Churches

Subscribe Now
to
THE STANDARD BEARER
or
Send a Gift Subscription
use the envelope enclosed in this issue

THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.
Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Prof. Robert D. Decker, Mr. Donald Doezema, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. Dale H. Kuiper, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman

Editorial Office: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. Donald Doezema
1904 Plymouth Terrace, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Reprint Policy: Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
P. O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Business Agent for Australasia: Mr. Wm. van Rij
59 Kent Lodge Ave.
Christchurch 4, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$7.00 per year (\$5.00 for Australasia). Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st or the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.



CONTENTS:

When Shall These Things Be 2
Introductory Note 5
A Dream, A Response, And A Request 5
Analysis and Response 7
Peace, A Sword, And Our Seminary 10
Faculty Letter 13
The Lausanne Congress On Evangelism 14
Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel (4) 16
Separation and Development 19
Eschatology - The First Period - The Resurrection 21
New From Our Churches 23