

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Thus the church receives her confessions not as the fruit of the thinking of learned theologians, but as precious gems gloriously prepared for her by the Holy Spirit in the way of the soul-struggle of believers and to satisfy the great needs of the church. She finds in her confessions a piece of her own life. She cherishes that confession as a costly document by which her triumph over heresy and error, thanks to the Spirit's operation, is recognized. She approaches that confession as the only compass which leads her safely through the many interpretations of the Word to the true meaning of that Word. She wants to see that confession set forth more beautifully, more correctly, more purely; but she never permits one part of its beautiful organism to be mutilated, or, much less, to be cut out. And without ever or in any way bringing that confession to a level with the altogether unique Word of God, she nevertheless maintains her conviction in the power of the Lord God that, as long as no purer confession is found, her confession is the simplest and as yet most complete formulated expression of the glorious truth which God has revealed to us.

— Abraham Kuyper, Sr.

Tract on the Reformation of the Churches, p. 26

MEDITATION

Striving For The Faith

Rev. M. Schipper

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God."

Philippians 1:27, 28

That the apostle would visit the church at Philippi again, or be denied this privilege, was only a matter of relative importance to him.

What was of great concern to him was that he might hear of their affairs, and particularly that the church stood fast, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Striving for the faith of the gospel!

This has always been, and still is, the sole calling of the church of Christ in the world!

O, we are aware of it that this statement is denied by many today, in toto, or in part. The winning of souls for Christ, is considered by many the chief duty of the church. Others believe and loudly proclaim that her main task is to become socially involved. Still others are prating about making this world to become the kingdom of Christ as the sole endeavor of the church. However, as popular as these claims may seem, they find absolutely no basis in the Scriptures.

Only one directive does the church have of Christ, and therefore of the apostle — strive earnestly for the faith of the gospel!

By the gospel, the apostle means the gospel of Christ. Of this he speaks in the first part of the text: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." The gospel is the good news concerning the Christ. Of Christ, you understand, Who is the revelation of God as the God of our salvation. Of Christ, Who is the anointed of Jehovah, ordained from before the foundation of the world to become Lord over all. Of Christ, Who is the first-born of every creature, and as such, unto Whom, for Whom, and by Whom all things consist. Of Christ, Who is the first begotten of the dead.

The gospel speaks of Christ, first of all, as being Christ *for* us, that is, His people. That He is when He

assumes our nature, and as such appears as the servant of Jehovah. He is Christ for us when He sheds His life's blood on the accursed tree for our sin and guilt. When He makes complete atonement for our sin, and removes the wrath of God we deserved, and in its place merits righteousness and life for us. He is Christ for us when He is raised from the dead and ascends into the highest heavens, where He continues to serve as our advocate at the right hand of God, and to prepare a place for us in the house of many mansions, the house of God's covenant.

Moreover, He is also Christ *in* us. For at God's right hand He receives the Spirit without measure, by which He returns unto us to take up His abode in us. As Christ in us, He makes us to be partakers of all His blessings.

Even so, all is not said concerning Christ. He is also Christ *through* us. And that means that He makes us to become fruit-bearing branches of the Vine. Through His grace we walk in all good works which also were before prepared, in order that we should walk in them. He works through us in such a way that where He leads, we follow; that where He blesses us with faith, we respond by appropriating, consciously laying hold on that which He has merited for us and gives unto us as set forth in the Word of the gospel.

In one word, Christ is the Anointed One, appointed to raise up the whole house of God!

Concerning this the gospel speaks!

Hence, the gospel is truly the revelation of God, of God as the God of our salvation in Christ from beginning to end!

When the apostle speaks of the faith of the gospel, this must be understood in the objective sense. He is not speaking of our believing in the gospel, though this may be true and necessary in itself. Rather, he has in mind that we strive for the faith expressed in

the gospel, that is, the truth of the gospel. By the faith of the gospel he refers to the truth of the gospel as it is believed and confessed by the church in the midst of a hostile world. Briefly, that faith of the gospel is expressed in the creeds of the church, in the Reformed community called the Three Forms of Unity.

Striving together for that faith!

The position which the church assumes in the world must of necessity be that of strife, because the faith of the gospel is constantly being gainsaid. Always there is the attempt to deny, to corrupt, to destroy the faith of the gospel. The attempt is also made to silence the church as she expresses the faith of the gospel. This attempt comes not only from without, but most generally from within the church. Not only do false teachers arise in the church who deny the faith of the gospel, but also the carnal element in the church, especially when it becomes a majority, will raise its head up to move the church from its very foundations, were that possible.

Like the Grecian athletes in the games, and like warriors prepared for battle, the church must always be prepared to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

When the church preserves the faith of the gospel in all its purity in all her preaching, instruction, and discipline to her generations, when she unfurls the banner of her faith in the midst of the world where God has placed her, when she seeks to maintain the faith of the gospel in doctrine and in life, she must expect that there will be opposition. Consequently there will always be strife. And in the strife the church must stand as a unit.

Striving together . . . !

Not, you understand, striving with one another, nor among themselves! Bickering and squabbling over petty differences and fighting among the members of the church can only lead to forsaking our posts in the striving for the faith of the gospel.

But striving together, in the sense that we stand together in the line of combat, as one man, in contention for the faith — that is the calling of the church in the world.

And that strife will assume both a defensive and an offensive character. When the faith of the gospel is attacked, the church will stand fast in defense. However, as in all warfare, battles are not always won by merely taking the defensive position; but often the battle is won by strategically maneuvering on the offensive.

Shall the church faithfully fulfill this unique calling, there are certain requirements that must be met.

The apostle notes first of all, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." The term "conversation" hardly expresses the thought of the apostle. To paraphrase the thought really expressed here, we could translate: "behave as citizens." And make no mistake about it, the apostle is not referring the members of the church at Philippi to the fact that as Roman citizens they are to react favorably with respect to the authority of Rome. But, rather, he has in mind that the church of Christ belongs to another polity — the members of the church, while Roman citizens, are nevertheless citizens of the kingdom of Christ. In other words, the apostle is concerned that the members of the church live as those who are controlled by the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. In the strife for the faith of the gospel they are marching to orders not from Rome, but from heaven.

Moreover, the apostle adds to this, "Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind." There must be unity of spirit and mind. Though the reference to the spirit here is not to the Holy Spirit, but to the spirit of man, the truth however is that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to realize this unity. When He realizes this unity, then the spirit of man, (that is, that part of him that is capable of being directed to God), and the mind (soul) of man, (that is, that part of him which is the seat of his natural and physical life and the subject of his thinking, willing, desiring, etc.), are not pulled apart; but they cooperate, they stand together in the striving for the faith of the gospel. And as this takes place in the individual members of the church, so it takes place in all the members at once — they stand fast as one man.

In order to stand fast, there must of necessity be a place to stand. That place is the sphere where the Holy Spirit operates, and where the faith of the gospel is maintained.

All this implies that we live as under the power of the gospel. The faith of the gospel and the striving for that faith are a matter of the heart. And as the heart is, out of which all the issues of life proceed, so the striving for the faith of the gospel demands our whole life. It requires that we stand in the covenant of God, and with all our mind, soul, and strength forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and godly life. So walking, we will never put the gospel to shame. It implies that we walk as a people that is brought under the power, and complete dominion of the faith of the gospel. It means that we always keep within us a fresh sense of belonging to the mother city, the New Jerusalem. It means that the gospel is not only a message to be believed, but obeyed.

To all this the apostle adds a word of encouragement.

How necessary that is!

If the church fails in her calling, there will be no enemies. You need not fear them. They will leave you alone. If you are a friend of the world, and make light of heresy, you will, of course, not have to suffer. There simply will be no opposition.

On the other hand, if you are faithful, many will be your foes!

When these foes arise, the apostle says, be not terrified. Rather lay hold on this two-fold token: on the one hand, their very opposition is a sign to you and them of their perdition; on the other hand, it is a sign of your salvation, and that of God.

Though the apostle does not demonstrate how this is true, this is not necessary. We know from the sacred pages of Holy Writ, and from the history of God's covenant in the world, that when the enemies

arise to assail the church, it is that they may be destroyed forever. When Pharaoh and his host, for instance, pursued the children of Israel, it was that they all might be drowned in the sea. When the Devil and the world with the apostate church rose up to destroy the Christ, it was that they might forever be vanquished. And this victory of Christ is ours forevermore.

And that is why the other side of the token must be a sign unto us of our salvation, which is all of God. When the enemy threatens, it is because you belong to the God of our salvation.

Remember, it is not only given unto you to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake!

Be not terrified by your adversaries!

Fight the good fight without fear. For the victory is ours unto the day of Christ, and forever!

EDITORIALS

Editor's Notes

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Volume 51 began with our October 1 issue. You probably have already noticed one of the changes for this volume-year — in the Meditation department; and there are a couple more. First of all, the *Meditation* department this year will be shared by Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. M. Schipper, and Rev. H. Veldman. A second change will be the dropping of the department *Contending for the Faith* for the time being — as soon as the current supply of articles for this department which I have on hand is exhausted. A third change is the revival of the department *The Voice of our Fathers*, which will feature an exposition of the Belgic Confession by Prof. Robert Decker. And finally, from time to time we will feature special articles written by some of our ministers who are not staff members.

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A *Special Report* on the Second General Assembly of the infant Presbyterian Church in America (formerly the National Presbyterian Church) appears in this issue. This, our readers may recall, is the new denomination which was formed by those who separated from the Southern Presbyterian Church because of apostasy. The report is from the pen of Rev. Eugene C. Case, a recent graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson, Mississippi) and now

a pastor in the new denomination. Pastor Case is a reader of our *Standard Bearer* and other literature; and we have had some occasional correspondence. We thank Rev. Case for his willingness to furnish this report.

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Publication News. To my dismay, the announcement of the Pre-publication Sale of our newest RFPA publication, *Peaceable Fruit*, was omitted from the October 1 issue. Besides, from more than one source I was needled for putting the announcement in the special anniversary issue because, it was claimed, people did not want to cut up that issue; someone even said it was poetic justice that the ad was on the back side of my own article in that issue! Besides, our Business Office reports that the pre-publication orders are trickling in very slowly. So here is a reminder to take advantage of this special offer. You will find an order form elsewhere in this issue. If you don't like to cut up your *Standard Bearer*, you don't have to use the form; but do send in your order by November 1 — the cut-off date on the special price. For those who are thinking of Christmas gifts, we have been assured that copies of this new 310-page book will be available in time for Christmas.

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About THE PSALTER. Recently it was called to my attention that copies of our book of praise, THE PSALTER, were not available. Because of this, and because our RFPA Publications Committee was mildly interested in a possible reprint, I inquired from the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. And I

received the following reply which will be of interest to our people and churches: "Thanks for your note concerning THE PSALTER. It just so happens that our plant has delivered a new printing of THE PSALTER, so it is now in good supply."

Some Recommended Reading

Recently there was sent to me by the Reformed Fellowship of Canada a neatly printed 64-page booklet entitled *Five Essays On Christian Education*. Along with the booklet came a request for a review — a request I am happy to honor. In fact, I consider this booklet worthy of attention in our editorial columns rather than in our somewhat irregular book review department.

As the title indicates, this book consists of five chapters. The first is written by a Rev. H. van Dyken and is entitled "Covenantally Ours." The next three are written by Mr. Gerald Bonekamp, a Christian school principal. They are entitled: "The Informal Christian School," "Authority: Behind the Classroom Door," and "Response Revealed — In Retrospect." The last chapter is written by another Christian school principal, Mr. H. Bergsma, and is entitled "Christian Education: What About the Future?" The chapter on "Authority: Behind the Classroom Door" is perhaps already known to some of our readers; it received rather wide distribution in mimeographed form.

Why do I recommend this booklet?

For the most part, the booklet is in the nature of a warning against the attempts of the AACCS to infiltrate the Christian schools of the National Union of Christian Schools. Those of our people who still send their children to these schools and participate in the operation of these schools may profit directly from these chapters, especially from those written by

Mr. Bonekamp, who does a rather thorough job of exposing the dangerous views of the AACCS with respect to Christian education. Also the parents, board members, and teachers of our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools, however, may be instructed by these chapters — not only with respect to the errors of the AACCS but also with respect to some important positive aspects of parental education and with respect to the proper place and function of parents, boards, and staff in the operation of the school.

If I may offer some negative criticism, it is this, that the first chapter, which undoubtedly purposes to furnish a covenantal basis for Christian education, is the weakest. It suffers from vagueness, from a lack of proper definition of the covenant and of the place of the children of believers in the covenant, and from some erroneous ideas (such as that of the covenant of works). One more suggestion: the writers of these chapters could have been identified and introduced to the readers. I hardly think they are so well known as to need no introduction.

However, I suggest that you spend 75c for a copy of this brochure. It can be obtained for this price from: The Reformed Fellowship of Canada, 242 Elmhurst Drive, Rexdale, Ontario, Canada. Follow up your reading of Prof. Hanks's "The AACCS and the Kingdom" by reading of this worthwhile and well-documented critique.

Know the standard and follow it.

Read the STANDARD BEARER!

Universal Grace--Universal Atonement--Universal Salvation

These three hang together.

When in 1924 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church raised to the status of a dogma the theory of universal (better known as "common") grace and, with it, the error of the general, well-meant offer of grace, it was predictable that in the years to come the Arminian heresy of universal atonement would rear its ugly head in that denomination. It was only a matter of time before this would happen. Our leaders predicted this in the late 1920s.

This prediction was fulfilled in the 1960s, when Calvin Seminary's professor of missions, Rev. Harold Dekker, openly taught and defended the propositions that God loves all men and that Christ died for all men.

And in 1967 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church was unable and unwilling to condemn that rank Arminianism. The way out was to declare this plain heresy only "ambiguous and abstract."

Why?

Because the errors of universal grace and universal atonement hang together. Maintain the former; and you must, to be consistent, maintain the latter. Condemn the latter; and you must, to be consistent, condemn the former. And it is a matter of record that the one big obstacle in the path of condemning Prof. Dekker's Arminianism of the 1960s was the First Point of 1924, which had to be maintained at all costs.

And when in the 1960s the heresy of universal atonement was tolerated, it was inevitable and predictable that sooner or later the error of universal salvation, or rank universalism, would be taught in the Christian Reformed Church. And it was predictable too, that this error would not be forthrightly exorcized from the church. In fact, when the Dekker Case was making headlines, the *Standard Bearer* warned that the logical consequence of the error of universal atonement was universal salvation.

Today, less than ten years after the Dekker Case, that heresy of universal salvation has been set forth by a Christian Reformed minister.

The story of this seems to be buried in the Acts of the Synod of 1974. It received only slight journalistic notice in the various reports of the Synod's activities. No alarm was sounded in any of the papers. And while at the time of the Dekker Case there was no small stir, what could be called the Ellens Case has thus far appeared to have created scarcely a ripple on the ecclesiastical waters of the Christian Reformed Church. A clear instance this is of the truth that

principles work through. Doctrinal principles work through, and common grace has now borne its consistent fruit: outright universalism. Ethical principles work through, and the result has been that in a denomination which refused to turn back from what was plainly the path of false doctrine blatant heresy hardly creates a ripple. Worse yet, it has become increasingly impossible to move ecclesiastical assemblies to take firm and incisive disciplinary action in case of doctrinal deviation.

What is the Ellens Case?

It is indeed difficult to get a detailed picture of the case. The Christian Reformed Church follows the detrimental custom of printing no "personal appeals" in its Agenda or Acts. There is room, of course, for the prevention of spreading abroad matters of a strictly personal and private nature through a synodical agenda; I am heartily in favor of that. But to exclude all appeals from individuals, even in cases involving public doctrinal deviation, cases involving the public preaching and teaching of officebearers, cases involving the maintenance of the confessions and of the Formula of Subscription — that is a bad rule. It means that the churches are kept in ignorance. It means that an appellant has little, if any, chance of getting his case directly before the ecclesiastical assembly which must adjudicate the complaint. And it means that the case is filtered down to synod through an advisory committee, with neither the delegates nor the churches at large usually being in a position to judge the accuracy and fairness of the advisory committee's handling of the matter and advice. Hence, in the Acts of the Christian Reformed Synod of 1974 the information is rather scant and is filtered through a committee. I will quote that information *in toto* from the *Acts of Synod, 1974*, pp. 96-99:

II. Appeal of Dr. John A. Kraft against Decision of Classis Lake Erie (Reporter: J.J. Hoytema)

A. Materials:

1. Letter of approval to synod. Personal Appeal 7 of Dr. J.A. Kraft.
2. Minutes of the September 1973 meeting of Classis Lake Erie.
3. Minutes of the May 1974 meeting of Classis Lake Erie.
4. Report of the Committee to examine doctrinal matters with Dr. J. Harold Ellens to Classis Lake Erie, May 1974.

B. Background: Dr. John A. Kraft, a member of the University Hills CRC protests the decision of Classis Lake Erie in regard to an alleged doctrinal

matter concerning Dr. Ellens. Dr. Kraft met privately with Dr. Ellens but the matter was not resolved to the satisfaction of Dr. Kraft. Dr. Kraft then took his protest to the steering committee of the University Hills CRC and then to the Cherry Hill CRC which was the supervising church. From there the matter was taken to Classis Lake Erie.

Classis then appointed a committee "to study the charges of Mr. John Kraft vs. Rev. H. Ellens." This committee came back to classis with the following recommendations:

- "1. That classis appoint three persons to examine with Dr. Ellens his beliefs that it is a possibility that all men go to heaven and that this possibility is supportable on the basis of Scripture.

Grounds:

- a. The studied opinion of the present committee is that Dr. Ellens' statement appears to be contrary to the Reformed creeds. This action would give him a chance to clarify and document his thoughts and examine them with representatives of the church community.
 - b. We believe Dr. Ellens would be best served if representatives of the church community could examine with him the degree of his agreement or disagreement with the Reformed creeds.
 - c. Hasty action is inadvisable. Careful investigation and study are necessary, since this is a central issue for Reformed theology.
 - d. This action takes seriously the efforts and concerns of Mr. Kraft in this matter.
- "2. That this committee examine with the Rev. Mr. Ellens the doctrine of hell, eternal punishment, election, and limited atonement, and the inspiration of Scripture in view of their relationship to his beliefs stated in (1) above.
 - "3. That this committee meet with Dr. Ellens frequently enough to *thoroughly* examine and clarify the issues and hopefully bring this matter to a resolution. This committee could advise Dr. Ellens on how to proceed with his examination of the issues; could offer him correction if needed, or could encourage him to present a *gravamen* if necessary.
 - "4. That this action be declared an answer to Mr. Kraft's charges and appeal, assuring him that classis will pursue the matter and seek a resolution."

These recommendations were adopted.

The newly appointed committee reported to the May classis meeting. This committee in its conclusion states: "We, with Dr. Ellens conclude that it is not proper to publicly reveal his question and/or

investigations without having worked through the matter in the context of the creeds and of his responsibility as an ordained pastor of the CRC. It appears that Dr. Ellens did not make it clear to his congregation when he was discussing "possibilities" and questions *and* when he was stating definite solutions, and thus gave occasions for confusion in the minds of some members of the congregation, such as Mr. Kraft."

Classis then adopted the recommendations of the committee which read as follows:

- "a. That classis advise Dr. Ellens that at this stage of his investigation his statement that it is a possibility that all men go to heaven and that this possibility is supportable on the basis of Scripture disagrees with the statements and intent of the Reformed Creeds.
- "b. That classis urge Dr. Ellens to remember his responsibility as an ordained pastor of the CRC, and, in any further investigation of this issue, to carry out the investigation in the context of the creeds, as well as the context of Scripture.
- "c. That classis advise the consistory of the University Hills CRC to assist Dr. Ellens in fulfilling recommendation (b) above.
- "d. That classis accept this report as the fulfillment of the mandate given to this committee 'to examine with Dr. Ellens his beliefs that it is a possibility that all men go to heaven and that this possibility is supportable on the basis of Scripture.'
- "e. Motion to thank the committee for their work and to adopt the four recommendations (a-d). *-Adopted*"

Dr. Kraft then appealed to synod. In his letter of appeal he states, "I am appealing this matter to synod. Rev. Ellens has preached and taught that it is a 'possibility' or a live option that all men go to heaven and that this view is supportable on the basis of Scripture. He did this without first presenting his views in the form of a *gravamen* and getting approval of the church as required in the form of subscription. . . . In my judgment any CRC minister who so preaches and teaches should be required to confess and repent of his heresy or be removed from the ministry of the CRC. This has not occurred. My call is for discipline." Dr. Kraft furthermore states that the action of Classis Lake Erie is only a warning.

C. Summary:

On the one hand the charge that Dr. Ellens preaches and teaches "that it is a possibility or live option that all men go to heaven and that this view is supportable on the basis of Scripture" is a charge that is not substantiated by Dr. Kraft nor reflected in the decisions of Classis Lake Erie. On the other hand Classis Lake Erie did declare, "that classis advise Dr. Ellens that at this stage of his investigation his

statement that it is a possibility that all men go to heaven and that this possibility is supportable on the basis of Scripture disagrees with the statements and intent of the Reformed creeds." The classical committee in its conclusions also states that it appeared that Dr. Ellens did not make clear to his congregation when he was discussing "possibilities" and questions and when he was stating definite conclusions, and thus gave occasion for confusion.

D. Recommendations:

1. That synod appoint a committee *in loco* to investigate the matter presented by the appeal of Dr. John A. Kraft and to deal pastorally with the parties involved.

Grounds:

a. There are conflicting interpretations of the report of Classis Lake Erie on the issues involved.

b. The history of the appeal as presented to synod indicates the need not only of investigation but also of pastoral guidance that can best be given by a committee *in loco*. —*Adopted*

2. That this committee report back to the Synod of 1975 for final adjudication of the appeal of Dr. Kraft. —*Adopted*

(Note: The Rev. H. Petersen abstained from voting on the above recommendations.)

What about all this?

In the first place, the "Summary" by the advisory committee in this matter is rather astounding. The conflict which they claim to have discovered appears to have been sucked out of the committee's thumb — unless, of course, there is information which is not recorded in the printed record. For there is no scintilla of evidence that the charge that Dr. Ellens preached and taught universalism was an unsubstantiated charge, or even that this was an issue in the case. On the contrary, when one reads the information given in "Background," he can only come to the conclusion that both Classis Lake Erie and Dr. Kraft (and there is nothing to the contrary from Dr. Ellens in the record) were certainly agreed that in one form or another Dr. Ellens had preached and taught universalism to his congregation. And the striking thing is that though Dr. Ellens must have known that this matter was going to Synod, there is no indication in the printed record that Dr. Ellens disagreed with any presentation of alleged facts on the part of either Mr. Kraft or the classis. And if there is more information than is printed, then this should have appeared in the record to substantiate the committee's summary and synod's decision.

In the second place, the matter of "possibilities" or "definite conclusions" is of no merit for the case. If I propose the possibility of universal salvation as being Scripturally supportable, or if I propose the definite

conclusion, I am equally guilty of violating the Formula of Subscription. In fact, it is the usual tactic of heretics to begin by suggesting possibilities rather than blunt conclusions.

In the third place, the decision of Synod is even weaker than that of Classis Lake Erie. The latter at least took a stand that Dr. Ellens' position disagreed with the Reformed Creeds, though it failed to advise disciplinary action or to declare Dr. Ellens to be *de facto* suspended from office as is the requirement of the Formula of Subscription. But Synod decided upon investigation and so-called pastoral dealing.

In the fourth place, what about this "dealing pastorally with the parties involved"? Is that not a fine idea? Is that not the course of Christian love? I will admit that it has a fine sound. But it is deceptive! First of all, Synod is not a pastor, and cannot deal pastorally. This is basically a hierarchical notion of the power of ecclesiastical assemblies other than a consistory. In the second place, Dr. Kraft was not in need of "pastoral dealing." So it is not correct to speak of "the parties involved." He was only in need of an ecclesiastical decision sustaining or denying his appeal; and it should have been the former. Thirdly, the time for pastoral dealing in a case of violation of the Formula of Subscription is *after*, not *before*, a finding of error and sin; and it is, in the case of officebearers, *after*, not *before*, suspension from office. Then there is plenty of time for a consistory — not a synod — to deal pastorally with (admonish and rebuke and seek to bring to repentance) its erring minister. Moreover, with all this high sounding talk about dealing pastorally, a synod ought to consider that it is not dealing pastorally with a flock when it permits an undershepherd to poison the flock with false doctrine, and to do so with impunity even for a time. True pastoral dealing will surely take into consideration the true welfare of the sheep and will place the welfare of the flock above the seeming protection of an individual.

In the fifth place, the action taken by the Synod appears to be suspiciously like the kind of action taken by synods of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in recent years. Synod promises "final adjudication" of Dr. Kraft's appeal next year. Personally, I will have to see it to believe it — and even then, remember, it is a year too late. But by this failure to act incisively, by this choosing of the course of postponement and dialogue, Synod is putting the door ajar for all the evils which are presently plaguing the GKN.

Meanwhile, common grace has borne its finished fruit — in blatant universalism.

And make no mistake! Dr. Ellens is not the only heretic. There are others. Harold Dekker's rank Arminianism — never recanted — is incipient

modernism and universalism. James Daane's blatant denial of reprobation and his insistence that Scripture is only saving in its message is incipient universalism.

A question! How long will it take, and how bad must things become, before right-thinking Christian Reformed brethren and sisters recognize not only

these intolerable evils but also the fact that 1924 is the root from which they have grown? And when will they exercise their right and duty of reformation — not by splintering, but by joining themselves where they can discern the marks of the church and where for well-nigh fifty years those marks have been manifested?

SPECIAL REPORT

National Presbyterian Church Second General Assembly

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By the time this report is printed, most of the readers will have heard something about the Second General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church. At the very least, they will most likely know that we are no longer the NPC, but have become the Presbyterian Church in America. Therefore, the purpose of this effort will be to consider some of the decisions made by the Assembly from a point of view that is very similar to that held by most of the readers of the *Standard Bearer*. This writer was a commissioner to the Second Assembly and had a first hand look at the proceedings.

The Assembly convened in the First Presbyterian Church at Macon, Georgia, which has a distinguished history, including the fact that it has hosted two other General Assemblies. One of the most interesting facts about the old church is that it was the site of a city-wide thanksgiving service ordered by the commander of the Union troops who captured the town during the War Between the States. The senior pastor of the church was so overcome by the mockery of being required to give thanks for the presence of enemy troops that he could not preside at the service. The task fell to the assistant, Rev. Goulding, who, in the face of the conqueror, boldly proclaimed the Word of God from Psalm 137:3: "For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." I wondered, as I stood before that church, whether the courage displayed by that man would find a complement in the meeting of the Second Assembly.

I found that I was to be disappointed.

After the preliminaries, including an address by retiring moderator, W. Jack Williamson of Greenville, Ala., and the election of Rev. Erskine Jackson of Kosciusko, Mississippi, the Assembly was confronted with the problem of choosing a new name. This item was destined to occupy the attention of the Assembly for a good part of the next three days.

The problem was brought about by the threat of a lawsuit by the officers of the National Presbyterian Church and Center, Inc., of Washington, D.C. This group is a congregation of the apostate United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. They claimed that since their fund-raising efforts were directed beyond their own congregation and over thirty percent of their budget was received from across the nation, their's was a ministry of a national character. The resolution asking the Assembly to change the name made a questionable reference to Matthew 5:40, 41, which really deals with our response to those winning a judgment against us in court. There was also reference to the court decision of the late 1930's which ordered that the Presbyterian Church of America (now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) change its name because it was confusingly similar to the name of the group from which they had separated. All of this led the Assembly, after a few hours debate, to adopt the name National Reformed Presbyterian Church.

We thought the matter was settled. But, the next day, in response to much breast-beating by some of the brethren to the effect that we had not really complied with the spirit of our decision to change the name to avoid offending the Washington congregation, the Assembly reconsidered. After

several more hours of debate, the name Presbyterian Church in America was adopted. I will mention only passingly that another objection to the name previously adopted had been the inclusion of the word "Reformed." Some of the brethren were very uncomfortable with that word.

A third attempt to change the name was beaten back when the Assembly voted overwhelmingly to refuse to reconsider again. So, the National Presbyterian Church has officially become the Presbyterian Church in America.

The name problem did not occupy all of the time of the Assembly, though problems associated with that caused a rather gloomy spirit to settle over the meeting.

An item of business which many thought would stir extreme controversy was a report dealing with the question of the so-called "charismatic" gifts. There was surprisingly little debate about the matter. The pastoral letter which says very little except that these gifts, as related to new revelation, have ceased, was adopted as information. The Book of Church Order section which had brought on the controversy was changed from stating flatly that these extraordinary gifts had ceased, to read as follows:

Under the New Testament, our Lord at first collected his people out of different nations and united them to the household of faith by the ministry of extraordinary officers who received extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and who were agents by whom God completed His revelation to His church. Such officers and gifts related to new revelation have no successors since God completed His revelation at the conclusion of the Apostolic age.

As can be seen, there is nothing wrong with that statement, as far as it goes. However, it does not rule out the possibility that there are other extraordinary gifts, not related to new revelation, which have not ceased. This was obviously a compromise intended to keep neo-Pentecostals from leaving the church. I fear this compromise will bring nothing but trouble in the future and destroy what little purity there is in the church.

At the first General Assembly, last December, a committee had been appointed to study the question of whether ruling elders may perform the sacraments. The majority of this committee reported against such a proposal. But, there was a minority report which favored allowing ruling elders to function in this way, thereby eliminating the distinction between ruling and teaching elders. In keeping with the general attitude of the Assembly not to take a position on anything, the whole matter was committed to the Committee on Constitutional Documents for further study.

One area where Scriptural principles did win out was in the matter of the inactive roll. For those unfamiliar with this ecclesiastical queer duck, let me say that this is the roll on which are placed members of a church who have not participated in the program of the church for a long period of time. It is simply a device to escape the responsibility of discipline. The first General Assembly had eliminated this oddity. However, some who were afraid they might hurt someone's feelings, or were afraid to exercise discipline, sought to have it reinstated. Finally acting in a decisive way, the Assembly rejected the proposal. We later adopted a specific set of steps to be taken with regard to members needing discipline.

The most explosive controversy of the Assembly centered around a proposal by the Committee on Mission to the World, and kept us in session until near one o'clock Friday morning.

The committee proposed to the Assembly that they be allowed to establish relationships with other evangelical mission agencies in order to be able to send missionaries out under their auspices. At the same time, these missionaries would maintain full relationship to the PCA and there would be a strong emphasis on allowing them to proclaim the Reformed Truth. It does not take long for one to see that this is impossible. Most "evangelical" mission agencies are Arminian to the core. Even if they will allow Reformed People to go out under their banner, it places us in a position of being tied to a group that denies truths we hold very dear. Since the missionaries going out under such a group would be governed by the rules of the group, the church gives up its proper oversight to a para-church organization.

Dr. Morton Smith, Stated Clerk of the denomination and a Professor at Reformed Seminary in Jackson, Miss., rose to speak eloquently against the committee's proposal. He pointed out that the first Assembly, in adopting "A Message to all Churches of Jesus Christ," had taken a position directly opposite to the proposal of the committee. He cited a section of that "Message" which had been drawn from the "Address to all Churches" adopted by the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America in 1861:

The only thing that will be peculiar to us is the manner in which we shall attempt to discharge our duty. In almost every department of labor, except the pastoral care of congregations, it has been usual for the church to resort to societies more or less closely connected with itself, and yet logically and really distinct. It is our purpose to rely upon the regular organs of our government, and executive agencies directly and immediately responsible to them. We wish to make the church, not merely a superintendent, but an agent. We wish to develop the

idea that the congregation of believers, as visibly organized is the very society or corporation which is divinely called to do the work of the Lord.

These are noble words. As Dr. Smith pointed out, receiving the committee's recommendation would put us in the position of being hypocritical with regards to that statement. Later speakers emphasized the fact that Presbyterian polity was at stake; that we were deciding whether we were Presbyterians or Baptists in our view of the Church.

Spokesmen for the committee asserted that their proposal would get the message of Reformed truth into more parts of the World. They failed to note that, at the same time, they were denying and destroying Reformed methodology in missions.

The committee carried the day. Once again, the truth was sacrificed on the altar of expediency to the god of Pragmatism. Many of us, not wishing that we be partakers in this abomination, recorded our negative votes to the committee's proposal.

I have tried to give a summary of the activity of the General Assembly with commentary. As can be plainly seen, the Assembly took some very questionable, nay, wrong, positions. I fear that an observation made to me by the editor of this magazine is quite correct. There is "considerable strange fire upon the altar."

Only time can tell what will happen to the PCA. The hopes for a reformed church are tied to Reformed Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, and a flow of graduates from that seminary into the PCA. However, if plans for extension seminaries are adopted, that source may well be diluted by night-school Arminians.

You can mix ice cream into axle grease with little harm to the axle grease. But the least bit of axle grease in a bowl of ice cream ruins the whole dish. There appears to be the axle grease of error in the ice cream of truth in the Presbyterian Church in America.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

What Does GRACE Mean To You?

Rev. G Van Baren

Among the mass of "junk" mail that regularly enters one's mailbox, the minister is subjected to some in addition to that which most laymen receive. Here in Grand Rapids, we receive regularly and without charge, *Grace Notes*. Judging from its name, one would think it to be a commendable organization. How could it not be — if its emphasis is upon *grace*? In fact, a recent flier from GRACE asked the question, "What does GRACE mean to you?" Alongside of that question one could find the definitions presented in the dictionary. But the flier identified what GRACE meant to us, here in Grand Rapids. What do *you* think it means? It's an acronym for *Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism*. Not surprisingly, this organization uses the symbol of the World Council of Churches: a boat on the sea with a cross as its mast.

G.R.A.C.E. recently adopted a new constitution setting forth its purposes and goals. G.R.A.C.E. itself originated out of an organization of ministers in Grand Rapids. Its new form makes it broader than the earlier organization, and allows it to further the cause of ecumenism.

A list of supporting churches and members proves to be rather revealing and enlightening. One would expect to see (and does) many Lutheran churches on the list, as well as United Methodist and Presbyterian. But there are others there too: St. Nicholas Orthodox, Salvation Army, Society of Friends, several Roman Catholic churches. Not quite so expected is the list of supporting Reformed Churches: Bethany, Central, Church of the Saviour, Ninth, Olivet; and one Christian Reformed Church: LaGrave Ave. But on the list is also Temple Emanuel — and as the name suggests, it is a Jewish Synagogue. One recent news letter from G.R.A.C.E. stated, "We are very grateful to all who support us; we hope we are serving you well and look forward to continuing and increased support from the community. We are very pleased to list Mayflower Congregational Church and Temple Emanuel as new members this year." Well - that is how ecumenism goes in our city.

The purpose of G.R.A.C.E. is stated in its constitution, adopted on January 29, 1974:

The purpose of GRACE shall be to promote programs and activities that will reflect the concerns

of the faith community represented in the greater Grand Rapids area. Recognizing the diversity of congregations, GRACE will not seek to effect doctrinal unity, but shall endeavor to bring together people of concern, through joint ministry, based on the strengths and resources of our Judaeo-Christian heritage, demonstrating the power of ecumenism.

G.R.A.C.E. proposes to work through two major units of ministry: Ministries to the Church and Ministries to the Community. It professes "to enable collective action where individual action would be impractical or impossible." G.R.A.C.E. presents a statement also of its activities for 1974:

Activities in 1974: representation on numerous boards of community agencies; workshops: Criminal Justice, Religious Education Resources, Resources for counseling, planning and management, Death and Dying, Serendipity; research and planning for churches and community organizations. We are also involved in planning for and implementing ecumenical worship experiences. Through the media ministries department we are involved in programming for religious topics in radio and TV as well as instrumental in securing fair employment practices in the media industry.

GRACE also works closely with Church Women United, the Sunday Evening Club, the Grand Rapids Ministerial Alliance and the Religious Educators of our Area.

G.R.A.C.E. recently (Sept. 8) held an "Ecumenical Service of Prayer and Praise confirming Gerald R. Ford as President." The clergy of the city as well as others were invited to participate on Sunday at 7:30 p.m. Prayers were offered by all those gathered together. This is one example of the "ecumenical programs" of the "faith community" that this organization sponsors. Many have considered such action praiseworthy and deserving of the support of any true Christian.

More disturbing have been recent announcements which link G.R.A.C.E. with Pine Rest Hospital. At least two announcements I have received, inform the clergy that "Grace and the Chaplains Department of Pine Rest Christian Hospital invite you to a film discussion and lunch, Wednesday, Sept. 11, 1974 at Pine Rest Christian Hospital." I am uncertain what is involved in this joint sponsorship. However, there is at least the appearance of what I would consider to be an unholy alliance.

Well, what's wrong with all of this? What objections could we possibly have for organizations, such as G.R.A.C.E., providing for such endeavors which perhaps individual churches could not? One might indeed be regarded as a "stick in the mud" or some sort of fool for refusing cooperation. Opposition to all of this is considered tantamount to opposing Christ and His work.

Let us keep in mind what has been going on. It is a fact of our times that the drive towards formal mergers of churches has somewhat floundered. Some mergers are still in the wind. Most have fizzled. That is the case often because many people in individual denominations refuse to go along with leaders who are more ecumenically minded.

What is the next best thing — and perhaps even better in the long run than formal mergers? That is cooperation with all sorts of groups. Many peoples, many churches, cooperating together, can accomplish very much. And in the process of this cooperation, these churches and people come to know and appreciate each other. They come to admire the respective strengths of each group. These become fast friends. They may remain in their own separate denominations, but they are one in heart and mind.

It is this sort of ecumenism which must be deplored and denounced as wrong. How can there be union in spiritual endeavors, in areas of education, by those who are not one doctrinally? How can, for instance, Reformed unite with Roman Catholic (of whom the Reformed confess that these are guilty of an accursed idolatry)? How can Jew and Christian support the same projects? Fact is, light and darkness, the truth and the lie, can not unite together. Working together may "demonstrate the power of ecumenism," but it surely does not demonstrate the power of the cross.

A further consequence of this sort of ecumenism is becoming very evident, especially among the youth. These see no major differences anymore between churches. They see no reason for separation. These increasingly approve closer ties between churches. And intermarriage between those of differing, radically differing, churches (at least, in former years) is on the increase. If the rabbi, priest, and minister can cooperate in many projects, why can not the youth unite in marriage with those of differing religious backgrounds? Why not "demonstrate the power of ecumenism" in this way? An ecumenism which could not attain its goal of formal unions, now seems to have been more successful through a unity in separation by cooperation. And it is having a decided effect upon the churches and especially the youth.

Criticism can justly be raised also concerning joint prayer and worship services. Now no true child of God is against proper prayer. And surely prayer is not uttered only by those of one specific denomination. But: in these joint services, are all really praying to the same God? When all are invited, from Temple Emanuel to LaGrave Ave. Christian Reformed (and we were too), can one really believe that unitedly these all would be addressing the same God? Can those guilty of "accursed idolatry" unite in prayer with

those who confess, "I am not my own but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ"? Can those who deny Christ as Son of God unite in prayer with those who acknowledge Him as Divine? Can those who deny or question the hereafter unite in prayer with those who look for the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells? The answer ought to be obvious.

I am convinced that in this instance G.R.A.C.E. is not grace. This sort of G.R.A.C.E. can only serve to tear down and destroy the foundations of the church. Increasingly, there is less opposition to improper and godless unions. The idea of cooperation is appealing. In unity there appears to be strength. And all this is

but part of the world-wide endeavor to unite mankind.

We too must be warned. Our youth must beware. Be not swayed by the siren songs of unity and ecumenism. There may and can be the seeking of proper fellowship between those of like mind also within different denominations. But worship and prayer and cooperation in various endeavors between those of vastly different doctrinal positions certainly is not a fulfillment of Christ's prayer, "That they may all be one." Mark this sign of the end of the age. We will be seeing much more of this sort of thing in the next months and years.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

The Belgic Confession

Prof. Robert D. Decker

Introduction

This is the third time in the fifty year history of *The Standard Bearer* that an exposition of the Belgic (or Netherlands) Confession of Faith is begun. The first exposition is a brief series written in the Dutch language and may be found in volume VII. In volume XXXVII Prof. H. C. Hoeksema began a new series which, due to the press of other editorial duties, was never completed. Several articles appeared from the pen of the Rev. J. Kortering who is now editor of the rubric, *The Strength of Youth*. It is our prayer that God in His mercy may grant that this new series of expositions of the Belgic Confession may be completed.

As we begin we pray, too, that these expositions may contribute toward a deeper understanding and appreciation of the faith of our fathers. The danger threatening the Church of our time is not dead orthodoxy as so many allege. The opinion is widely held that the Church must revise and update the creeds because they as products of their time do not accurately reflect the faith of the Church in the twentieth century. The creeds, so it is said, do not speak to the issues we are facing in these days. If the Church refuses to revise her creeds she will become hopelessly enmeshed in the past and become unable to fulfil her task in the world. From this position we

wish to separate ourselves. It is true that creeds are products of their times and we shall take note of this as we proceed with our exposition of each article of the Belgic Confession. Nevertheless it is our firm conviction that the Three Forms of Unity express eloquently the truth of the infallibly inspired Scriptures. If the Church is really serious about her calling she could do no better than listen carefully to "the voice of our fathers." If ever there was a time when the Church needs to be firmly anchored in the truth of the Scriptures as set forth in the Belgic Confession, it is now. The truth is assailed on every crucial point and the departures from the faith occur so rapidly that one can hardly keep abreast of them. The Church and our Protestant Reformed Churches in particular had better know the truth lest the lament of God's prophet be true of them: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." (Hosea 4:6)

The Historic Setting...

To understand and appreciate the Belgic Confession we ought to know something of the fascinating historical situation in which it was written. Because the period into which we delve is as detailed and complicated as it is fascinating we shall offer but a sketch drawn in only a few, broad strokes. Those readers interested in further study may consult

any good Reformation history text or Dr. Peter Y. DeJong's two volume exposition of the Belgic Confession entitled *The Church's Witness To The World*.

Our interest is in the lowlands during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These territories included what are now the countries of The Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France and at that time were called simply, Netherlands. Until 1477 these lands had been ruled by the Burgundian princes whose line became extinct at that date. In 1515 Charles of Spain, the son of Ferdinand and Isabella, began his rule. Having been crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1521 Charles set about the task of unifying the independent states under his rule. This meant trouble, for the states of the lowlands were rather fiercely independent. Though the writings of Martin Luther were widely read they had minimal impact on the people of the lowlands. The latter, who found themselves being robbed of rights and privileges almost daily under Charles V, were much more attracted to the teachings of the Anabaptists who advocated defiance of the government. Charles V, believing himself to be king by divine right, and being a faithful son of the Roman Catholic Church, initiated the infamous inquisition in an attempt to compel the people of the lowlands to submit to the pope. By 1524 the inquisition was in full swing with papal approval.

What the Scriptures say of Israel in Egypt's bondage could be said of the saints who suffered under the inquisition: "the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew." And they were afflicted! Historians tell us that more Christians were put to death in the sixteenth century than in the days of the persecution of the early church by the Roman emperors. In 1529 an ordinance was imposed which ruled that all who made insulting remarks about images of God, the virgin or saints, failed to report heretics, or who even discussed questions about the faith were to be put to death. Even this failed to stem the tide. The printing presses were groaning under the load of forbidden books and reformation literature poured into the lowlands especially from Germany. By 1540 all heretics were deprived of their property and those who sheltered heretics were liable to the death penalty.

Charles V died and was succeeded by his son, Philip II, in 1555. If Charles was a faithful son of the Roman Catholic Church, Philip was fanatical in his devotion to Rome. He recognized that the Netherlands with its industrial and commercial advances was crucial to the success of the Spanish Empire. In order to increase his control of the lowlands he increased taxes and withdrew the constitutional privileges of many of its cities. Philip

appointed his sister, Margaret of Parma, as his regent. Margaret, with the assistance of a council of three, flagrantly ignored the rights of the nobility. At this point Prince William of Orange became leader of the resistance movement which eventually won independence for the northern provinces. By the papal bull of 1559 the lands were divided into fifteen bishoprics and three archbishoprics, appointments to which were made only by the pope. Politically and religiously the lowlands was in the cruel grip of Philip II.

By now the teachings of Calvin had entered the Netherlands and won the allegiance of thousands. These were attracted to the clear, simple statement of the Christian faith rooted solely in the Word of God which Calvinism offered. While the Anabaptists continued with no little vigor, Calvinism gained a significant foothold among the people of the lowlands. Among the leaders of the Calvinistic Reformation in the Netherlands was Guido de Bres, the author of the Belgic Confession.

Guido de Bres

The statement of P.Y. DeJong is worthy of emphasis: "The memory of this intrepid preacher and teacher of the holy gospel deserves to be permanently enshrined in our hearts." (*The Church's Witness To The World*, vol. I, p. 21)

We are told that just prior to his birth (ca. 1522) de Bres' mother heard the preaching of an Augustinian monk, Hendrik van Zutphen, as he traveled through Mons, de Bres' birthplace, on his way to Wittenberg. Upon hearing the message his mother prayed that if the Lord gave her a son he might become a preacher. Little did she realize what God had in store for her son. As child de Bres was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. Later he described himself as being at first unbelieving and blind! Apparently, though we know very little of his early life, he was converted to the Reformed faith at an early age.

These were not easy times for the faithful, for the flames of persecution under the Spanish ruler were burning fiercely. Everywhere those suspected of heresy were hunted and if found, subjected to the most cruel tortures and put to death. In 1547 de Bres fled for his life to England where under Edward VI adherents to the Reformed faith were cordially welcomed. During the nearly five years de Bres spent in England he came into contact with several gifted leaders of the Reformation. Among these were John a Lasco, the homeless Polish nobleman, who was pastoring a refugee church in London; and, Petrus Dathenus, an outstanding preacher, later considered to be the father of the liturgy of the Dutch churches. In 1552 de Bres was able to return to his homeland where he traveled from city to city preaching the

Reformed faith and gathering small groups of believers into congregations. During this time he wrote his first book, *Le Baston de la Foy Chrestienne*, "The Rod of the Christian Faith." In this volume de Bres, by quoting voluminously from the Bible, demonstrated that what he and others were teaching was the truth of the Word of God. Many of the subjects dealt with, as well as the general outline of this book, are incorporated in the Belgic Confession. After a period of exile in Frankfurt, Lausanne, and Geneva, de Bres was able to return to southern Netherlands in 1559, at which time he married Catherine Ramon. Under Philip II the floodgates of persecution were opened and all who broke with the Romish church were accused of undermining the authority of government, a charge stemming from the excesses of some of the anabaptists with whom the Reformers were lumped by the enemies of the Reformation.

For the two-fold purpose of replying to these unfounded charges and instructing the faithful, de Bres wrote his Confession of Faith. He was laboring in Tournai, a city wrested from the French by Charles V in 1521. Both because of the reformers who resided there and on account of this city's sympathies for the French, Tournai was closely watched by the authorities. When a large group of believers spontaneously gathered in a public place and began singing the Psalms, which was strictly forbidden, Margaret of Parma ordered the arrest of all those suspected of heresy. de Bres was forced to flee once more.

During the night of Nov. 1, 1561, he took a copy of his Confession of Faith, together with a letter addressed to the authorities, and tossed it over the castle wall where the commissioners of Margaret of Parma were lodging. de Bres became the object of an intense and relentless search. The years 1561 to 1566 were spent in exile in France among the Calvinists. Subsequently de Bres returned and became pastor of a congregation in Valenciennes, a town in southern Netherlands. When the iconoclastic disturbances broke out and many images and relics were destroyed and Roman Catholic sanctuaries profaned, the hostility of the authorities knew no bounds. The city was besieged and capitulated after three months. de Bres was captured while fleeing and imprisoned. On the evening of May 30, 1567, having refused to deny the Reformed faith, Guido de Bres was hanged. He is said to have addressed his fellow prisoners: "My brethren, today I am condemned to death for the doctrine of the Son of God. Let Him be praised for this. I am very glad on account of it. I never thought that God would show me such an honor. I feel my heart swelling with grace, which God causes to descend upon me more and more; and I am from moment to moment strengthened. My heart springs with joy within me."

This is how precious the Reformed faith was to Guido de Bres. He lived for what he wrote in the Belgic Confession and he died for it. Would we?

* * *

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Sovereign Separation

Rev. John A. Heys

By faith Abram left Ur of the Chaldees to go to the land of Canaan.

He was not some venturesome soul looking for something better or different. He was not a man with a pioneering spirit who had dreams of other places for himself and his family to settle in for fleshly advantage. He was not at odds with his relatives and neighbours so that it became wise for him to leave the area and get as much distance between himself and them as possible.

Hebrews 11:6 declares that God called him to leave and to go to a place he had never seen, and to which,

perhaps, he had never given any or much thought. He may have heard of the land, but he certainly never gave any thought to moving there and living there. The verse also explains that he went by faith. He believed God when He told him that there He would make of him a great nation. He obeyed God because He trusted Him. He believed God's covenant promises even apart from this new aspect of God's covenant. He believed that he belonged to the seed of the woman, was of the seed of Shem, with whom God had established His covenant and whose God He would be. It was by faith that he took such a long and important journey to come to Canaan.

But even as faith brought him into the land of promise, unbelief soon brought him out. Unbelief did not bring him back to the land of his fathers. He did not lose his faith. But he did falter, and in an act of unbelief he left the promised land because there was a famine in the land. He never considered the sin of returning. His faith never left him so that he turned his back upon God and lost all interest in the land promised him. God will never allow His children to do that. But they, as Abram, can sin. They as Abram can falter in their faith and walk in a way of unbelief for a time.

With Abram it was a case of full intention of going back, of believing that this was his land and that he would inherit it. It was a case of being sure that God would fulfill all His promises. It was therefore also his intent only to sojourn in Egypt, not move there for a permanent place of residence.

Nevertheless it was an act of unbelief. It was a failure to trust fully the God Who called him and placed him in that land of famine. Indeed, Genesis 12:10 calls it a grievous famine. It was not a matter of having had choice food and of now experiencing lower living standards. It was a matter of the necessities of life being so scarce that life itself seemed threatened. And before we become harsh and overly critical with Abram, let us look around, and in the mirror, and see how in a land of the highest standards of living man has ever known, we find men, (and maybe ourselves) going on strike for the choicest of steaks, while they are still well able to eat cheaper cuts of meat, fill their stomachs with all kinds of delicacies, having a trailer and a boat in their back yards, spending thousands of dollars on vacations, never spending a penny or only a few, on church or school, and say that they cannot make ends meet! Their homes are more luxurious than that of many kings in years gone by, and they have just traded in their black and white television set for the one with the biggest screen made for color television. These "necessities" force them to forego the top choice of foods, and they cry of hardships and violate God's law to seek to climb higher while knowing a luxury unknown to Abram and his contemporaries. And in the church world this is not at all a rare thing either. Nor are such strikes condemned, and membership in such organizations called what it is, namely, agreements to violations of the fifth and eighth commandments. It is lording it over the master instead of honouring him. And it is stealing his property in that the strike declares, "We will see to it that you make no money and lose in your business, in order to force you to give us a higher standard, one as close to yours as we can get!" And the church will often approve rather than condemn such evil!

With Abram it was no such situation, but he figured that his life was in danger and failed to put his trust in the God Who said that He would make of him a great nation and would give him the whole land. And lack of trust in God is sin. Unbelief is sin, and let us not try to deceive ourselves into minimizing it and by labeling it anything less than sin. It is saying that God is not God. In Abram's case it was saying that God might not be able to keep His promise without Abram's help. It was questioning His almighty power; and that is sin against God!

And one sin leads to another.

Unbelief breeds unbelief, lack of trust breeds more lack of trust, as rats breed rats. Having succeeded in getting Abram to doubt God's word, Satan got him to corrupt his own words. He, with Sarai, his wife, resorted to the lie, to a half truth which is a lie as well as an open falsehood. They schemed to hide the truth that Sarai was Abram's wife and spread the lie that she was his sister. It was bearing false witness; and although it was not false witness against the Egyptians in that it falsified their words and got them in trouble because they were found guilty when not actually guilty, but because it did get them into trouble through no deliberate act of evil on their part. Pharaoh took Sarai to be his wife in good faith believing the half truth of Abram and Sarai.

This ought to be a double warning to us and to our children. Not only does sin produce nothing but sin, one sin breeds more sin. And when we sin, we not only hurt ourselves by adding to our guilt before God, but we place ourselves in the position wherein we endanger the neighbour with whom we are to walk in love before God.

We had not better foolishly try to defend Abram and Sarai. (And she, of course, was as guilty as Abram in the matter.) We had not better say that they had to seek food for their lives and that Abram had a responsibility toward his family. Of course he did. But one's responsibility given one by God never demands sin, distrust and the lie. And that Abram's move to Egypt was sinful is evident in that he found it necessary to tell a lie there to protect that life that was threatened by famine in Canaan. The point is this: Abram did not put his trust in God to give him bread, and so he is in no spiritual condition to put his trust in God to keep his life from being taken by Pharaoh. He did not pray to God to ask what he should do. He simply spoke out to Sarai and said, "We are going to Egypt for food." Therefore he also had to say to Sarai, "You tell all in Egypt the half truth that you are my sister." In effect this meant, and he could just as well have said "Deceive them in regard to our closer relationship of husband and wife."

It is on the background of such unfaithfulness on man's part that God reveals His faithfulness and assures us that His covenant stands because He is unchangeably merciful and true to His Word. He promised a Seed of the woman Who would give us victory. He had narrowed down the line of those from whom this Seed would be born. It was to Abram, and although not literally stated, through his wife, Sarai, that God was going to give that Seed. Sarai as well as Abram must be spared for our sakes, for the covenant's sake. The Christ must be born of Abram and his lawful wife in a line that would soon be narrowed down to Judah and David. And even though in sinfulness, in a faltering faith Abram went down to Egypt and trusted in his own lie to protect him, God's goodness and mercy followed him that we may dwell in the house of the Lord forever. He saves us not only from sin but in spite of our sins.

All this was in sovereign, unchangeable grace. God was under no obligation to continue His covenant with Abram anymore than He was with Adam, who had been created in a covenant relationship with God. Adam became a covenant breaker, and God drove him out of the covenant garden where they had sweet communion together. Then in sovereign and unchangeable grace He saved Adam and gave rich covenant promises. Now, too, He is dealing with a covenant breaker, one who left the land where God called him to live and wait for a son, and a great nation, and the land itself. Abram had not kept his part of the covenant. He had gone away from the covenant land. God was under no obligation to protect, to guard him in Egypt; and He did bring great fear into his heart by having his wife taken from him.

But the gospel runs throughout the whole of Scripture; and we see and read of it here. In His grace God guarded Abram and Sarai. He let no harm befall them, though they asked for great harm and serious results upon their lie.

The word is grace, sovereign, precious, wonderful grace!

What Abram — and let not us not overlook, what we — did not deserve, God bestowed. The angel of God went with him. God did not forget or forsake him, but sent an angel to guard him well, and to protect him for our sakes. Do not read this passage of Holy Writ as simply an account of what happened to Abram and in his life. Remember that God's Church is one body, and all the members belong together. God was here following Abram with His goodness and

mercy, even though he strayed from the land of promise, for OUR SAKES! Appreciate that. Praise God for it!

And remember that it all is possible because of Him Who came out of Abram's loins and as the last Adam, and our new Covenant Head, was never guilty of any covenant breaking. He fulfilled God's law and broke not a single commandment from any aspect of its truth. He loved God with a pure and perfect heart. He suffered the punishment of Abram's and Sarai's and your and my sins and lies and rebellion and covenant breaking. And for His sake we are guarded in God's grace, even when we least deserve it.

In a sense that sums up the whole of Scripture which shows us a fallen man so very soon after his perfect creation in God's image. The whole of Scripture shows us to be sinners, and even after being brought to faith, shows us to be saints who falter in their faith, often look more like unbelievers than believers. And on this background Scripture shows a faithful God Who guards us as the apple of His eye, is gracious to us and blesses us, even though we are so very unfaithful so very often.

We can read, and do read in the Scriptures of faltering faith; but never do we read of faltering grace. We can read and do read of saints who are not on guard while the enemy is seeking their destruction; but we never read of God being caught off guard or failing to guard His elect children. Faithless and unfaithful we are so often. No man has ever or ever will find Him unfaithful.

Truly it may be said, as one has once cleverly pointed out by using each letter of the word grace to form a new word and a definition of that grace of God, "Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense." Indeed, without Christ there is no explanation for this guarding grace of God to faltering Abram, or to you and me. Though cast to the depth of hell for our sins, He continued to love the Father and cry for His fellowship. And in Him we have pardon. At His expense we enjoy God's unchangeable grace. Let that encourage us when we find ourselves having faltered in our faith. Let it not lead us to carelessness and more sin, but to a thankful appreciation of salvation that is all of grace.

For here, too, on the pages of Holy Writ we have the glorious message of the gospel that we are not saved by works but by the grace of an unchangeable God.

Gift Idea? Give good books. Give RFPA publications!

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Eschatology - The First Period - The Resurrection

Rev. H. Veldman

Discussing the doctrine of the resurrection as taught and set forth by the church during the years, 80 A.D. to 250 A.D., we called attention in our preceding article to the writings on this subject of Athenagorus. We now continue with these fathers during these early years of the church in the New Dispensation, calling attention first to Minucius Felix.

We read of this writer in Vol. IV of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, pages 169 f.f. Minucius Felix is said by Jerome to have been an advocate at Rome prior to his conversion to Christianity. Very little else is known of his history. And nothing is known with any certainty, except the dialogue, known as the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, from which we will presently quote. This *Octavius* is a supposed argument between the heathen Caecilius and the Christian Octavius, the writer being requested to arbitrate between the disputants. The date of its composition is still a matter of keen dispute.

In chapter XXXIV the following argument is pursued: Moreover, it is not at all to be wondered at if this world is to be consumed by fire, since everything which has a beginning has also an end. And the ancient philosophers are not averse to the opinion of the probable burning up of the world. Yet it is evident that God, having made man from nothing, can raise him up from death into life. And all nature suggests a future resurrection. We now read the following:

But who is so foolish or so brutish as to dare to deny that man, as he could first of all be formed by God, so can again be re-formed; that he is nothing after death, and that he was nothing before he began to exist; and as from nothing it was possible for him to be born, so from nothing it may be possible for him to be restored? Moreover, it is more difficult to begin that which is not, than to repeat that which has been. (Is this necessarily true? Is it easier, for example, to make an egg, than to restore perfectly a shattered one? — H.V.) Do you think that, if anything is withdrawn from our feeble eyes, it perishes to God? Every body, whether it is dried up into dust, or is dissolved into moisture, or is

compressed into ashes, or is attenuated into smoke, is withdrawn from us, but it is reserved for God in the custody of the elements. Nor, as you believe, do we fear any loss from sepulture, but we adopt the ancient and better custom of burying in the earth. See, therefore, how for our consolation all nature suggests a future resurrection. The sun sinks down and arises, the stars pass away and return, the flowers die and revive again, after their wintry decay the shrubs resume their leaves, seeds do not flourish again unless they are rotted: which in winter hide their verdure with a deceptive dryness. Why are you in haste for it to revive and return, while the winter is still raw? We must wait also for the spring-time of the body. And I am not ignorant that many, in the consciousness of what they deserve, rather desire than believe that they shall be nothing after death; for they would prefer to be altogether extinguished, rather than to be restored for the purpose of punishment. And their error also is enhanced, both by the liberty granted them in this life, and by God's very great patience, whose judgment, the more tardy it is, is so much the more just.

And in chapter XXXV the argument is advanced that the righteous and pious men shall be rewarded with never-ending felicity, but unrighteous men shall be visited with eternal punishment. The morals of Christians are far more holy than those of the gentiles. This concludes our quotations from the writings of Minucius Felix. However, we will quote, the Lord willing, from other church fathers, such as Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and others, in subsequent articles.

The names of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian are familiar to many of our readers. Clement of Rome and Theophilus of Antioch have also expressed themselves with respect to the resurrection.

Clement, known as Clement of Rome, in distinction from Clement of Alexandria, was probably a Gentile and a Roman. He seems to have been at Philippi with Paul (A.D. 57) when that first-born of the Western churches was passing through great trials of faith. There, with holy women

and others, he ministered to the apostle and to the saints. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter XXIV, he writes, and we quote:

Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord continually proves to us that there shall be a future resurrection, of which He has rendered the Lord Jesus Christ the firstfruits by raising Him from the dead. Let us contemplate, beloved, the resurrection which is at all times taking place. Day and night declare to us a resurrection. The night sinks to sleep, and the day arises; the day (again) departs, and the night comes on. Let us behold the fruits (of the earth), how the sowing of grain takes place. The sower goes forth, and casts it into the ground; and the seed being thus scattered, though dry and naked when it fell upon the earth, is gradually dissolved. Then out of its dissolution the mighty power of the providence of the Lord raises it up again, and from one seed many arise and bring forth fruit.

In chapter XXV of this epistle he speaks of a wonderful sign, the phoenix as an emblem of our resurrection, and we quote, leaving it to our readers to judge of its importance:

Let us consider that wonderful sign (of the resurrection) which takes place in Eastern lands, that is, in Arabia and the countries round about. There is a certain bird which is called a phoenix. This is the only one of its kind, and lives five hundred years [according to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, a phoenix is a legendary bird which according to one account lived 500 years, burned itself to ashes on a pyre, and rose youthfully alive from the ashes to live another period—H.V.]. And when the time of its dissolution draws near that it must die, it builds itself a nest of frankincense, and myrrh, and other spices, into which, when the time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. But as the flesh decays a certain kind of worm is produced, which, being nourished by the juices of the dead bird, brings forth feathers. Then, when it has acquired strength, it takes up the nest in which are the bones of its parent, and bearing these it passes from the land of Arabia into Egypt, to the city called Jeliopolis. And, in open day, flying in the sight of all men, it places them on the altar of the sun, and having done this, hastens back to its former abode. The priests then inspect the registers of the dates, and find that it has returned exactly as the five hundredth year was completed.

In a footnote of this chapter, it is stated that this fable respecting the phoenix is mentioned by Herodotus and by Pliny, and is used as above by Tertullian and by others of the Fathers. And then, in chapter XXVI of this epistle, Clement writes:

Do we then deem it any great and wonderful thing for the Maker of all things to raise up again those that have piously served Him in the assurance of a good faith, when even by a bird He shows us the mightiness of His power to fulfil His promise? For the Scripture saith in a certain place, "Thou shalt raise me up, and I shall confess unto Thee;" and again, "I laid me down,

and slept; I awaked, because Thou art with me"; and again, Job says, "Thou shalt raise up this flesh of mine, which has suffered all these things." (It appears from the above that Clement believed this fable.)

Theophilus of Antioch also wrote on the resurrection. Little is known of the personal history of Theophilus. It is believed that he was born a pagan, and owed his conversion to Christianity to the grace of God and the careful study of the Holy Scriptures. In chapter VII, writing to his friend, Autolycus, he writes:

When thou shalt have put off the mortal, and put on incorruption, then shalt thou see God worthily. For God will raise thy flesh immortal with thy soul; and then, having become immortal, thou shalt see the Immortal, if now you believe on Him; and then you shall know that you have spoken unjustly against Him.

And in chapter VIII of this writing He writes the following:

But you do not believe that the dead are raised. When the resurrection shall take place, then you will believe, whether you will or no; and your faith shall be reckoned for unbelief, unless you believe now. And why do you not believe? Do you not know that faith is the leading principle in all matters? For what husbandman can reap, unless he first trust his seed to the earth? Or who can cross the sea, unless he first entrust himself to the boat and the pilot? And what sick person can be healed, unless first he trust himself to the care of the physician? And what art or knowledge can any one learn, unless he first apply and entrust himself to the teacher? If, then, the husbandman trusts the earth, and the sailor the boat, and the sick the physician, will you not place confidence in God, when you hold so many pledges at His hand? For first He created you out of nothing, and brought you into existence (for if your father was not, nor your mother, much more were you yourself at one time not in being), and formed you out of a small and moist substance, even out of the least drop, which at one time had itself no being; and God introduced you into this life. Moreover, you believe that the images made by men are gods, and do great things; and can you not believe that the God Who made you is able also to make you afterwards?

Also Justin Martyr writes on the resurrection. To him we have referred in the past. Justin Martyr was a Gentile, but born in Samaria, near Jacob's well. He must have been well educated: he had travelled extensively, and he seems to have been a person enjoying at least a competence. The writings of Justin Martyr are among the most important that have come down to us from the second century. He was not the first that wrote an Apology in behalf of the Christians, but his Apologies are the earliest extant. They are characterized by intense Christian fervor. He writes on the resurrection in what is known as

Fragments of the Lost Work of Justin on the Resurrection.

Justin Martyr speaks of the resurrection in these *Fragments* in several chapters. He speaks of the objections that are raised against the resurrection of the flesh. He also asks the question whether, when the members rise, they must discharge the same functions as now. Then he asks whether the deformed shall rise as deformed. It is interesting, I believe, to quote this passage of Justin Martyr:

Well, they say, if then the flesh rise, it must rise the same as it falls; so that if it die with one eye, it must rise one-eyed; if lame, lame; if defective in any part of the body, in this part the man must rise deficient. How truly blinded are they in the eyes of their hearts! For they have not seen on the earth blind men seeing again, and the lame walking by His word. All things which the Saviour did, He did in the first place in order that what was spoken concerning Him in the prophets might be fulfilled, "that the blind should receive sight, and the deaf hear," and so on; but also to induce the belief that in the resurrection the flesh shall rise entire. For if on earth He healed the sicknesses of the flesh, and made the body whole, much more will He do this in the resurrection, so that the flesh shall rise perfect and entire. In this manner, then, shall those dreaded difficulties of theirs be healed.

In chapter X of these *Fragments* Justin Martyr writes that the resurrection of Christ proves that the body rises, and we quote:

If He had no need of the flesh, why did He heal it? And what is most forcible of all, He raised the dead. Why? Was it not to show what the resurrection should be? How then did He raise the dead? Their souls or their bodies? Manifestly both. If the resurrection were only spiritual, it was requisite that He, in raising the dead, should show the body lying apart by itself, and the soul living apart by itself. But now He did not do so, but raised the body, confirming in it the promise of life. Why did He rise in the flesh in which He suffered, unless to show the resurrection of the flesh? And wishing to confirm this, when His disciples did not know whether to

believe He had truly risen in the body, and were looking upon Him and doubting, He said to them, "Ye have not yet faith, see that it is I"; and He let them handle Him, and showed them the prints of the nails in His hands. And when they were by every kind of proof persuaded that it was Himself, and in the body, they asked Him to eat with them, that they might thus still more accurately ascertain that He had in verity risen bodily; and He did eat honey-comb and fish. [but is it not Jesus Who asks them whether they have any meat? — H.V.] And when He had thus shown them that there is truly a resurrection of the flesh, wishing to show them this also, that it is not impossible for flesh to ascent into heaven (as He had said that our dwelling-place is in heaven), "He was taken up into heaven while they beheld," as He was in the flesh. If, therefore, after all that has been said, any one demand demonstration of the resurrection, he is in no respect different from the Sadducees, since the resurrection of the flesh is the power of God, and, being above all reasoning, is established by faith, and seen in works.

And then, in a concluding paragraph, this church father declares that the body, having been saved, will therefore rise. Justin Martyr speaks of the body as the home of the soul, and of the soul as the house of the spirit. These three, according to him, will be saved in all those who cherish a sincere hope and unquestioning faith in God. And inasmuch as the Saviour in the whole Gospel shows that there is salvation for the flesh, he deplores the lamentable fact that we should any longer endure those unbelieving and dangerous arguments of evil men who would reason that the soul is immortal but the body mortal. This, writes he, is what we used to hear from Pythagoras and Plato, even before we had learned the truth. But now He has come proclaiming the glad tidings of a new and strange hope to men, that He would not keep incorruption in incorruption, but would make corruption incorruption. Indeed, Justin Martyr certainly believed in the resurrection of the dead, as was generally true of the saints of God throughout this early period of the church of God.

Gift idea? Gift subscription!



Secretary's Annual Report, R.F.P.A.

Members, Friends and Supporters of the R.F.P.A.

Dear Brethren:

Another year has quickly flown by, and once again it is our privilege, on this special 50th anniversary, to bring to you tonight our annual report on the activities of your Board and Staff, during the past twelve months.

This has been an eventful year for your Board and our Business Manager, who was able through the grace of God, to report to us monthly, consistent growth of the *Standard Bearer*. We surely can see the fruits of laboring in His vineyard. He has blessed the efforts at spreading His word and the truth through the written page, far beyond our fondest hopes and expectations, by allowing the *Standard Bearer* to reach into the far corners of the earth. He has given us the financial backing enabling us to produce the *Standard Bearer* in ever increasing quantity, and most importantly, the dedicated servants who devote many hours every two weeks, producing spiritually enlightening articles for our paper.

Let us give you a few interesting facts:

The 10 for 2 offer has proved to be the most successful means of increasing our subscription list. Since its inception, we have had 564 responses to this campaign, adding 114 new regular yearly subscribers.

You have also seen the inserts in the *Standard Bearer* periodically through the year, urging our subscribers to send in names of interested friends, in order that we might send them a free copy of the *Standard Bearer*; and your response to this has been gratifying. Over 500 sample copies were requested, resulting in 49 new subscribers. The Board feels this is an excellent way of reaching brethren in other denominations, and we urge you to continue sending in names for free copies throughout the year.

Our last report in 1973 informed you that 1,525 copies were being printed each issue. With this report, we are happy to inform you that 1,700 copies of each issue are now being printed, and 125 additional copies for those desiring bound volumes. Of special interest is our growing list of subscribers in Canada

and Australia. More than 100 copies of each issue are mailed to Canada and 75 to Australasia. Over 100 copies are mailed to such countries as Japan, India, Mexico, Germany and even behind the iron curtain to Budapest, Hungary. A grand total of 250 new subscriptions were received during the past year, increasing our subscription list by approximately 15%.

Postal rates have been increasing drastically. It now costs 16¢ to mail one copy to a foreign country. Our publishing costs have increased 20% during the year. However, we are thankful for the fact that our financial status has kept pace with all these increases, and the Board is determined not to increase the cost of subscriptions, as long as our loyal supporters and churches continue to make up the deficit between publishing costs and subscription income with their many gifts. Our treasury was also given a considerable boost this year through a gift of \$4,200 from our former Oaklawn congregation, who specified that this money be used in the distribution of the *Standard Bearer* in the Chicago Area.

It is most gratifying to all those involved in publishing the *Standard Bearer*, that a major portion of our time and efforts can be devoted to distribution, and that our financial needs are so wonderfully taken care of by you, our supporters. Retiring this year are the brethren R. Bos, F. Huizinga, and C. Kuiper. We wish to thank these men for the hours spent on the Board during the past three years, and we know that they have enjoyed seeing the growth of the *Standard Bearer* during these years. A word of thanks also to Mr. Pipe, who continues to handle the mailing of our paper, and also to our able business manager, Mr. Vander Wal for his untiring efforts.

In concluding this report, the Staff and the Board of the R.F.P.A. continue to covet your prayers and your support for this kingdom work, on this our 50th birthday.

Thank you
THE BOARD
D.Knoper, Sec'y

Book Reviews

The Freedom of God (A Study of Election and Pulpit), by James Daane; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 208 pages, \$5.95 [Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema]

For those readers interested in a more detailed review, such a review was published in the May, 1974 issue of our *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. A few brief remarks will suffice here.

This book purports to offer a solution to a problem, the problem of the absence of election from the preaching in Reformed pulpits. I say "purports" because the book engages, first of all, in false problematics. That is to say, the problem which the author sets up is not the real problem in those cases where election is absent from the preaching. And naturally, false problematics will lead to false solutions. And on this count the author is more guilty than on the first count.

The first part of the book is a diatribe against what the author calls "decretal theology," which receives 100% of the blame for the alleged absence of election from preaching. It is marred by the fact that the author misrepresents those whom he criticizes, among them, as you might expect, Herman Hoeksema. In fact, I have seldom seen such gross misrepresentation — and I have documented this charge in the longer review mentioned above. The result is that the author

does not demolish Hoeksema's theology, or the theology of any so-called decretal theologian, but a mere straw man.

When the author turns to positive development, he produces little that is clear, less that is substantial, and nothing Reformed. In fact, the heart of Daane's solution to a purported problem is the denial of sovereign reprobation, and, thus, of sovereign predestination.

Do I recommend this book? By all means! Read it, in order to keep up on developments. But don't take anything that is written for granted. Go to the sources, and check for accuracy.

The Atonement, by Archibald A. Hodge; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 440 pages, \$3.95 (paper) [Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema]

This is a reprint in Baker's series of "Notable Books on Theology." I have long had a copy of this book in my library, and I deem this a very worthwhile reprint. This is a very thorough work on the atonement by this Princeton theologian. It is written from a fundamentally Reformed viewpoint. At this price, one would be foolish not to add the book to his library if he does not already possess it.

Heartily recommended.

PRE-PUBLICATION SALE

PEACEABLE FRUIT (For The Nurture Of Covenant Youth)

by

Gertrude Hoeksema

This new R.F.P.A. publication is scheduled to come from the presses on or about November 1. The regular price of this clothbound volume will be \$5.95. If you place your order before November 1, you can take advantage of the pre-publication sale price of \$4.95. Your check or money-order must accompany your order. All orders will be filled as soon as the book is available. Mail your order to: Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

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News From Our Churches

September 30, 1974

Rev. Dale Kuiper preached his farewell sermon in Pella on September 22. On September 25, he was installed into his new office of missionary minister of the Word, in a Divine Worship Service held in Hudsonville Church. The church was nearly filled on that occasion, as a goodly number of our people came to witness what First Church's bulletin called, "this important event in the history of our churches." The following week Rev. Kuiper moved with his family to Skowhegan, Maine, in order to begin his labors there as the second Home Missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America.

Two of our churches have, of course, been left vacant as a result of the recently accepted calls to the office of missionary. Both of those churches, Kalamazoo and Pella, have extended a call to Rev. J. Kortering.

On Tuesday, September 10, the congregation of Southwest Church held a farewell for then Pastor-elect James Slopsema and family. The following Tuesday evening the June graduate from our Seminary was ordained into the office of the ministry, in Edgerton, Minnesota. The congregation of Edgerton extended invitations to neighboring sister churches to join with them on that happy occasion. Rev. Moore conducted the service.

* * * * *

An Open House was held in Hudsonville Church on September 21, in honor of Rev. C. Hanko, who at that time observed forty-five years in the ministry of God's Word!

A couple of weeks earlier, on September 7, Rev. G. Lubbers observed the completion of forty years of faithful ministry, both as pastor and missionary. It happened that he was in Skowhegan on that occasion and, thanks to the thoughtfulness of a faithful member of the group with which we are working there, we have an account of a special commemoration of that occasion. We quote the following from that much appreciated letter from the brother in Maine:

"After the church service on the evening of September 8, we gathered in his honor at a home.

"In recounting highlights of his ministry, Rev. Lubbers said that he and Mrs. Lubbers longed for the day when they could hear, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.'

(continued on back page)

ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS

We express our congratulations to Professor H. C. Hoeksema on this 25th anniversary of his ordination into the ministry of our Lord. We pray that God will continue to bless him and use him in his labors to the propagation of His truth and the gathering of His Church. May Professor Hoeksema see the blessings of the Lord on his labors and when his ministry on this earth is over, the reassuring word of our Lord, "Well done good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of your Lord."

The Theological School Committee
Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
Richard H. Teitsma, Sec.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The board of Adams St. Protestant Reformed Christian School wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to members: Mr. Wm. Hoffman in the death of his father, and Mr. L. Dykstra in the death of his mother. Our prayer is that they may find comfort and strength in God's Holy Word.

Psalm 34:18, 19 "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

Chas. E. Kregel, Pres.
Kenneth Schipper, Sec'y.

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RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of the South-East Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby expresses its sincere Christian sympathy to Rev. and Mrs. Marinus Schipper, our Bible leader and President, respectively, in the death of Rev. Schipper's sister, MRS. ELIZABETH DYKSTRA, of Holland, Mich.

May the God of grace comfort the hearts of the bereaved family.

Mrs. G. Pipe, Vice Pres.
Mrs. H. C. Ophoff, Sec'y.

"Rev. Lubbers stated that many times he learned that God didn't need him — that God doesn't need anybody — but that nevertheless God was pleased to use him. He would be happy if God continued to use him for a few more years.

"In moments of trial Rev. Lubbers would remember often the words, 'Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling,' and then add, 'I can't cling. Hold me Lord!'

"After his remarks, the group sang 'Great is Thy faithfulness,' 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' and a few others.

"We in Maine feel greatly blessed to have partaken of Rev. Lubbers' ministry during his stay, and to have shared this momentous occasion with him."

* * * * *

Another welcome contribution comes from our Business Manager. Mr. Vander Wal writes:

"Many items concerning our Protestant Reformed publications have been reported in this column. Letters received from the readers of our *Standard Bearer*, and from listeners and readers of our Reformed Witness Hour radio sermon, have been printed in our News Reports.

"This time, we are happy to give our readers a report on an entirely different facet of literature published by our Protestant Reformed Churches. We refer to the Catechism Booklets published by our Churches, for the catechetical instruction of our Covenant children. Recently an order for these books was received from Northampton, England! In part, the letter reads as follows:

"'You asked about our use of your catechism materials — well, all I can say is that we in England find them really excellent, and we publish nothing like them here (only "Mark's Sketchbook of Christ" by Helen Tenney, pub. by Banner of Truth Trust). I have a little girl aged 7.4 years and a little boy aged 1 year — I have been working through the first O.T. Workbook with her and also on the Junior and Beginners Catechisms (Bible Stories) during our daily family devotions. The folks at our Church are becoming quite keen on using them too. We would love to know of any other children's materials or children's reading books (fiction or non-fiction) that you can whole-heartedly recommend as Reformed, as it is so difficult to find any in England?'"

D.D.

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