

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

A study of the parables will therefore yield an abundance of fruit in the lives of those citizens of the kingdom whose eyes have been opened to see its mysteries and whose ears have been opened to hear its truths.

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION**New Creatures in Christ***Rev. H. Veldman*

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

2 Cor. 5:17

In the verses 14 and 15 the apostle had written of the wonderful love of Christ, that, when He died, we all died, in order that we should no longer live unto and for ourselves, but unto Christ Who died for us and rose again. Henceforth, from now on, because of this love of Christ toward us, we know no man after the flesh. Indeed, once Paul knew Christ after the

flesh. Once, when he persecuted the church, he was motivated by carnal reasons. But now, all this is past. Now we know Him no more after the flesh; Christ has shed abroad His love in our hearts.

Of this, the words of our text are a conclusion. From this it is evident that if a man be in Christ, he is a new creature. And, let us read the text this way:

"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, a new creation! old things are passed away; behold, they are become new!"

* * * * *

The word translated "creature" in English and "schepsel" in Dutch simply means "creation," and it is the same word as that which appears in Genesis, that God created the heavens and the earth. To create is always presented in the Word of God as an act of God's almighty, omnipotent will.

To create is not merely to make something out of nothing. Of course, there is nothing fundamentally wrong with this definition; what the fathers meant with it we all understand. However, this definition, in the first place, does not apply to man, inasmuch as he was taken out of the dust of the earth. Secondly, it really does not tell us what it means to create. And, thirdly, it surely fails to do justice to the beautiful and very significant definition of this concept in Holy Writ.

God only can create. Man cannot create. He cannot call, speak things into existence. We can speak of things only after they exist. We ourselves are creatures, and therefore limited to and determined by the things that are made. God alone can create. That God creates means, in the first place, that He calls into being as an act of His almighty will. The Lord's speaking (when God Himself speaks) is always powerful and creative. He speaks and it is, He commands and it stands. It was thus at history's dawn: God said, "Let there be light," or literally: "Light." This same idea of creating must also be borne in mind to understand this text. And, secondly, when God creates, calls things into existence, He calls the things that are not as if they were. This we read literally in Romans 4:17. This, too, is of the utmost significance in the interpretation of the words of this text.

Whom does God create into a new creature? Who and what is man? In common with the animal world, man, too, is an animated, organized, living being; and he was created out of the earth. Man is body and soul. He was created physically, is composed of flesh and bones and blood, has a nervous system, etc. He also has a soul. The soul of the animal is in its blood. My soul is the seat of my natural life, the seat of all my thinking and willing and lusts and aspirations. My body and soul are wonderfully adapted to one another. In distinction from the animals, God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. Man is, therefore, created as God's image bearer, is a personal, a moral-rational being. He is always prompted by his attitude toward God, either to love Him and subject

all things to Him, or to do all things because he loves himself.

However, there is more. The object here of God's creative work is man as *old* man. Sin did not affect man essentially. True, he lost much of his excellent gifts; he retains only remnants of these original gifts. Man must now struggle to attain unto the knowledge of things. Besides, his body, too, was affected. It is subject to death. However, he did not change essentially. He continues to be a moral-rational being, is able to think and will and desire, has the ability to develop the earth, use its powers, is able to propagate the human race. Sin, however, did affect man spiritually. His entire nature was changed, spiritually, from the service of the living God into the service of the devil. He is now a sinner, wholly corrupt and perverse, dead in sin and in trespasses, full of darkness and hatred of God and death.

Finally, what is the nature of this creative work of God? Indeed, the Christian is not a product of instruction. An instructed sinner always remains a learned fool. Neither is he the product of persuasion. A sinner can never be persuaded to leave his evil way. There is no amount of external activity that can ever transform a child of sin and darkness into one of life and light. The Christian is nothing less than a new creation. He is the product of God's almighty grace. He is called into existence by God's own omnipotent word. As God spoke at history's dawn, "Light," and there was light, so now God speaks light and life into the darkness and death of His elect sinner. And this Christian is a *new* creature. Even as the Lord, at history's dawn, called the things that are not as if they were, so the sinner becomes new; light and life now exist where only darkness and death reigned before. How wonderful is this new creature in Christ.

* * * * *

Christ is the source of this new man or creation. This is surely the idea of this text. When we read: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," we realize that the apostle means that he is a new creature because he is in Christ. This almighty, creative work of God, creating this new creature, always occurs in Christ — never outside of Christ.

Christ is the Head of His church. Negatively, this means that there is no life or possibility of life in us. We have no life. We are completely devoid of it. And we can never attain to it. We can never merit it nor pay our sins and debts. And we can never call ourselves out of life into death, nor call ourselves into the life of God's covenant.

Christ is the Head of the church. It is for this

reason that the apostle uses the name, Christ, in this text. The name, Christ, means: Anointed. Christ is the name of the Servant of Jehovah, as He was anointed, ordained and qualified by the Triune God, even eternally, to be our Head, our Representative, our Chief Prophet, Only High Priest, and Eternal King. Christ is Jesus, God's eternal Son, anointed in our flesh and blood, to do what we could never do, represent us in death and in life, to restore and lead and translate dead sinners into the blessedness of God's eternal kingdom and covenant.

This Christ is the Head of the church. He is our judicial, representative Head. He represents us in the awesome satisfying of the righteousness and justice of God. He pays our debt, bears God's infinite wrath in perfect obedience, merits for all His own everlasting life in heavenly immortality. He is also our Head organically. We receive this everlasting life, not only because of Him, but also through Him. He Himself is glorified. And He is glorified as our Head. He is not simply received up into heaven to take His place among and next to all the saints who preceded Him. He passes them, is lifted up above them, to the very pinnacle of glory, at the right hand of God, receives the Spirit beyond measure, is glorified as the life-giving Head of all His elect own.

Hence, if any man be *in* Christ, he is a new creature. Indeed, He is the power station, our spiritual reservoir, and we are the light bulbs. His life and light are transmitted to us by God's almighty and irresistible creative word. God speaks the living Christ into our hearts. God speaks, as the Triune God, through His Spirit; He speaks, explosively, Christ in us, in our hearts, Christ as the life-giving Head and Principle of His church. And the result of this wonderful grace of God is that Christ, in His grace, is called into our hearts, sets up His throne there, unites all His own with Himself, and now we live in and out of Christ Jesus, our Lord. And this is revealed to us and confirmed in our consciousness through the preaching of the gospel, when we are called, consciously, out of darkness into God's wonderful light.

* * * * *

Old things are passed away. This expression, as well as the expression, "All things are become new," must be understood in the absolute sense. True, the child of God is very imperfect. And he knows this. Yet, the child of God is viewed here from the principle of the new man, from the viewpoint of his being a new creature.

So, old things are passed away. All old things! The inner fellowship with sin and darkness is gone. We have died to sin (sin has not died within us, but we have died to sin). The old man, the old creature, has —

passed away. This is also true objectively. The world is no longer our permanent home; the sphere of sin and our covenant with iniquity and darkness are passed away. Our old and former friendships and associations, lusts and aspirations are all passed away.

Behold, all things are become new! The apostle exclaims this in spiritual ecstasy. We read: "Behold, they are become *new*. And this word, "new," does not mean "new" in the sense of another (there is also a word in the Greek which means "new" in the sense of another), but in the sense that it never existed before.

Do we grasp this ecstasy on the part of the apostle? Is it any wonder that he is filled with ecstasy? Notice: all is become new within us! The love of Christ constrains us, now controls our entire being and nature. We have a new will, a new mind, a new thinking, new lusts and desires, new plans and purposes; we are prompted by something we never had before — the love of God and the love of Christ, the love of the brethren and the love of the neighbor.

And, secondly, new are all things all about us. The objects of our pursuits here have become new, absolutely new. We now have new associations, new fellowships, new purposes, a new city, the heavenly Jerusalem. Everything is so different. We live in a new and wonderful world.

Of course, all this is true only in principle. This new life is ours only in principle — we have this new man in an earthly house of this tabernacle. And this remains as such until the day of our death, so that the cry of lamentation is heard from our lips, as we read it in Romans 7:24. We love this new life, seek it, and would be delivered of the old man of sin. We reach out to the perfection that is above. But, be it in principle, we are new creatures. The joyful future now beckons unto us. This new creature will soon be delivered out of this earthly house and then nothing will ever again disturb the perfect and heavenly fellowship with God. Then the word of God, 2 Corinthians 5:1, will be fulfilled: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Redlands (CA) Mary-Martha Society wishes to express their sincere sympathy to Mrs. Kate Veldman in the loss of her husband, MR. HARMON (BILL) VELDMAN.

May our covenant God comfort her by His Word and Spirit.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. Marvin Kamps, Pres.
Mrs. Dennis Van Uffelen, Sec'y.

EDITORIALS

Our Australasian Tour (7)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

To be completely honest, we both were of the opinion — Rev. Hanko and I — that after our tour of New Zealand the rest of our tour would be somewhat anticlimactic. Part of the reason for this lay in the fact that our New Zealand tour had been so thrilling; part of it lay in the fact that the rest of our schedule was somewhat vague when we began our trip, due to some last-minute changes. However, we could not have been more mistaken! And needless to say, we are glad that we were mistaken.

We were very warmly and enthusiastically received in Tasmania. And though our Tasmania schedule was a bit uncertain before we arrived, due to the fact that Pastor Rodman was still recovering from the effects of a severe heart attack last year during his travels, our schedule turned out to be extremely busy. For a man who was supposed to be on a curtailed schedule, Pastor Rodman was an extremely busy man during the 3½ days of our whirlwind tour of Tasmania! But he seemed to suffer no ill effects, and we all thoroughly enjoyed our fellowship together, both at the meetings and during our travels. The fact that we travelled together by car gave us much opportunity for discussion of theological and ecclesiastical matters — interspersed by Rev. Rodman's, "Oh, that reminds me of a story that I must tell you from my Arminian days . . ." And with all our exchange of views — and I must say, we were deliberately probing one another and even searching for possible areas of disagreement — we discovered an altogether delightful likemindedness. And we also had a hearty reception from the people of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church wherever we went. Further, we received the testimony that we were the first and the only ministers from another denomination whom they would allow in their pulpits. This, we believe, is a significant indication of the stand of these churches and of the degree of agreement between us. Along these lines Rev. Hanko and I reported to our Contact Committee and to our Consistories when we returned. And now our

assessment has been confirmed by a development about which I will tell you at the end of this article — a most exciting and delightful development!

When I say that we had a whirlwind tour of Tasmania, I mean it. In 3½ days' time we participated in 7 meetings and in countless personal conversations, and we travelled an estimated 300-400 miles. Our tour began with our arrival in late afternoon at Wynyard, in the northwest corner of the island. We were met by a Mr. and Mrs. Klein and by Pastor Rodman, and our hosts were Mr. and Mrs. Albert Bosveld. As you can tell by the names, there are some of Dutch background in the EPC. We even met a Kuiper family in Launceston; that's getting rather close to "Hoeksema" — because my mother was a Kuiper, which accounts for my middle name, "Cooper." An interesting sidelight was the fact that the Bosvelds had a snapshot of a Rev. Hoeksema, taken by Mr. Bosveld's deceased brother in the 1950s in Grand Rapids. It turned out to be a picture of my father, taken in the front yard of the First Church manse.

Our meeting on that first evening was held in the Methodist Church building in the neighboring town of Burnie. It was a gathering of some 30 people, who listened intently to my lecture on "God's Sovereign Love of the World." These people love and understand the Reformed truth of sovereign, particular grace; and this became evident, too, from their response to the lecture. After the lecture we enjoyed much conversation with the people of the congregation, and later we visited with the Bosvelds and Kleins until late at night.

Bright and early on Saturday, July 5, Mr. Bosveld drove us along the rugged north coast to Ulverstone, where we met Rev. and Mrs. Rodman, who brought us the rest of the way to Launceston, where Mr. Rodman's home church is located. Rev. Hanko stayed in Launceston at the home of Mr. and Mrs. V.

Connors; Mr. Connors is clerk of the Launceston session and also clerk of the presbytery (classis). Mrs. Hoeksema and I stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Lot Bosveld, members of the Reformed Church in Launceston.

There was little time to spare after our arrival. Saturday's first meeting was in the Launceston church at 3:30 in the afternoon. Rev. Hanko spoke at length on the history and background of our churches and on the common grace question. And after his introduction, there was a lengthy question-and-answer session, during which several pertinent questions about the covenant and the place of the children of believers in the covenant were raised. This was a very interesting meeting and, I believe, very fruitful. We had "tea" (supper) cafeteria style in the church basement, and this gave us the opportunity to meet and converse with the Launceston people. Saturday's second meeting was a lecture on "The Reformed Faith in Crisis." In this lecture I was also asked to interject some remarks concerning the AACS, a movement which has also gained a foothold in Tasmania — or, at least a foothold. We found in our Australasian travels that there was considerable interest, but also considerable ignorance, with respect to the Toronto movement; and we were glad for the opportunity to enlighten people on some crucial matters and to sound a warning against this movement. Nevertheless, the general interest of the people is not in this subject. After the evening lecture we had our late evening refreshments (called "supper" in Australasia), and again had the opportunity to chat with the people. There were audiences of 50-60 at both these Saturday meetings.

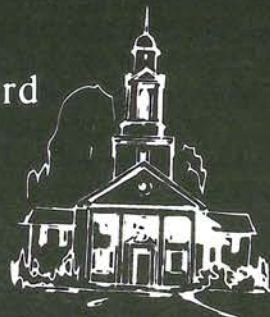
Sunday morning both Rev. Hanko and I had preaching engagements. Rev. Hanko had the opportunity to preach at a mainline Presbyterian Church, St. Andrew's; and he preached on Psalm 91:1, 2 to a rather elderly congregation of some 200 people. I was a guest in Pastor Rodman's pulpit, and I preached to a congregation of some 80 people on Isaiah 45:22-25.

After noon dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Connors and farewell to Launceston, we travelled along winding roads through the Tasmanian countryside to the little congregation at Winnaleah, arriving nicely in time for a meeting scheduled to begin at 4 o'clock. This was an informal gathering at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Carins. I introduced the subject of sovereign, particular grace in connection with Ephesians 2:8-10. And our meeting extended right through "tea" to about 10 o'clock at night. If we were wondering whether the people of the EPC were as well-informed concerning the truth as their leaders, any doubts were dispelled at this meeting. Here, in this far away little country village of Tasmania, in this meeting of very ordinary people of God, we fielded questions about

supra- and infra-lapsarianism and about Calvin on common grace as discussed in L. Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*! What a surprise! And what a pure delight to spend that evening with this group of some 40 people and their children. We went to bed that night with much to think about and much to be thankful for. Rev. Hanko stayed with the Carins, and Mrs. Hoeksema and I stayed overnight with Mr. and Mrs. Syd Crawford.

On Monday morning, after a quick picture-taking stint to prove that we saw genuine Australian kangaroos, we were on the road again for the all-day trip to the Tasman Peninsula and the village of Taranna. Our Business Manager and I had often talked about that "strange address" in Tasmania: "Taranna, Koonya, Tasman Peninsula," where the Rev. John Lyons lives. Now we had the opportunity to meet this brother and his wife, and a joyful time of fellowship it was. There is nothing imposing about the Taranna Church — a small building and a struggling little flock. And the Taranna manse is located in the kind of back country, at the end of a dirt lane, such as you would not even imagine for a Protestant Reformed manse. But here we were! Amid Reformed people who genuinely welcomed us! At the far southern end of this far away island in the Pacific! Unbelievable! God works in a mysterious way, indeed! I wish you could have enjoyed Pastor Lyons' conversation with us. And I wish you could have shared our fellowship at the evening meeting at the home of Kingstons, when Rev. Hanko introduced the discussion on the basis of Matthew 11:28. We were saddened, however, to learn that Pastor Lyons, because of poor health, was about

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to retire from full-time ministry. This again will intensify the sore need for ministers in the EPC.

Thus ended our stay in Tasmania. In the morning we had a quick sightseeing tour to the ruins of an old penal colony at Port Arthur. Then, on our hurried trip to the Hobart Airport, we enjoyed some of the beautiful scenery of Tasmania. And after barely making it to the airport on time (they were paging us when we arrived!), it was a hurried goodbye to Mr. Rodman, and back again to Melbourne. We regretted the fact that because of our abbreviated schedule and because of the fact that the bridge over Durwent at Hobart is out, we could not visit the Hobart congregation and Pastor Cameron-Smith.

And now for that surprise! In response to a letter of thanks from our Committee of Contact and our inquiry as to ways in which we might be of assistance, we received the following letter from the Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, signed by Mr. V. Connors, Clerk:

"The Committee of International Church Relations of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America,

"Dear Sirs:

"We wish to thank you for your letter which was read at our last Presbytery meeting on the 25th October.

"When this letter was read and received the representatives from the various congregations of our Church including Rev. P. Burley from Rockhampton, Rev. I. Morgan, Melbourne, expressed their appreciation of the ministry that Professor Hoeksema and Rev. C. Hanks exercised among us.

"After due discussion on this letter, it was unanimously agreed that the Presbytery of our Church officially recognize the Protestant Reformed Churches of America as a true Church of Jesus Christ and therefore we desire to establish official correspondence with you. We recognize the communion of the Protestant Reformed Churches as a sister communion of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

"Appreciation was also expressed by the various representatives concerning the manner with which your representatives conducted themselves whilst they were among our Churches and we wish to inform you that their presence in our Church was a great encouragement. We were grateful to God for their visit.

"Yours in Sovereign Grace,
(w.s.) V.J. Connors
Presbytery Clerk"

And that is a fitting note on which to end this report of our Tasmanian Tour.

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ALL AROUND US:

Challenge for Today

Rev. H. Veldman

In *De Wachter*, a Dutch weekly periodical of the Christian Reformed Church, on page 5 of the Oct. 21, 1975 issue, appeared a concluding paragraph in an editorial by the editor of that paper, which we now quote (we translate):

Reformation Day is again approaching. May our commemoration of the Reformation lead to a deepening sense of the absolute authority of God's Word and to struggle against all undermining of that authority. Yea, and also to faithfulness in the proclamation and listening to God's Word. Let that Word determine for us what is the deepest need for man, also the man of today, and let that Word bring the saving message, and let that Word enlighten the intense (*nijpende*) problems of today and show the way for solution.

That is the challenge for us today — as sons and daughters of the Reformation.

With this, editor of *De Wachter*, we are in complete agreement. Of course, the editor of the *Wachter* is surely aware of the fact that this authority of the Word of God is being undermined today in the Reformed church world, also in the Christian Reformed Church. What must we say about Report 44? Or about a professor who received a life appointment in Calvin Seminary and has publicly said and written that he is in disagreement with the Canons of Dordt? Then, Rev. Haverkamp, we must fight all this undermining of the Word of God. May we have the grace of God to do this! The hour is extremely late!

HOW POSSIBLE?

However, the *Banner* in an editorial in the issue of Oct. 24, 1975 is rather confident that the Christian Reformed Church is loyal to the Reformed understanding of the Scriptures. The editor writes on page 7:

In short, the Christian Reformed Church exists now in loyalty to the Reformed understanding of the Scriptures. Granted this understanding, our institutions fit: preaching, the sacraments, discipline; schooling, and the Seminary; missions, radio outreach, and the ministries of information and mercy.

But take the Reformed understanding of the Scriptures away, and put the keys to the kingdom into the hands of anyone trained in some evangelistic "method," and what parts of our denominational

structure are any longer necessary?

The answer is, I think, none of them at all!

What do you think? — LDK

What must one say of this? I again refer the editor of the *Banner* to Report 44, and the life appointment given to a seminary professor, Prof. Harold Dekker, who openly said and wrote that he is in disagreement with the Canons of Dordt. And the Christian Reformed Church, in its preaching and Seminary, etc., is loyal to the Reformed understanding of the Scriptures? I ask: how is this possible? Is the editor of the *Banner* unaware of conditions in his church? How can he write this?

AMERICAN DELEGATION ASKS PENETRATING QUESTIONS OF DUTCH CHURCHES

In the *RES News Exchange* of Oct. 14, 1975, page 1109, appeared the following bit of information which we wish to pass on to our readers. The quotation speaks for itself.

(Grand Rapids) A team of four churchmen of the Christian Reformed Church in North America has returned from visiting a number of Reformed churches in the Netherlands. A high point of their visit was the address of their spokesman, Prof. John Kromminga to the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) with which the Christian Reformed Church has close ties. The delegates expressed the concern of the Christian Reformed Church about theological and church developments in the Netherlands. In his address Prof. Kromminga asked: "Is there a theological drift in the Gereformeerde Kerken away from the moorings provided by the Confessions? Have doctrinal sensitivities been weakened to the point where many do not realize the seriousness of an important deviation? Has secularization made inroads into the church to the point where sound doctrine is considered to be of secondary importance? Does the church encourage all of the above deviations by failure to take definitive and decisive action where an error of important dimensions has been identified and recognized?"

The visiting churchmen recognized that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have found "another way of dealing with each other" in cases of doctrinal deviations from the Confession than was the case in recent years. However, they also asked, "Has not the time come for the healing action of discipline

— applied to be sure, with due consideration and patience, but applied firmly for the sake of the integrity of the church?”

Church members, Kromminga stated, must know themselves as belonging to a body, of which Christ alone is the head. It is necessary “that they recognize that the Spirit of Christ dwells in that body and leads it into the truth; that no one may presume to be such a teacher of that body that he will no longer listen to the body when it speaks.”

The Synod did not react immediately to the address but will study the communication and its penetrating questions.

Imagine, these delegates expressed the concern of the Christian Reformed Church about theological and church developments in the Netherlands. I could hardly believe my eyes when I read this.

Of course, it is wonderful when delegates of the Christian Reformed Church express concern about these questions and developments in the churches in the Netherlands. But, what must one say when these same developments are also present in the church of these delegates? What would a dyed-in-the-wool Calvinist say when confronting the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church today? That church has set forth its doctrine in the Three Points of 1924, teaching a general, universal love of God and denying the truth of the utter depravity of the natural sinner. That church has its Report 44, has given a life appointment in its seminary to a professor who is publicly in disagreement with the Canons of Dordt. That church has its decision on homosexuality, on the remarriage of divorced persons whether divorced biblically or unbiblically. That church, too, is playing with its confessions and liturgy. And now delegates from this church sit in judgment upon the churches in the Netherlands? Is one not reminded of the Dutch saying: *de pot verwijt den ketel dat hij zwart is* (the pot accuses the kettle that it is black)? I do not understand that Dr. Kromminga had the boldness to address these remarks and penetrating questions to this General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Would it not be much better if the Christian Reformed Church would take inventory in its own midst; should that church not confront itself with these penetrating questions?

THREE DUTCH (GKN) MINISTERS CALL FOR SEPARATION

How different is the following quotation from the *RES News Exchange* of Nov. 4, 1975, page 1122.

(Grand Rapids) Three ministers of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) distributed a letter at a meeting of the association *Schrift en Getuigenis* (Word and Witness) which stated their conviction that it was time to separate oneself from those who are not of the church. “The time for end-

less talk is past,” they said. “We separate ourselves from those who violate the body of Christ and Christ Himself by holding or tolerating false doctrine.” *Schrift en Getuigenis*, an organization of those disturbed by events within the GKN, however, did not feel that it could recommend such a course because the GKN Synod did not really hinder the true worship of God.

Rev. H.J. Hegger compared the God of Wiersinga and Kuitert to Baal, for they have destroyed the altar of the Lamb who was sacrificed for the sins of the world. Some choose the God of Eli, who was afraid to resist the apostasy of his sons. Hegger called upon the people to choose for the God of Elijah. At the end of his address, Hegger read from an article by K. Runia and commented, “As long as we still hear such things from our church leaders, it is difficult to turn our backs to our churches.

Four consistories have addressed letters to the GKN Synod saying that they do not regard as authoritative pronouncements of any church assembly that are not based on and that do not perpetuate faithfulness to God’s Word and to the Confessions.

I believe that I should make a few comments. I do not know what Prof. Runia had written in that article. Our readers, however, have been introduced to him in the past on more than one occasion in our *Standard Bearer*, in connection with his denial of the truth of double predestination.

The organization in the Netherlands, to which the above quotation refers, consisting of those who are ill at ease in Zion because of events in the Netherlands, did not feel that it could recommend such a course because the GKN Synod did not really hinder the true worship of God.

The Synod did not really hinder the true worship of God? What must a synod do before it really hinders the true worship of the Lord? I suppose this means that those who love the truth may continue to worship God unmolested by those who hate the truth of the Word of God. However, what must the people of God do when the synod condones heretics, refuses to prosecute those who depart from the Scriptures and trample the Word of God under foot? What must they do who love the truth when they are compelled to sit down at the Lord’s table with those who attack and destroy the Word of God? Is it not true that such a synod denies the marks of the true church? These marks are denied because discipline is no longer exercised against those who corrupt the truths of the Word of God, and also because the sacraments are profaned, inasmuch as the table of the Lord is not denied to those who despise the Word of God. And if this be true, and it is, then it must also follow that there is a most serious defect as far as the preaching of the Scriptures is concerned. It is hardly true, therefore, that the GKN Synod did not really hinder the true worship of the Lord.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

January 15, 1976

Dear Timothy,

We had reached the point in our last letter where we were talking about faith — especially as it stands connected to the Scriptures. I think I mentioned to you that Scripture does not mean by faith an acceptance of unproved assumptions or of unprovable pre-suppositions. This is a view of faith which is extremely common today especially in the so-called Science — Scripture debate or Creation — Evolution debate. And there is sometimes misunderstanding about this matter also in connection with our faith in Scripture as the Word of God infallibly inspired in all its parts. When we claim that we hold the Scriptures to be infallibly inspired by faith, we are said to hold to a doctrine which is fundamentally unprovable. That we accept this by faith means that we accept it even though we cannot prove it, and perhaps just because we cannot prove it. I deny this, and I think we ought to be clear on this point.

The whole thing revolves around the question: What is faith? The Scriptures make it very clear that faith is the bond which puts the believer into living contact with Christ so that the believer lives in fellowship with Christ, draws his life out of Christ, is part of the mystical body of Christ, and continues in organic union with Christ for all of life, through death, and on into eternity.

But because faith is the living connection between the believer and Christ by which the life of Christ becomes the possession of the believer, it is also a very great power which changes in a profoundly spiritual way the whole life of a man who possesses it. Do not get me wrong. Faith does not change man in any psychological sense of the word. Faith does not make alterations in one's character. As far as his character is concerned he is the same kind of man before he has faith as after he has received this gift. Nor, if he has an IQ of 95, does faith raise his IQ to 135. Faith is a spiritual power. But as a spiritual power it enlightens the mind and changes the will.

Our Canons speak of this as a couple of very beautiful articles. It is true that our Canons are talking about regeneration or conversion, but it is also obvious that our fathers, in these articles, meant to include faith. They write in III & IV, 11, 12: "But

when God accomplishes his good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, he not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and *powerfully illuminates their minds by his Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God*; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man; he opens the closed, and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, he quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, he renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions.

"And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture . . . it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scripture inspired by the author of this work declares . . . Whereupon the will thus renewed, is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence, becomes itself active. Whereupon also, man is himself rightly said to believe . . ."

Now the point I want to make is this. If faith is such a spiritual power, faith is exactly the power to put the believer in contact with heavenly things — with the things of God, of His revelation, of His Word, of Christ, of heaven and of all things spiritual. I say, faith is the power to *put him in contact* with all these things. Without faith this is impossible. Faith is the power to do this. But if faith is such a power, then faith is, so to speak, its own proof. I want to make this as clear as I possibly can. To ask one to "prove" that the Bible is the Word of God is to ask an absurd question of one who has faith. Let me see once if we can illustrate this. Supposing that you are in your living room looking out of the window on a day in which the rain is falling from the skies in torrents. Supposing further that there is a man who is standing on the street corner in front of your house waiting for a bus. But because he has no umbrella he has literally become soaked to the skin. The water is dripping off the brim of his hat. He is huddled inside

his coat trying to preserve a little warmth against the chill of the drenching he is getting. He is completely and totally miserable. Now supposing that you rush out of the house and run up to the man to ask him why he is so miserable. He will probably wonder a bit about your sanity, but will, no doubt, answer that, generally speaking, his misery is due to the fact that the rain is falling, he left his umbrella home, the bus is late in coming, and this combination of circumstances has resulted in a thorough soaking for him. But if your next question would be: "*Prove to me that it is raining,*" the man would either become furious because he would think you were mocking his discomfort, or he would think you out of your mind if your question was asked in seriousness. The point is that there are some things which are so totally obvious that they are beyond the reach of proof. They are so obvious that, if to a given person, they are not obvious, there simply is not any kind of evidence one can muster which will make the point any more obvious than it is. If the man who is standing in the rain and is gradually getting more and more soaked, seeks seriously proof for the fact that it is raining, there is no evidence one can produce which will make it any more obvious than it already is.

Now this was the way it was in Paradise with Adam. All the creation shouted aloud the Word of God. And Adam heard this Word of God in every living thing. He knew God, knew God as a friend knows a friend. He had living and abiding fellowship with God. His joy and happiness was to live with God surrounded on every side by God's Word. If someone had come into the garden and had asked Adam: "*Prove to me that there is a God,*" Adam would not have known what to say. And he would not have known what to say because every flower, every bird, every piece of fruit, every ray of sunlight, every part of the blue sky above, shouted itself hoarse in praise to God the Creator of all. About all Adam could have said was: "*Look around you at every thing. And if you are not persuaded that God is, then there is nothing at all I can do or say which will make this truth any clearer than it is.*" God was so obvious in all things that there was no proof possible.

Sin changed that. And sin changed that, not because the speech of God in the creation is any less clear. It may be a different kind of speech in the creation, for the creation speaks loudly of God's wrath, of His curse and of His punishment of all wickedness. But the speech is still there. God did not cease speaking in creation. The trouble lies with man. Sin has made him completely blind and deaf to God. We must understand once again that this was a spiritual loss. It is true that man was also affected by sin physically and psychologically. Death came into his existence. And the powers of mind and will which he possesses from a natural point of view are only —

"remnants of natural light." But the spiritual loss of man's spiritual powers was fatal. He is now an enemy of God, filled with bitter hatred against God. And it is this spiritual enmity and hatred which makes the sinner totally blind to God and to all the things of God. To use Paul's expression in Rom. 1:18, he holds the truth in unrighteousness. It is exactly this spiritual blindness which makes all proof really irrelevant to the unbeliever. You will recall what Moses said to the rich man in hell (Luke 16.) The rich man wanted Lazarus to go back to earth to warn his brothers about the consequences of their sinful lives. Moses told the rich man that he would not send Lazarus back, because the rich man's brothers had Moses and the prophets. But the rich man did not think that Moses and the prophets were adequate. He was of the opinion that if his brothers had something extraordinary, had a visitation from one who had been through death and who lived on the other side, that this unusual happening would surely persuade them to change their ways. Moses' answer is definite and final: "*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*" There is no way in which an unbeliever can be convinced of the truth of heavenly and spiritual things. There is no proof which can be brought to bear on the problem which will be sufficiently convincing to persuade him to change his mind. And this is simply because the whole matter is spiritual. The wicked are spiritually blind, not intellectually blind. And their spiritual blindness makes it impossible to see anything of the kingdom of heaven. There is an old adage, "*No one is so blind as he who will not see.*" This is eminently true of the unregenerate.

And it is exactly because of this that faith is such a great power. For faith is the power whereby our spiritual blindness is taken away. And faith is such a power because faith enlightens the mind and changes the will. By the power of faith, we *will* see, for our wills are renewed. By the power of faith, we love the things of God and of His Word.

Hence also faith is its own proof. And faith is its own proof, not because faith is blind acceptance of the unprovable, but because faith is the spiritual power to see the completely obvious. The believer needs no proof that the worlds were framed by the Word of God so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Faith makes this so completely obvious because faith places the believer in living contact with Christ. Faith believes that the Bible is the Word of God. To the believer this is obvious. If the unbeliever says to him, "*Prove to me that the Bible is the Word of God,*" all that the believer can do is say, "*The Bible says so.*" And if this is unsatisfactory, so be it. You cannot prove any further something so completely and totally obvious. You

cannot *prove* to a man standing in a howling blizzard that it is snowing. You cannot *prove* to a man dying of cancer that he is sick. You cannot *prove* to a man who has just eaten himself full that he is not hungry. If all these things are not completely obvious to the individual, there is something wrong with him that no amount of proof is ever going to change. You cannot *prove* to a child of God that the Bible is God's Word, that Christ is His Christ, that all that Scripture says is very truth. He knows this with such total conviction that proof to him is irrelevant. He knows

Christ's Word as truth because He knows Christ Who speaks that Word. He knows Christ as his Friend and Savior. He knows that he belongs to his faithful Savior. And he knows that that is his comfort.

But now I must say farewell for the time being. Sometime in the near future I shall finish this discussion by tying the loose ends together and relating this to Hermeneutics and to preaching.

With Christian greetings,
H. Hanko

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Hebrews (13:11-14)

Rev. G. Lubbers

BURNED WITHOUT THE CAMP OF ISRAEL (Hebrews 13:11)

The writer to the Hebrews peruses his instruction concerning the error and danger of returning to the Old Testament tabernacle after Jesus has suffered for the sins of the people outside of the gate of Jerusalem, at Calvary. This he does in a very profound way in which he incidentally gives us some very pointed exegesis concerning the meaning and the intent of the Old Testament sacrificial atonement on the great Day of Atonement. The writer lets the Scriptures themselves speak once more, and from these Scriptures he draws certain unerring and binding conclusions.

He is speaking here of certain sacrifices of the Old Testament priesthood. In this case he is speaking of the blood which was carried into the most holy place once a year as delineated in Leviticus 16. Of this yearly entering into the holy place the writer of the Hebrews had spoken before. (Heb. 5:2, 3; 9:7; 10:3) In each case he draws a contrast between the priesthood of the Old Testament high priest after the order of Aaron and the New Testament high priesthood of Christ according to the order of Melchizedec. And now, once more, as a parting warning to the Hebrews, the writer once more points out a great difference between the two Testaments, indicating the greater benefit of what Jesus did for us when compared with the ritual of those who continue (*hoi latreuontes*) to minister in the tabernacle of Sinai.

Things must be seen and understood in their proper perspective and meaning. The readers must clearly understand the typical transaction of the Day of Atonement, which was a yearly event in Israel. They must notice what happens to the *bodies* of those beasts (living creatures whose life was in their blood) whose blood was carried into the most holy place by the high priest. In many sacrifices which were brought into the tabernacle the priests had their regular portion of the meat assigned to them. Among the distinct provisions made for the support of the priests from the altar were those of the sacrifices, the flesh of burnt-offerings, peace-offerings and the trespass-offerings, and especially the heave-shoulder and the wave-breast. (Num. 18:1-14) This was to be eaten in the temple, and it was also for the house of the priests. However, there was one sacrifice which was not eaten at all among others. It was the flesh of the bullocks which were slain for the sins of the priests on the great Day of Atonement. On this day *atonements* were made for the priests, the temple and the altar, and for the sins of all the people. It was the grand finale of all the feast days of the yearly lunar and Sabbatic Calendar in Israel. All the sacrifices proclaimed that a better sacrifice was needed. And so such a great sacrifice came before the Feast of tabernacles on the seventh month, the fifteenth day. This was a day in which all Israel humbled themselves with fasting. (Lev. 16:29) And it was a day in which two goats were selected for the sacrifice for the sins of all the people. It was a sin-offering which brought about

atonement and was a picture of a sacrifice which would be well-pleasing to the Lord, whereas in it all the former sacrifices were proclaimed to have perfected nothing. (Heb. 7:19) In this sacrifice on the day of atonement the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat of the ark, proclaiming that the just demands of the law were now fulfilled. Of course, the just demand of the law was not fulfilled; it was only fulfilled in a typical, prefiguring way. It was gospel-tidings of better things to come when Christ would cry from the cross with a loud voice, "It is finished". (John 19:30)

It is to this that the writer in Hebrews 13:11 refers when he speaks of the "bodies of those beasts" whose blood is *carried* (*eispheretai* — present tense) into the holy place. The writer here refers really to the most holy place, as is evident from such passages as Hebrews 9:8, 12, 24, 25. Here the high priest only might enter, and that, too, only once per year, and not without blood. What happened to the "bodies" of these beasts, the goats and the bullocks? Did the priests receive a part of this sacrifice as they did with certain sacrifices which we have pointed out in the former paragraph? Not at all. All that belonged to the sacrifice was unclean. In other words, the sacrifice was such that it afforded no benefit for those who ministered in the tabernacle. They could not eat from this altar. They ended up with zero. The burning of these beasts was not a whole-burnt-offering of thankfulness and of being accepted of God in the worship of profound gratitude. It simply meant that the greatest sacrifice in Israel "perfected nothing". Here the writer once more does what Jeremiah did when he found fault with the old covenant which can be broken. (Hebrews 8:8-13; Jer. 31:31-34) The writer is standing on solid Scriptural ground. He demonstrates conclusively that the Old Testament Day of Atonement was only a failure in itself; it called for endless, annual repetition without having any positive benefit for those who minister in the tabernacle. And if it had no benefit for those ministering, far less did it have any benefit for the "people", the congregation of God. It ended in a heap of stinking ashes outside of the camp of Israel. What folly on the part of those who continue to carry blood of the beasts and continue to burn their "bodies" outside of the camp!

THE PEOPLE SANCTIFIED BY CHRIST'S BLOOD OUTSIDE OF THE GATE (Hebrews 13:12)

But now the entire matter has changed for the church, the believers of the New Testament in Christ's blood. For Jesus did something outside of the "gate" of the earthly city of Jerusalem. He suffered there for the sins of the people. He brought the sin-offering!

It is interesting to notice that the writer here, when

speaking of what Jesus performed, does not speak of Jesus outside of the "camp" but outside of the "gate". Reference is here not to the holy camp of Israel, where God dwells in the midst of His people, the chosen tribes, but rather to the earthly city, which is left desolate. (Matt. 23:38; Jer. 22:5; I Kings 9:7) Even the fleshly Israel, which continues to carry blood into the holy place, shall be a "proverb and a by-word amongst the people". For the city of which the writer here speaks is not an "abiding city". (Heb. 13:14) Truly that city where the Lord was crucified is the "great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt". (Rev. 11:8) From out of this city Jesus bore his cross on his "Via Dolorosa" till they came to the place of the skull, called Golgotha. There they crucified him between two malefactors, being numbered with the transgressors. In this city, the attendants at the altars continue with the Old Testament sacrifices in the days of the Hebrews to whom our letter is addressed. Judgment hangs over this "city". The fatal year is 70 A.D.

Now the church of Christ, the believing Hebrews, must notice that Jesus "suffered" without the gate of this city. He suffered for the sins of the people. He says: "Sacrifice and burnt-offering thou didst not desire; it is written in the volume of the book: Behold, I come to do thy will, O God!" "Outside of the gate of Jerusalem, before all the world, Jesus hanged on the accursed tree. There He suffered his inexpressible sorrows, pains, and hellish agonies, and shed his blood. There He suffered and died till the full atonement was made. He carried our sins outside of the "camp" of Israel when He passed through the "gate" of Jerusalem. There walked the "Lamb of God, who carried away the sin of the world". (John 1:29)

For His name is "Jesus"! The writer emphasizes more than once that Jesus is the Mediator who brings the blood of the Covenant, the sin-offering, the blood of *sprinkling*. It is the blood which Christ will bring into the better and heavenly tabernacle, before God Himself on the throne of grace. This Jesus is the Son of God in our flesh. He is real and righteous man, and yet very God! He came to save his people from their sins. *That* the Hebrews must not ever forget. They must not forget that Jesus also brought blood into the sanctuary of God. He brought his "own" blood, and not the mere blood of "beasts" which could not make satisfaction to the righteous demand of the law. In bringing his "own blood" Jesus "sanctified the people". This means that He suffered the wrath of God against our sins. It must be the final and perfect cleansing. It behooved God, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the captain of our salvation through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:8; 5:8; 9:26) And the altar upon which

Christ brought the sacrifice, the Cross of Calvary, is such that we may eat from it and hunger nevermore. It became for us the bread of life. (John 6:53-55) When the writer to the Hebrews speaks of "sanctifying" the people it does not merely refer to what we call sanctification, the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man, but it refers both to the taking away of the guilt of sin as well as the corruption. It is the complete redemption which Christ became unto us, when He was made to us from God wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. (I Cor. 1:30, 31) Here, too, the truth is: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord". (Jer. 9:23, 24) Jesus on the Cross is "JEHOVAH - TSIDKENU", THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS! (Jer. 23:6) And the people who are sanctified outside on the "gate" are also denominated "The Lord, our righteousness". (Jer. 33:16) Jesus so cleansed the "congregation" that no further cleansing is needed. For where there is cleansing, God says, "I will remember their sins and iniquities no more". (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 10:17) And where there is such forgiveness there "is not more offering for sin". (Heb. 10:18)

GOING OUTSIDE OF THE CITY TO BEAR CHRIST'S REPROACH (Hebrews 13:13)

What is striking in the text is that the writer says to the believers, "Let us go forth therefore". The term "therefore" in Greek is "*toinun*", that is: indeed now! Since Christ has suffered for us without the "gate" we, too, must pass through that gate of the earthly city, which is made a desolation. We must not stay in this error of Judaism, with its manifold and strange teachings, but we must leave it all behind, once and for all. Never must the church look back to this teaching as something to which they would return. Such is this *precept* of the Gospel here. It is the counterpart of Christ's *all* when He says, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is really seeking the "old paths" and the "good way" when we pass through the "gate" of Jerusalem to be with Christ, where the middle-wall of the partition has forever been broken down, and where the set times and seasons of the Old Testament are no more kept, whereas they have been nailed to the cross as the weak and beggarly principles. (Gal. 4:9, 10; Col. 2:20)

VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

Man's Creation and Fall (II)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

"We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after his own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God. But being in honor, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death, and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil. For the commandment of life, which he had received, he transgressed; and by sin separated himself from God, who was his true life, having corrupted his whole nature; whereby he made himself liable to corporal and spiritual death. And being thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, he hath lost all his excellent gifts, which he had received from God, and only retained a few remains thereof, which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse; for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness, as the Scriptures teach us saying: The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not: where St. John calleth men darkness. Therefore we reject all that is taught repugnant to this, concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave to sin; and has nothing of himself, unless it is given from heaven. For who may presume to boast, that he of himself can do any good, since Christ saith, No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him? Who will glory in his own will, who understands, that to be carnally minded is enmity against God? Who can speak of his knowledge, since the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God? In short, who dare suggest any thought, since he knows that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God? And therefore what the apostle saith ought justly to be held sure and firm, that God worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. For there is no will nor understanding, conformable to the divine will and understanding, but what Christ hath wrought in man; which he teaches us, when he saith, Without me ye can do nothing."

Article XIV, *The Belgic Confession*

In the previous article we concentrated on the very first clause of Article XIV and limited ourselves to the doctrine of man's creation. We emphasized in that connection the uniqueness of man's creation by God out of the dust of the earth. That uniqueness is evident from three facts: the significant pause in the Genesis record between the creation of the animals and that of man and the Divine soliloquy, God's forming of man out of the dust of the earth, and God's breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. All this means that man, while he is "of the earth, earthy", is more excellent than the animals and in a real sense stands above the earthly. By virtue of his creation man is a thinking, willing, and personal being. In this article we wish to focus on the first part of Article XIV once more and treat the concept of the image of God in man. We believe that God: "... made and formed man after his own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God." This, the fact that he was created in God's image, the Creed terms man's "honor" and "excellency."

Just what is meant by the image of God in man? What do the Scriptures have to say to this question? There is little or no disagreement among the theologians as to the general meaning of this concept. The image of God simply means that man was created in such a way that there was "a creaturely likeness of God in him" or a "reflection of the perfections of God in man." (H. Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 204) Calvin speaks of man before his fall as a "mirror of the glory of God." (*Institutes*, Book I, Chapter XV, 4) This clearly is the idea of the Genesis account which reads:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

Genesis 1:26,27

The text teaches that God made man in such a fashion that he resembled God Himself. As created in God's image, man reflected something of the very virtues of God. This, in general, is the idea of the image of God in man and concerning this there is little difference of opinion. This is also the meaning of our *Confession* when it speaks of man being made and formed by God "after his own image and likeness."

However when it comes to specifics concerning the image of God there is a wide range of opinion among theologians both past and present.* Some of the earlier fathers of the church distinguished between

the terms "image" and "likeness." It is much better, however, to understand "likeness" as referring to the same thing as "image" and a further explanation of "image" in Genesis 1:26. Thus what the text teaches is that God so created man in His Own image that there was a likeness of God in man. Others have found the idea of the image of God in man to consist in the dominion man was given over the rest of creation (Cf. Genesis 1:26ff.). These often made appeal to Psalm 8:5,6 where Scripture speaks of man's creation in these terms:

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."

It is true that man stood as lord under God over the creation as image bearer of Jehovah. His lordship over creation also revealed man's excellency and honor as God's image bearer. But his dominion over creation must not be identified or confused with man's having been created in the image and after the likeness of God. His dominion, as is obvious from God's command (Gen. 1:28ff.), refers to man's unique and holy task as God's friend-servant. The late Karl Barth proposed a rather novel view and insisted that the image of God in man consisted of the male and female relationship. According to Barth, when Genesis 1:27 states: "... male and female created he them," it is describing the image of God. There is a community of Persons in the Godhead argued Barth. This is reflected in the fact that God created man as "man and woman." In this way man stands in the image and after the likeness of Maker. For reasons which will become obvious as we continue this discussion we find this view of Barth unacceptable.

A view of the image of God rather commonly held in the Reformed community distinguishes the image of God in the wider (or broader) and the narrower sense. To the image in the broader sense belongs man's rationality, morality, and "immortality" (It should be noted that "immortality" in Scripture does not merely mean that man lives on after death, but it refers to the state of "not being able to die" and is attainable only by grace and through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Cf. I Cor. 15). This part of God's image man still possesses; he did not lose this in the fall. And this too distinguishes man from the animals. By the image of God in the narrower sense is meant man's original righteousness which he no longer possesses as a result of his fall into sin. The inherent danger involved in this distinction ought to be apparent at once. This means that man retained something of God's image and likeness even after his fall. He still possesses a rational, moral, and "immortal" soul and in this sense still stands in the image and after the likeness of God. This leads quite naturally to the next step, that of saying there re-

*A rather extensive survey of the many views may be found in G. C. Berkouwer's, *Man: The Image of God*, pp. 67ff.

mains a remnant of good left in man after the fall. And, this in turn: "...lends itself very easily to support the view of those who insist that there is a certain common grace by virtue of which natural man is not so depraved as without that grace he would have been. And if this is not a denial of the doctrine of total depravity, words certainly have lost their plain meaning." (H. Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 207)

Preferable, if distinctions must indeed be made, is the one made by the late Herman Hoeksema. (To the best of my knowledge this distinction is original with Hoeksema.) According to this distinction we speak of the image of God in the formal and in the material sense. By the formal sense is meant that man's nature is adapted to bear the image of God. God created man in a way which made man capable of reflecting His perfections. From this point of view we may speak of man as image *bearer* of God. As image bearer with a mind and will and moral nature, man was created capable of bearing God's Own image. By the material sense is meant the actual contents of the image of God. In this sense man actually bore the image of God; he really mirrored God's virtues. This is commonly called: "man's original righteousness." Those virtues making up that original righteousness are the true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. As created in God's image man knew God as His Creator, Father and Friend; he stood in harmony with God's will; and in purity of nature man was consecrated to the service of God in love. These virtues he lost when he fell into sin and consequently, into death. Now man is image bearer of the devil according to his fallen, sinful nature. He is still man. Still he possesses a rational, moral nature, but no longer does he reflect God's virtues. About this we shall have more to say in our next article.

This is the Biblical view. Scripture always presents man's redemption as a restoration of the image of God in him and that image of God consists in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. In Ephesians 5:23, 24 we read:

"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Putting off the old man involves the renewal of our minds; this is knowledge. And that new man which we must put on is created (formed, transformed or completely changed) according to God in righteousness and true holiness. (Cf. also Col. 3:10; Romans 12:1,2; Ephesians 5:8, I John 3:1,2; John 17:3) This is what man possessed originally, lost in the fall, and is given by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. This the elect can never lose. In the glory of the new creation and for all eternity the saints will mirror, as God's image bearers, the beauty, the power, the matchless glory of His infinite perfections.

This is the view of Calvin and our Confessions. Citing Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:23,24, Calvin argues that we can know "in which faculties man excels" and is a "mirror of the glory of God" from the restoration of the corrupt nature of man. (*Institutes*, Book I, Chapter XV, 4) The Catechism asks: "Did God create man so wicked and perverse?", and answers: "No; but God created man good, and after his own image, that is in righteousness and true holiness." (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day III). *The Canons of Dordrecht* teach: "Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright, all his affections pure, and the whole man was holy." (III, IV, Article 1). And the *Belgic Confession* in Article XIV emphasizes the same truth when it says: "We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after his own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God."

This, therefore, is the truth concerning the image of God in man; the truth taught in Scripture and our Creeds.

to be continued . . .

GUEST ARTICLE

Special Collections For Missions

Rev. G. Van Baren

At the last Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, a decision was taken which directly affects the financing of the mission work of the churches. It

was a rather momentous decision, a departure from the ordinary practice of the churches to raise necessary funding through Synodical assessments. Yet few

have been made aware of the decision. The *Acts* of the last Synod (at the time of the writing of this article) have not yet been distributed. The consistories have been informed of the decision under consideration, but even there some misunderstanding has arisen. The purpose of this article is to call attention to this action of Synod and to encourage our people to respond generously.

Briefly, Synod decided to raise a part of the funds for our mission labors through collections (four of them) in the churches during the year of 1976.

The Mission Committee presented to Synod a proposed budget for mission work. After revision through Synodical decisions, that budget included the following: \$10,000 for radio broadcasting; \$5,000 to send emissaries for two to three months to Jamaica; \$35,300 for domestic missions; \$5,000 for work in other fields of labor. The total amount adopted by Synod in this mission budget was \$55,300.

The mission committee estimated that of this amount, \$9,000 would be raised through collections on the various mission fields. This is itself a remarkable fact. This represents about 16% of the total mission budget or about 22% of the amount needed for our "home" missions (excluding radio and Jamaica missions).

Synod, in adopting an assessment for missions, took into account that there was a surplus in the mission funds. It estimated that for 1976, \$6,300 could be used of accumulated funds in the mission account. Some of this balance arose when we assessed the churches for two home missionaries before these had accepted the call extended to them.

The assessments which Synod levied for mission work were \$40.00 per family per year. This represented a drop of \$3.00 per family from the previous year. The \$40.00 assessment would raise from our 875 families a total of \$35,000.

The difference between the total amount budgeted, and the amount raised by assessments and the collections from the mission field and from the surplus of last year, is \$5,000.

It was in connection with this \$5,000 figure that the Mission Committee came to Synod with the following proposal: "We ask Synod to authorize four mission collections per year in the churches. Ground: Many families feel they would like to contribute directly to mission work. Estimated receipts: \$5,000." The Synodical committee which presented its advice to Synod on this proposal, recommended adoption. And the Synod itself adopted the proposal (as I recall, without debate) in Article 102 of the Acts, "Motion is made to adopt II E 3 of Committee I Report that Synod authorize four mission collec-

tions per year in the churches. Ground: Many families feel they would like to contribute directly to mission work (cf. E 7 of the Mission Committee report) Carried."

So — in harmony with Synod's decision, \$5,000 must be raised in 1976 by taking four collections in each of our churches. Each family will have to contribute an average of \$6.00 per year in these four collections (or, \$1.50 per family per collection). That is not much — but it will be needed to balance the budget Synod adopted.

The decision however, marks a change of course, howbeit slight, for our churches. In the past, the Synod has been inclined to raise required funds by assessing the churches annually. Within the congregations, families willingly paid their prescribed budgets — yet hardly could distinguish what their gifts supported. One might vaguely recall that something like \$180.00 per family per year represented Synodical assessments. Yet, how this was divided into which funds, few would know. Assessments seem to be the easy way of raising required funds.

Nevertheless, it has become evident repeatedly that when the people of our churches are aware of a real need, they respond even beyond that which is expected or asked. The erection and payment of our Seminary Building is an example. Instead of assessing the churches over a period of ten or fifteen years to pay for this building, Synod asked for voluntary contributions. None was required to give. What was presented was given in love and in the consciousness of the need. Now, after only a few years, the contributions and pledges will *more than pay* for our Seminary Building. The overwhelming support was simply more than any of the Theological School Committee had dared hope for.

Perhaps that experience was part of the motivation of the Mission Committee to propose raising some of the funds for mission work through voluntary giving in four collections. The amount needed is relatively small. There ought to be no difficulty raising it. But this will represent voluntary gifts of God's people who, in their giving, are aware of the fact that it will be used for a specific purpose: for the preaching of the Word of God in other places.

But just suppose, once, that our people overwhelmingly also supported this idea of contributing voluntarily to the mission fund through collections — and far, far more was given above that which Synod anticipates. That could only mean that the Synod of 1976 would be compelled to reduce again the *assessments* for missions because of the willingness of God's people to contribute voluntarily. (In fact, \$53.00 per family per year or \$12.50 per collection per family would raise all that we need to carry out

our proposed mission work in 1976.) If voluntary contributions would raise that much, then assessments would no longer be necessary for mission work. None would be paying any more than they do now through assessments — the difference would be that our contributions would be more meaningful and voluntarily given for a cause which is dear to the hearts of each of us.

How are you going to respond?

Another collection

The last Synod also took other decisions of which the churches ought to be aware, approving the taking of collections in the churches to provide for certain necessities of the five ministers who presently labor in Jamaica with their brethren. The Synod approved the recommendation of the Mission Committee that the

four young ministers in Jamaica be paid \$10 per week each for living expenses and \$10 per week each for travel expenses (the Rev. Elliott receives also this latter amount for travel). The total amount needed annually is \$4,680. But again, Synod did *not* levy an assessment to raise this amount. The Synod rather approved the request of the Mission Committee that collections (the number was not specified) be taken in the churches to raise this sum. At the present time, however, the mission committee is embarrassed by the fact that it does not have the funds to pay these laborers in God's vineyard in harmony with the decisions of Synod. Our churches, perhaps, have not been impressed sufficiently with the need and the Synodical decision with regard to their recommendation for help. We trust that our God will lay upon our hearts a willingness to give in harmony with this need. Collections taken for this cause ought to be sent to Rev. R. Van Overloop who is serving as treasurer of this fund.

IN HIS FEAR

The Future That Is Past

Rev. M. Joostens

It is especially at this time of year that our thoughts turn to the future. As the old and well-marked calendar is replaced by a new one, sporting an unfamiliar scene, we consider the things which may come upon us in the coming year. Perhaps it is the sudden and abrupt change from the old to the new that is to blame for this. Even as a sigh expresses the thankfulness that all has gone well in the past, our souls are gripped with fear regarding the future, and various questions of what lies ahead flood the soul. Though we have arrived at the middle of this first month of the new year, reminiscences of the old and questions about the new still linger in our minds.

The future is nebulous. The future is full of all kinds of uncertainties. And though we often attempt to peer into the darkness of the future, philosophizing and rationalizing about it, the questions about the future remain to a large degree, unanswered. Even an objective analysis of the past combined with a careful projection concerning the future cannot unveil the future.

This must never become a reason for the child of God to be distraught. I know that this is the tendency of the world. The world is very anxious regarding the future. They would much like to have the ability of prophetic prediction. Peering into a crystal ball, reading tea leaves or the palm of one's hand, as well as the whole craze of astrology, are only a few signs of this. But we as children of God must exclaim, "Thanks be to God." We must see His inscrutable wisdom even in this, that He has hidden from us the future. Certainly this can never be proclaimed a mistake! Most certainly our God, Who is characterized by divine wisdom, has veiled the future for us according to His all-wise purpose.

The fact that the future belongs to the realm of those things which are hidden, finds its very establishment in the perfection of God's creation. For when we speak about the future we are dealing with the concept of time, and time is a creature of God. Time is an inherent characteristic of the whole of God's creation. In the act of creating, God gave a distinct

and separate existence to those things which were eternally in His counsel. That particular distinction of the creative act is the characteristic of time and space. For our purposes, we are interested only in the former. The whole creation is ruled by time. Whether we speak of things animate or inanimate, time affects them all. Wood rots, metal corrodes, chemical elements have half-lives and wrinkles mark our faces. In distinction from the immutable Creator, all things and creatures are mutable. We are constantly changing and becoming. I speak of the way I was, the way I am at the moment, and the way I will be. The past, present and future are very real segments of time for us.

Not only has God, in His perfection and wisdom, characterized the creation by time, but He has also withheld from the rational, moral creature the capabilities of analyzing the future. That which pertains to the future lies beyond our grasp. Our memories and history books facilitate the recollection of events which belong to the past. We are able to live and act in the present. But the future is beyond our reach.

To the future, therefore, belongs those things which are providentially hidden from view. The future is expressive of things which must yet come to pass, a time subsequent to the present. To the future belongs those things which as yet are shut up in God's counsel, to be executed before the teleological end of history. To that portion of time belongs speculation and conjecture.

It is the very nature of man to delve into that future. According to the nature of man, he desires to secure for himself the future. Man hates uncertainty. It is revolting to him to think upon things over which he has no direct control, the things which point him to his finite characteristic. The whole of the world illustrates that this is the case. Mankind will not rest until it can secure for itself a prosperous future. Man wants to secure world peace. We need hardly be reminded that today's "peace-makers" are heralded as heroes, though they seek after a false peace. They who make achievements in procuring methods to perpetuate earthly life are hailed because man wants to be certain about his life and health tomorrow. And, in as far as the great ones of this earth have fallen short of their aims, man buys for himself security for his possessions, health and life itself. As people of God, we must be careful so as not to be swept along with this carnal craving after security. It is man by nature who so strives. Man who stands outside the sphere of God's particular grace stands in the midst of this world by himself. He has no god because he rejects His Christ! He stands in his own sinful pride professing to be his own god. And in conformity with this, he thinks to be the master of his fate.

But we rejoice in quite a different truth! We are not without God in this world, but we are the children of God for Christ's sake. We confess the ever-beautiful truth of Lord's Day 10, that "... we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father..." He will providentially care for us even in regard to the very minutest detail. So the Scriptures assure us, that not even one hair can fall from our heads except it be in accordance with His will. That fatherly care also applies to the future. As the uncertainties of this pilgrim journey come upon us, as fear grips the soul and questions storm the mind, then we rejoice with the Psalmist, "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." (56:3)

He is the eternal God. Time is in His hand. The future is past! How is that so? In the first place, because all things are finished in God's counsel. In God's counsel appears not only the alpha but also the omega of history and time as we know it. And certainly from the viewpoint of the Almighty and Eternal One, every future as well as past event of history stands fixed. Not, you understand, as if God's determinate counsel is stagnant, for He is the decreeing God. But we can never interject the aspect of time into the Eternal. He sees the end from the beginning. There is no future with the "I am." But in the second place, and this is more to the point of this article, though essentially no different, all time is comprehended in Christ. We are referring to the concept of the "fulness of time." Let us consider this closely.

This particular concept is deep and not without variation in meaning. It is not our purpose to enter into the sundry arguments of exegesis, but simply to point out the central significance of Christ from a historical viewpoint. After all, we are dealing with time and specifically the future. The apostle Paul uses the phrase "fulness of time" in the two familiar passages of Ephesians 1:10 and Galatians 4:4. In the latter, his point is that Christ made His appearance in the flesh when the old dispensational era came to a close. That is to say: Christ fulfilled, made full, the dispensation of the law. Prior to Christ, Israel was under the yoke of the schoolmaster who led them to Christ. In Ephesians Paul speaks of the fulness of time as being the era of the new dispensation in which God will gather all things together in Christ. We may combine these two meanings and note that there is no history that stands in separation from Christ. All of history, as the execution of God's counsel, finds its summation in the cross and resurrection of Christ as He stands at the very center of that counsel. The result is that every moment, as well as its content or happening, is completed in Christ from a principle viewpoint.

But what does this mean concretely? This, that

every historical happening or event is for the well-being and benefit of Christ. Oh, but there is more! For Christ is the Anointed One commissioned to stand at the head of His people. Paul tells us that He is the head and we the body. We are Christ's! Then it becomes clear to us. History from its alpha to its omega has but one function and purpose and that is to be the stage upon which God saves unto Himself a people, along the way of sin and grace. The present and past serve that purpose, but so will the future. Of that we can be certain.

We need not live with fear and trepidation in our souls. We may not! Do not misunderstand; there is a correct concern regarding proper provision for the future. But this may never turn into worry and anxiety! This is sinful. As God's children, we must daily

live by faith ever trusting in our heavenly Father. Never may providing for the future violate our faith. I'm afraid that all too often on our part, a full refrigerator and a good pension plan or insurance policy detract from our faith and trust. The whole way of our pilgrim's journey unto the heavenly Canaan has been completed in Christ.

The future does not look bright. The anti-christian kingdom is increasingly becoming realized. Questions flood the mind, fears grip the soul. What does the future hold? We don't know. Yes! We do know. It holds a pilgrim's journey upon which every obstacle has been conquered by our Lord. He was in all points tempted like as we will be. He died even as we must die. By the grace of God in Christ we will traverse the future until we receive the crown of glory. We do not walk in fear, but in His fear!

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Mark Of The Beast

Rev. G. Van Baren

In the past I have reported various items which point to the possible nearness of that time when a "mark" will be required of all who would buy or sell. The "mark of the beast" is one of the well-known signs of the end of time and the imminent return of Christ on the clouds of glory. We read of this mark in Revelation 13. There, the second beast out of the land (land indicates the relative stability which allows for the rising of this beast) does wonders, making fire to come down out of heaven in the sight of men (vs. 13). He deceives by means of miracles (vs. 14). He directs that an image be made of the first beast (unified political powers of the earth). And he gives life to the image of the beast, requiring that all should worship that image or be killed. The image of the beast is given the power to speak and to execute punishment upon those who will not bow down to his demands. The subservient ones receive marks in their foreheads or in their right hands. The mark these receive is the number "666." Whoever has not that number can neither buy nor sell.

Two articles recently were brought to my attention which give some indication what form the mark of the beast can take. I can not vouch for the authen-

ticity of the reports, yet these appear realistic enough to give pause for thought.

The first article appeared in the *Old Faith Contender*, July-Sept., 1975, and in turn was quoted from *Moody Magazine*:

The Beast is a gigantic computer that takes up three floors at Administration Building of Common Market Headquarters. This 'monster' is a self-programming unit that has over one hundred sensing input sources. Computer experts have been working on a plan to computerize all world trade. This master plan involves a digital numbering system for every human on earth. The computer would assign each citizen of the world a number to use for all buying and selling to avoid the problems of ordinary credit cards. The number would be invisibly "laser-tattooed" on the forehead or back of the hand. It would provide a walking credit card system. The number would show up under infra-red scanners to be placed at all check-out counters and places of business. Dr. Elderman suggested that by using three six-digital units, the entire world could be assigned a working credit card number. Other Common Market Officials believe that the present chaos and discord caused by the 'mystery' points to the need of a world currency —

perhaps an international mark that would do away with all currency and coin.

When one of the Market leaders was asked what would happen if any person objected to the system and refused to co-operate, he replied rather pointedly, "We would have to use force to make him conform to requirements."

And from the *Maranatha Messenger* the following article appeared:

On Tuesday, April, 1975, on the 6:30 a.m. Morning News on Radio Station KTRH in Houston, Texas, the following was broadcast:

"A Nebraska based supermarket chain has become well known to the banking committees of Congress and to federal regulatory bodies, The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, and the Federal Home Loan Bank Board. The interest in these supermarkets by these financial groups is not in its food operations but in the results of its landmark experiment; First Federal was authorized by the FHLBB last January to install electronic terminals in the two supermarkets. Its transmatic money system enabled First Federal customers to make deposits and withdrawals from their accounts via computer, while shopping for groceries. The arrangement was the first of its kind in the state in E.F.T. (Electronic Fund Transfer). There is a huge conviction in financial circles that E.F.T. in one way or another will become a major means for transferring money in the near future. All buying and selling in the program will be done by computer. No currency, no change, no checks. In the program people would receive a number that had been assigned them tattooed in their wrist or forehead. The number is put in by a laser beam and cannot be felt. The number in the body is not seen with the naked eye and is as permanent as your fingerprints. All items of consumer goods will be marked with a computer mark. The checkstand will also pick up the number in the person's body and automatically total the price and deduct the amount from the person's 'Special Drawing Rights' account.

"Over eight cities in the U.S. have started this program. Some of the banks in the Portland, Oregon area have been asked to install this type of system in their banks. The marks are already appearing on items nationwide."

I would want to caution us first of all that reports as the above ought to be taken with the proverbial "grain of salt." I suggest that because repeatedly in the past I have observed somewhat "sensational" signs mentioned which are obviously designed to attract attention — and gain additional financial support for the group or organization which has such foresight as to warn its members of the future dangers. At the same time, the two quotations above are very similar to others I have read (and quoted) from other sources at other times. There is certainly that element of truth in these reports which causes one to sit back and think.

That complex computers can be cheaply produced is evident to anyone who reads the daily newspaper. Ads appear with regularity advertising various "adding" machines which can do complex mathematical work. The prices are low — the cheapest is under \$10.00. Stores are converting to computer-registers. Ringing up a sale at the same time registers everything needed to check on stock or any of the other necessary tasks of operating a place of business.

It is not difficult, then, to conceive of large computers (beast?) which can keep record of every individual and every transaction that takes place on the whole of the earth. If a hand-held machine at such low price can accomplish so much, it would hardly be a difficulty to design that which could keep a check on everything. There is even the suggestion that computers could translate instantaneously from one language to another; or could convey requested information by voice transmission. Could not then such a computer be the "image of the beast" which could literally speak and make demands which would serve to place all of mankind under the beast?

The appearance of "marks" also serve to remind one of the end of this age. Hardly a grocery item can be purchased but that it has printed on it a set of unevenly spaced lines and some numbers. Whether men could have placed on them literal, but invisible, marks by means of laser beams, I do not know. That does not seem at all inconceivable.

Already now, our own government has assigned to most of the citizens a number which enables one to carry on business with the government — the social security number. To this I have called your attention before. That number was, originally, for the purpose of collecting and distributing social security taxes. But increasingly, that number is being used for many other transactions. Only this past year we have received a notification from the Internal Revenue Service informing us, "In processing your return for the above tax year, we found that it did not include your spouse's social security number. The number *will be required* for processing tax returns in the future." (italics mine). At least there is the implied threat that unless one voluntarily takes on himself this social security number, he will not be able to have his income tax return processed (with the consequent penalties, I presume).

What will be next? Will the government use a laser beam (or some other device to record a number permanently on each individual?

The church and the child of God ought to be very observant of the things taking place today. We must not think that the time for warning and the sign of danger would be when someone writes a number,

666, on one's forehead. The antichrist, and his fore-runners, are more clever than that. The attempt will be rather to lead man, step-by-step, to accept the idea of the mark of the beast. At each step, there will be the attempt to show that the developing "mark" is essential to progress and development. The danger for the church, then, is that it will be willing at each step to concede the necessity of that little step.

The appearance of the first and second beast of Rev. 13 is imminent. Many signs point in that direction. It behooves the church, therefore, to take special

care. Present-day developments ought to be diligently studied. The church will not be able to change the course of events which lead to the establishment of the antichristian world power. Nor does it desire to do that. But it must itself beware lest its garments become spotted and it seeks to cooperate with the world. The spirit of compromise is obvious everywhere. Cooperation is the hallmark of this age.

"Be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing, saith the Lord, and I will receive you," II Corinthians 6:17b.

Book Reviews

R.D. Decker

THE ZONDERVAN PICTORIAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE BIBLE. Merrill C. Tenny, General Editor; Zondervan Publishing House, 1975; \$79.95 (five volumes). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko]

Zondervan Publishing House has completed its work on an entirely new Encyclopedia of the Bible. The work was a massive undertaking, and the results, generally speaking, are gratifying.

The scope and theological position of the Encyclopedia are defined in the Preface:

The scope of this *ENCYCLOPEDIA* is intended to cover directly or indirectly all persons, places, objects, customs, and historical events and major teachings of the Bible. Not all are treated separately; some will necessarily be subsumed under larger topics. It is, however, designed to be a comprehensive survey of general Biblical and theological knowledge.

The critical and theological position of this work is conservative. All viewpoints of Biblical scholarship are mentioned and are given fair representation, but the emphasis is that of historic Christianity. Allowance has been made for varying opinions within this framework, and in some cases more than one article on a given theme has been included in order to represent fairly differing doctrinal interpretations. Occasionally one may find discrepancies between articles on historical and chronological topics. These are often indicative of ambiguity in the original records, on which no final judgment is easily attainable. Authors of articles have been accorded liberty to state their conclusions, provided these conclusions are founded on a fundamental conviction of the veracity of the Biblical record.

There are many excellent features about this work. We can mention only some of the most important.

Each word is given in the Hebrew and Greek where possible. This is of value to those who are able to use the original languages of Scripture, but it in no way detracts from the value of the set for those who have no acquaintance with these languages.

All the articles of importance have a bibliography at the end of them which is, generally, valuable and will assist the student in pursuing his study of various topics in greater detail.

Some subjects are treated in great detail which makes it possible to use this Encyclopedia for reference work. There are lengthy articles on many doctrinal subjects such as inspiration, Biblical criticism, canonicity, election, ethics, creation, the atonement, the millennium, etc. E.g., there are 35 pages on the canon of Scripture alone. Some of the articles are excellent and, as the Preface states, take a conservative position. J. Murray, e.g., has an excellent article on the truth of election; G.H. Clark has an excellent article on ethics; there is a fine section on the chronologies of the Old Testament.

The work makes use of all the latest discoveries in archeology and brings much information about the Bible up to date.

There are many maps and pictures, beautiful color plates, and a fine map section at the end of Vol. 5.

Anyone who uses the work will, of course, have to exercise some discretion. While the authors usually present many different viewpoints on controversial subjects, they also state their own views. We cannot

always agree with these. The author of the article on genealogies does not want to give them literal significance. W.H. Mare favors a progressive creationism. W.U. Ault holds to a local flood. And there are naturally some disagreements when different authors are writing on similar or related subjects.

The Encyclopedia could be improved by a system of cross references. E.g., while the subject of the millennium is discussed in at least four different places, there are no cross references to aid the searcher in finding all these places.

We recommend this Encyclopedia with the reservations mentioned above. It is a must for our schools. It is a valuable addition to any home library, and we urge our people to purchase it. The price is not high for the amount of material which is contained in it, and it will be used for years as an aid in the study of Scripture.

Herman C. Hanko, *The Mysteries of the Kingdom* (An Exposition of the Parables), Reformed Free Publishing Association, Grand Rapids. 306 pages.

The readers of the *Standard Bearer* are familiar with the writings of Prof. Hanko who teaches *New Testament* in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches. This is the author's first full length book. And it is a good one. On the inside front cover of the attractive dust jacket one reads: "This book is an attempt to interpret the parables in such a way that the Lord's description of their purpose and His guidelines for interpretation are followed. It is in this way, the author believes, that the mysteries of the kingdom will be set forth in their proper light." The author has succeeded admirably in reaching this purpose.

All of the parables of Jesus are treated. The material is strictly based on solid exegesis of the text. And there is constant practical application of these mysteries to the lives of the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. While the author does not hesitate to grapple with textual or theological problems wherever necessary, he does so in clear, understandable language. Hence the expositions are exhaustive but never too deep for the believer who may lack formal theological training. It is a book which can and ought to be used by preachers, teachers, and laymen. It may be purchased for \$5.95 from Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

My colleague and the R.F.P.A. are to be commended for publishing this book, a worthwhile addition to any library.

Een Halve Eeuw Theologie (Motieven en Stromingen van 1920 tot Heden), by G. C. Berkouwer;

Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok, Kampen, 1974; 412 pages, \$37.50 (Dutch money).

On October 12, 1973, Dr. Berkouwer retired as professor of the Theological Faculty of the Free University of Amsterdam. This event occasioned his looking back upon a half-century of being busy within the Gereformeerde Kerken and in Theology. And the book under discussion is the result of his retrospective look. In these theological memoirs he gives account of his motives in his theological and ecclesiastical labor, and he offers a review of the important currents in theology from 1920 until today. In a way this is not a typical Berkouwer book. While in the nature of the case there are many references to the views of others, at many points there is much more of Berkouwer in this book than in some of his Dogmatical Studies. Through reading this book, one certainly obtains a better insight into the theological approach and views of the author. Anyone who has followed the entire series of Dr. Berkouwer's Dogmatical Studies, as well as his other works, should by all means read this volume. And it is to be hoped that the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company will eventually publish an English edition of this interesting book by Dr. Berkouwer. This is a very significant volume.

Of special interest to Protestant Reformed readers will be Chapter IV, which deals with the doctrine of election. In this chapter Dr. Berkouwer attributes his own development with respect to the doctrine of election to his reaction against the views of Rev. Herman Hoeksema, whom, therefore, he credits with helping his own development, but by way of contrast. I have paid special attention to this chapter in a review article in the May, 1975 issue of our *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. In this article I quote the pertinent section from Chapter IV, and then I offer some critical remarks. The interested reader may consult that article. If it was not clear from Berkouwer's work on *Divine Election*, it certainly becomes clear from this volume that Dr. Berkouwer denies double predestination, and therefore denies the Reformed doctrine of sovereign predestination, including both election and reprobation.

My recommendation of this volume, therefore, is not due to agreement with Dr. Berkouwer, but is due to the fact that Berkouwer is a very significant and influential theologian. In recent years he has probably been more influential on the Reformed scene than any other single theologian. It is important, therefore, that those who study theology and who are called to maintain and teach and preach the Reformed position, should take into account the teachings of Dr. Berkouwer. And this volume is important for the understanding of Berkouwer. Its careful study, therefore, is highly recommended.

News From Our Churches

The time of Sunday worship services seems to be something that receives a periodic review in our churches. The consistory in Isabel, South Dakota, called a special congregational meeting to consider changing the Sunday worship services from 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM to 9:30 AM and 1:30 PM. The consistory felt this would be an aid to the ranchers in the congregation and to those members who travel a great distance to attend services. They could then do their work and travel while it was yet light. Edgerton considered a proposal on the agenda of their annual congregation meeting to extend evening services through the months of November and March. The previous schedule was 9:30 AM and 7:30 PM April through October and 9:30 AM and 2:00 PM November through March.

One of the reasons we look forward to Christmas Day in many of our churches is because of the Sunday School Christmas Program. If one of your children is scheduled to take part in the program, you may even look forward to this event with just a little bit of nervous anticipation. But, as Prof. Decker expressed it after the Christmas program in First Church, children can express the meaning and the joy of Christmas in a way that is special and always brings joy to the hearts of those who attend the program. After the program the children receive some candy, maybe an orange, and in Southwest Church, even animal crackers for the 'wee-tots.'

We even seem to have some diversity in the Sunday School schedule within the churches. Most meet September to May, but in Hull, Iowa, it is June through August. And in Southwest Church (Wyoming, Mich.), Sunday School meets May through August.

Two of our Protestant Reformed Schools celebrated rather special events the beginning of this school year. After a number of years of holding classes in the church basement, a new school building was dedicated on September 12 in Loveland, Colorado. After speeches by Rev. Lanting, Mr. G. Kuiper the school administrator, and Mr. Ray Ezinga the School Board President, and some musical numbers, refreshments were served in the new building.

Our congregation in Redlands, California, not only dedicated a new school building, but a new school.

No report has yet arrived concerning the school dedication (the mail from the West Coast seems to be a bit slow.) The new school in Redlands is distinctive on at least three counts: it is the newest school; it is the only one of our schools which is air-conditioned, and the only one of our schools with grapefruit trees growing in the school yard. (I enjoyed a half dozen grapefruit from these trees last summer; they were a bit tart, but otherwise quite good.)

The congregation in Hull has plans to open a new grade school. This past November a drive was conducted in Hull to raise \$15,000 to pay off the debt on the land for the school and to secure \$30,000 in pledges toward the cost of erecting a school building in 1976.

Most if not all of our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools publish a newsletter or journal several times a year. Of late I have received copies of the *Adams Announcer*, the *Hope* (Walker, Michigan) *Highlights*, and the *Northwest Iowa* (Doon) P.R. Christian School *Polaris*. All of these contain school news and short pieces by the students and teachers. If you live near one of our eight schools and would like to receive a subscription to one of these newsletters, I am sure the school would be most pleased to comply with your request.

Each year, the students at Adams and Hope schools forego the customary school practice of gift exchanges. Instead, the students contribute toward a gift which this year was given to the students of our small western schools. The money is used to buy classroom educational materials that will benefit the students of these schools.

The Young Adult Society in Randolph sponsored a Thanksgiving evening Singspiration. Mr. & Mrs. John Hilton, formerly from Maine and now living in Grand Rapids where John is attending our seminary, consented to come and give special music. John plays the saxophone accompanied by his wife on the piano. The children of the congregation also prepared some songs.

Rev. M. Kamps of Redlands, California, has received a call from our church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

K.G.V.