

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

It is indeed possible to delay too long in the work of reformation. One can bemoan the presence of false doctrines and false teachers in the church. One can bemoan apostasy in doctrine and life. One can protest such evils officially and unofficially. One can profess that the calling to fight and to work for the enlightenment of others and for reformation from within is his duty. One can continue to live in the vain hope that somehow and from some quarter a change for the better is going to come. But there comes a time when one must also act, and act decisively. And there also comes a time when it is too late to act and when the opportunity for and the hope of a genuine and pure and sound movement of reformation become a thing of the past. Be warned!

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MEDITATION

Exhorted to Walk Circumspectly

Rev. M. Schipper

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Ephesians 5: 15,16.

Remarkable it is how often the apostle speaks in this epistle of the walk of the children of God.

Already in the first part of the epistle (2:2) he reminds them of what their walk was in times past, when they walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the

air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. But in the chapters 4 and 5, no less than five times he calls attention to what their walk should be. Listen to him! Writes he: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called . . ."

(4:1ff); "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind . . ." (4:17ff); "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." (5:1,2ff); "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (5:8) And then in our text: "See then that ye walk circumspectly. . . ."

All these exhortations are obviously based on the doctrinal truth the apostle had so clearly expressed in this epistle. The apostle evidently assumes the inviolable principle, that doctrine and life belong together, and that the latter must flow out of the former.

Had not the apostle succinctly but beautifully set forth the truths that the saints had been chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him? (1:4) Had he not shown unto them the truth of their redemption through His blood . . . ? (1:7) Had he not declared with great finality the fact that they had been saved by pure and sovereign grace through faith, not of works, lest any should boast? (2:8,9) Did he not show them that they were entirely God's workmanship, created unto good works, which God had prepared in order that they should walk in them? (2:10) And did he not show finally that all of this, their being predestinated in love, their being saved by grace through faith, their creation unto good works, was all unto the glory of God by Christ Jesus? Indeed, he did!

Hence, it is urgent that these saving truths be exemplified in their lives; that their walk be circumspect. And it is all the more urgent, because the days are evil.

See then that ye walk circumspectly!

As always in Scripture, so also here, one's walk embraces his whole life; that life as it is lived in all departments of life in the outward sense of the word; but that life as it is motivated from within by spiritual principles.

Our life is indeed realized in many departments: the home, the church, the world. It is realized within different brackets of time: the age of childhood, the age of adolescence, the age of manhood, and old age.

Our walk then is our life as we live it in all these changes of time, in all these departments of life, and that, too, in the midst of this present evil world in which we are called to be lights.

However, when we speak of our walk in all the departments of life, we must be careful that we

do not fall into the error of departmentalizing our religious life. This is done so frequently when we, for example, assume on the Sabbath an almost Pharisaic piety, but on the rest of the days of the week the mask comes off, and we live as does the world; when we are in the company of God's people we talk and act like them, but as soon as we must rub elbows with the children of this world, we talk and act as they do. No! Our walk that is circumspect is what it ought to be on all the days of the week — in the church, but also in the world.

See that ye walk circumspectly!

As wise, not as unwise!

Wise they are when they reckon with the reality of their spiritual status and calling. Unwise they would be should they fail to reckon with this reality.

Circumspectly, means exactly, accurately; with the implication of diligence. In no sense are they to deviate from the law of duty. Their calling has been marked out for them with great care in the Word of God. In line with that calling they are to walk. This surely implies severe spiritual discipline, allowing no occasion for loose living.

Such is the contents of the exhortation.

And the apostle also shows the way in which this exhortation shall be carried out.

Redeeming the time!

Time here must not be conceived of chronologically. The apostle is not thinking of time in terms of moments, hours, days, years, etc. Rather, he is speaking of time in the sense of opportunity, the occasion for doing or not doing something. This cannot mean however that time, chronologically speaking, is totally absent. For all our opportunities surely come to us in moments of time. Fact of the matter is that all of life as we live it here in the present world is caught up with the brackets of time. As Moses so pertly put it in Psalm 90, our days are seventy years, and, if really strong, maybe eighty years; but then cometh the end. The Infinite does not reckon with time, for with Him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. But we are children of time, and for us time has a beginning and an end.

In the midst of all the years of our life, opportunities come to us. As Solomon expresses it in Ecclesiastes: "A time for every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time

to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace."

As another before me so beautifully described it, "Time is like a train, it takes you past many beautiful landscapes which you see for the moment, and never see again. It takes you past the lovely stage of childhood, through the dreamy days of youth, through the struggling days of manhood, and then through the days when eye grows dim and powers abate, — always fleeing on until it drops you off in the stillness of the grave."

And the writer continues: "Time is the divinely allotted opportunity to accomplish those works which God has before prepared in order that we should walk in them. On the wings of time were your parents brought to you in your tender years in order that you might love and honor them, and be in subjection to them. Then in time you became parents, and treated so your children. On the wings of time the naked, the hungry, the thirsty, the imprisoned were placed on your door step in order that you could clothe, feed, give drink, and visit them. In time you meet your brother in Christ, and the enemy of God; you have the communion of saints, and experience the temptation of the world; you come under the preaching of the gospel, and you take notice of the philosophy that is false."

These are the occasions, the opportunities that come to us as we walk circumspectly in the present world.

When we redeem the time, we actually take advantage of the opportunities. Literally, the apostle says: Buy up the time, i.e., buy them up for yourselves. And that means, as we said, to take advantage of them. Don't let those opportunities pass by without using them, and reacting to them.

How necessary that is! And wonderful at the same time!

Childhood, that is the time for learning. How foolish to let it pass without using it to its fullest advantage! One learns, you understand, not merely to get a head full of knowledge, but to see all things in their proper perspective, in the light of the revelation and purpose of God. Many are the learned atheistic fools who sit in the seat of instruction, who have ruled God out of His universe. Most blessed is the knowledge of him who has learned to say: My God, how great Thou art!

Parenthood, that is the time for instructing. Most blessed opportunity it is, and often lost because we are too busy making our dollars and a place in the sun. Why did God make you parents anyway? Simply

to feed and clothe the children He so graciously gave you? O, indeed, you missed the opportunity if you did not take the time to talk with them by the way, or as you lay down, of the wonderful works of God.

Brotherhood, that is the time to edify one another. O, indeed, there is time also for coffee and cake, but even that is time wasted if we have not shown to one another the good graces of our God which He has shown to us.

Temptation, that is the time to apply the Word of God. You remember that, when Jesus went out into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan, He said: It is written! This is what He expects you and me to do when the tempter comes to entice us.

And so we could go on and on. So many are the opportunities that come to us: the time of the preaching of the gospel, the time of the Means of Grace, the time when we should be hungry and thirsty after righteousness that we may be filled; the time for sickness and health, the time for prosperity and adversity, the time for courting and marriage, the time of truth and the philosophy of man, the time for work and recreation; all these and many more are the opportunities that come to us between the cradle and the grave. These we must use to their very best advantage in the fear of God, or we are not walking circumspectly, redeeming the time.

And the motivating reason which the apostle adds to the exhortation is:

Because the days are evil!

To be noticed here is the fact that already in the day when the apostle wrote this epistle he observed that the days were evil. One wonders what the apostle would say if he were to write the epistle in our time.

Evil the days are in more senses than one. When Jacob appeared before Pharaoh (Gen.47), and the king asked the patriarch how old he was, he replied: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." Undoubtedly the old man was quite cognizant that the evil of his days was not the evil brought upon him by the wicked in the world in which he was a stranger, but also the evils of his own sinful nature, and the evil actions which proceed from that nature. Solomon, looking at the world in the day in which he lived, exclaimed: "Vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity"; and again, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Contrary to the modern philosophy that there is a certain restraint of evil, due to a certain "common

grace” of God, the world of darkness in which we dwell develops in sin and corruption. The days, that is, the time of our sojourn, the days in which we live in the present world, are becoming increasingly evil. And the end is not yet. According to Scripture, iniquity shall abound until it reaches its acme in the man of sin who must presently be revealed. We need not describe the evil days in which we live; you all know how evil the days are. It is screamed at you through all the news media, and you see it with your own eyes.

That is all the more reason why we should be exhorted to walk circumspectly, redeeming the time. This is not the time to walk carelessly and indifferently. Surely this is not the time to talk and act

as the world, even though you become accustomed to its foul play. The very evil of our days should serve as an incentive to walk holily, to watch and to pray. To have on the whole armour of God, and to do battle against the evil, within us and around us. It certainly behooves the children of light to keep their garments clean, and to walk as children of light, even when that calling shall evoke the wrath of the evil one, bring sorrow and loss to ourselves.

It surely behooves us to look by faith to our Guide, and Captain of our salvation, Who has promised never to leave nor forsake us. And Who, when He shall appear in His glory, shall be able to say: Well done, ye good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of the Lord.

EDITORIALS

Right On Course!

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Somewhat inexplicably there appears in the “NEWS” department of *The Banner* (Jan. 30, 1976, pp. 24, 25) an article from the pen of James Daane under the title, “The 50th Birthday of the Protestant Reformed Churches.”

I say “somewhat inexplicably” for more than one reason. In the first place, our 50th birthday was no longer *news* at the time of this article: our year of celebration was almost past. In the second place, the article is not actually a news article at all, but a kind of book review of *God’s Covenant Faithfulness*, our anniversary book. And, in the third place, it is hardly *news* when James Daane writes articles which are sharply critical of what he alleges to be Protestant Reformed theology. Dr. Daane has been busy for a good many years already constructing straw men, dubbing those straw men “Protestant Reformed Theology,” and then knocking down those straw men with mighty karate strokes — meanwhile flattering himself, I imagine, that he has done a masterful job of demolishing Protestant Reformed theology. That is, of course, a very interesting but self-deceptive pastime.

It is a matter of policy with me not to debate in response to book reviews. After all, when we send out books for review, we do not expect all the reviews to be favorable; we expect to “win a few, lose a few.”

Nor will I depart from that policy at this time. I have previously stated that I will debate with Dr. Daane concerning Protestant Reformed versus Daane-ish theology under the provision that our articles be carried in both *The Reformed Journal* and *The Standard Bearer*. And then, of course, there would be some back accounts to be reviewed.

But a few comments are in order, nevertheless.

Somehow or other when James Daane writes, I find it difficult to resist reading him. In attempting to assess the reasons for this, I came to the following conclusions.

In the first place, Dr. Daane writes interestingly, I think, because he almost always writes *abrasively*. And that kind of writing results in making readers pay attention. True, he does not always employ the proper abrasives. But he gets results. In this instance he probably gained a few readers for *God’s Covenant Faithfulness*, for which we will be thankful. I could well imagine that if Dr. Daane would be allowed to substitute his abrasive literary productions for some of the bland pabulum that frequently appears in *The Banner’s* editorial department, he could have the whole Christian Reformed Church in a dither with a few editorials.

In the second place, Dr. Daane’s writings are diffi-

cult to lay aside because he has a propensity for telling fairy tales. Did you ever hear the fairy tale that Prof. Hanko writes *ambiguously*? In fact, so ambiguously that his entire chapter in *God's Covenant Faithfulness* should be passed by? Or did you ever hear the fairy tale — and Daane has various versions of this one — that we deny the “historical fabric of the covenant” or that for us God’s covenant is an “idea, not a historical reality”? Or again, did you ever hear the fairy tale which imputes both ontological theology and existential theology to one and the same theologian? You see, Daane occasionally betakes himself to a theological never-never land; and when he does so, he truly produces some “whoppers” — all of which is interesting, provided the reader does not allow himself to be misled into confusing fact and fiction. In fact, I became so carried away by Dr. Daane’s caricature of our covenant theology that I had to pull *God's Covenant Faithfulness* from my library shelf and bring myself back to reality.

But there is, I believe, one more reason why Dr. Daane’s writings are interesting, especially to a Protestant Reformed reader.

That reason is that Dr. Daane invariably proves to be *right, but dead wrong*.

Dr. Daane is invariably right on one count. He has an almost uncanny ability to recognize Protestant Reformed theology when he sees it.

But he is also invariably wrong on two counts. In the first place, he always creates a caricature of that Protestant Reformed theology instead of representing it accurately and truly. In fact, his caricature is so remote that one would almost say that any similarity between it and the real product is strictly coincidental. As a result, he is wrong on a second count: his criticisms are never accurate and pertinent, because they are criticisms of the caricature, not of the genuine product.

And this is of special interest to me.

Why? Because it is an evident token to me that my theology is *right on course*. When I read Daane’s fulminations against what he *alleges* is Protestant Reformed theology, then I come to the conclusion that he must have read some truly Protestant Reformed theology and that he must have recognized it as the genuine product, and that this, in turn, must have sent Dr. Daane off into never-never land. For it has become axiomatic for Daane with respect to Protestant Reformed (Reformed!) theology to be . . . right, but dead wrong!

Symptomatic

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In *Waarheid + Eenheid*, December 20, 1975, there appears a brief report and commentary which, in my opinion, is symptomatic of the weakness of the movement of the *Verontrusten* (Concerned) in the Netherlands. The article reads as follows (I translate):

“Alas, Dr. C. van der Zanden, of Middelburg, believed that he could no more baptize children. . . . He saw that his conception did not agree with the Reformed confession. The matter was decided in a good four weeks. Too bad, because now our churches will miss a Scriptural preacher, who departs from the Reformed Confession in regard to a little section. There are still many around who deviate with respect to many more and much more weighty sections. And who might do that already for years. An honorable Christian such as Rev. van der Zanden resigns. I have not yet heard of consistories and Classes which deal so swiftly with the greater dissenters. Nor have I heard that these themselves request honorable dismissal. Too bad, and astounding. ‘I am not ashamed of the Gospel,’ said Rev. van der Zanden only a few

months ago to a church full of young people in a Youth for Christ gathering. God bless you, brother!”

In the same youth section of the same issue, by the way, there appears an article encouraging participation in Youth for Christ which quotes its principles, principles which are plainly far short of being Reformed, but only Fundamentalists.

But to return to the matter first mentioned, this I call symptomatic of the weakness of the movement of the *Verontrusten* in the Netherlands. It may indeed be true that in the Netherlands they measure with two measures, so that the so-called big heretics, such as Kuitert, Wiersinga, c.s. go free, while a man like Rev. van der Zanden cannot be tolerated because of his denial of infant baptism. It may also be true that the churches acted with dispatch in the above mentioned case, while such cases as those of Kuitert and Wiersinga have been delayed for years. One can even understand, and even sympathize with the feeling of injustice which comes to the fore in the above report. But to refer to the matter of infant baptism as

a little section of the Reformed Confession is nevertheless symptomatic of a grave weakness and of a serious lack of understanding and appreciation of the Reformed Confession. For along with infant baptism goes that most important truth of our Reformed heritage, namely, the truth of God's eternal covenant of grace. And so to belittle this truth as to classify it as a little sub-section of the Reformed confession is to betray a lack of appreciation for that which constitutes the very genius of the Reformed faith.

When it comes to choosing sides between the Concerned and the Liberals in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands, I cannot hesitate: my sympathies are without question with the Concerned and against the Liberals.

But how can a Reformed man bemoan the loss to his churches of a minister who denies infant baptism – and, with it, the truth of God's covenant? Is this not symptomatic? I fear it. I fear that it is symptomatic of a very serious weakness in the movement of the Concerned. I fear that this is symptomatic of the fact that while the movement of the Concerned is indeed conservative, as over against the blatant liberalism of such men as Kuitert and others, nevertheless it is not conservative in the sense of being strongly and distinctively Reformed, but sometimes manifests itself as being conservative in the sense of being “evangelical” and “fundamentalist.” How otherwise is it to be explained that such a movement as “Youth for Christ” can also be justified and promoted in *Waarheid + Eenheid*? Surely, there is

nothing distinctively Reformed about such a movement! How a Reformed man can get it in his head to promote such things and to present such a movement as a viable option for Reformed young people is a conundrum to me.

But what is worse, if my diagnosis of this symptom is correct, there is very little hope from the quarter of the Concerned as far as a truly Reformed movement of reformation in the GKN is concerned. I can foresee continued fragmentation of the same kind that has already become manifest to a considerable degree in the GKN, but little if any possibility of a genuinely Reformed movement of reformation through separation.

And there is a lesson and a warning here. It is indeed possible to delay too long in the work of reformation. One can bemoan the presence of false doctrines and false teachers in the church. One can bemoan apostasy in doctrine and life. One can protest such evils officially and unofficially. One can profess that the calling to fight and to work for the enlightenment of others and for reformation from within is his duty. One can continue to live in the vain hope that somehow and from some quarter a change for the better is going to come. But there comes a time when one must also act, and act decisively. And there also comes a time when it is too late to act and when the opportunity for and the hope of a genuine and pure and sound movement of reformation become a thing of the past. Be warned!

South Africa Church Breaks With GKN

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

For some time now there have been growing tensions between the increasingly liberal *Gereformeerde Kerken* of the Netherlands (GKN) and a sister denomination in South Africa, the *Gereformeerde Kerk* of South Africa, sometimes referred to as the “Dopper” church. The latter is the smallest of the three Afrikaans churches. These tensions have had their occasion partly in the fact that the *Gereformeerde Kerken* of the Netherlands supported the World Council of Churches' special fund to combat racism, and partly in the heresies in the GKN which have been tolerated and allowed to go unrestrained and undisciplined. Depending on whose news reports one read, sometimes it seemed that the former item was the chief reason for the tension (in connection, of course, with the whole controversy about *apartheid* in South Africa); and sometimes it seemed that the

doctrinal aberrations in the GKN constituted the chief irritant. Personally, I tend to think that the two issues are not unrelated, both being facets of the growing liberalism in the GKN.

And now these tensions have ended in an official break, a break initiated by the South Africa Church.

A *Standard Bearer* subscriber in Johannesburg, South Africa kindly sent me two clippings about this subject from *The Star*, a daily newspaper in that city.

The first, dated January 24, reports as follows:

“The Gereformeerde Kerk, smallest of the three Afrikaans churches, has decided to sever all ties with its sister church in Holland.

“The decision to break off relations was made in Potchefstroom last night by the general synod of the Kerk.

"The severing of bonds will have far-reaching implications, and brings to an end a relationship between the Afrikaans church and the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands which started in 1859. (Note: if this data is correct, it would mean that the original bond was established even before there were any Gereformeerde Kerken. The latter were established in 1892 through a merger of the secession movements of 1834, the Afscheiding, and the secession under Kuyper in 1886, the Doleantie. HCH)

"The synod took the decision after considering a report by a committee which recommended the break.

"The decision is to be conveyed to the synods of the African and Coloured churches of the Gereformeerde Kerk, as well as the Reformed churches in New Zealand, Australia and USA.

"These last are also considering breaking ties with the 'mother' church in Holland.

"The decision to break off relations was made because of 'heresies' by some church members in Holland because the Dutch church supported the World Council of Churches' special fund to combat racism.

"Last night's break threatens to worsen the already yawning split between Afrikaner and Dutch intellectual establishments. The rifts contain serious political implications and accusations from both sides."

The second report carries the by-line "Lambert Pringle, Religion Reporter" and is dated February 3. It furnishes further details:

"The acceptance by the Gereformeerde Kerk at its synod recently that according to Holy Scripture racially mixed marriages cannot be regarded as unlawful or forbidden is highly significant.

"So too is the decision on common worship that no person should be excluded from participating in the life of the church on grounds of race or colour. (Note: These decisions, of course, must be understood against the background of the South African *apartheid* policy and controversy. HCH)

"And while these decisions might have been long overdue for some, they might also have put other noses out of joint.

"For while the more powerful Ned. Geref. Kerk is not opposed to mixed worship, it remains firmly against mixed marriages.

"The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk, second largest of the three Afrikaans churches, is opposed to both mixed marriages and mixed worship.

"One man who is delighted about many of the decisions his church took is Professor Tjaart van der Walt, one of South Africa's most eminent theolo-

gians.

"As head of the department of New Testament at the theological seminary at Potchefstroom and at Potchefstroom University, Professor Van der Walt has his finger on the pulse of developments in the annals of the Afrikaans churches.

"He was an adviser to the synod, and was also chairman of the commission which recommended that the Gereformeerde Kerk in South Africa should sever its relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands.

"For the Gereformeerdes at Potchefstroom it was a tough decision to make and, as Professor van der Walt says, any split which severs ties of more than a century is serious.

"But even more serious, he says, are the reasons behind the decision to break bonds with the Dutch church.

"Behind the split is the fact that the Gereformeerdes here became deeply unhappy about the 'radical and unreformed views and heresies' of some ministers, theologians and professors of the church in Holland.

"One such man was Dr. Herman Wiersinga, a minister in Amsterdam who said that Christ did not die on the cross for our sins, but that it was more a shock tactic.

"This, says Professor van der Walt, touches on the deep significance of the Cross and the Crucifixion — the very core of Christianity.

"Another reason was the fact that the Dutch church decided to support the World Council of Churches' special fund to combat racism.

"The Gereformeerdes in South Africa felt this was supporting 'violence' of liberation movements in Southern Africa.

"Another matter which played an important part in the decision to split was the report on homosexuality by some Dutch ministers. This report suggested that not only should homosexuality be considered, but that congregations would also have to accept a homosexual minister who was living with a man in the rectory.

"Professor van der Walt believes any attempts to reconcile the two churches will be difficult.

"He does not regard the decision to split as moving towards isolation. Instead, he is happy with the Gereformeerde Kerk's international relations with other churches — especially other reformed churches overseas.

"He says too that the church's missionary work in South Africa is a manifestation of Christian unity.

"He is also happy with the decisions which the synod took — particularly those about mixed marriages and common worship.

"He believes that his church is moving in the right direction in other areas. One of these was his church's critical stand on the issue of migratory labour.

"And while he believes his church is beginning to face up to socio-political issues, he would like to see the church become radical and outspoken.

"He prays for the day when his church and all other churches in South Africa will meet on a common platform.

"Professor van der Walt also regards the yawning split between Dutch and Afrikaner establishments as grave.

"But however satisfied Professor van der Walt may be about the mood and direction of the synod, some of its own members believe the *Gereformeerde Kerk* will have to alter many more of its attitudes if it hopes to be reconciled with organizations like the South Africa Council of Churches and other churches overseas.

"The *Gereformeerde Kerk* still has strong reservations about mixed marriages in South Africa, and churches overseas, including its former 'sister' church in Holland, still accuse it of supporting the Government's policy of apartheid and separate development."

We can only applaud the decision to sever relations with the GKN. It was long overdue. And this holds true not only for the *Gereformeerde Kerk* of South Africa, but also for all Reformed denominations which have maintained ties with the GKN. It also holds true for the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, which until now has not shown the courage to enforce its own constitution and its own anti-World Council advice. From the point of view of the principle, the GKN has long ago and in many ways forsaken the doctrine and discipline which constitute the very basis of unity for Reformed churches. It was, therefore, wrong — principally wrong — for other Reformed churches to continue in any kind of unity with the GKN. And from the point of view of practice, the fact that others continued to maintain ties with the GKN has only afforded the latter the opportunity to introduce its corrupt leaven into other Reformed communions. Frankly, I have no expectation that the GKN will be moved to return from its evil ways; but perhaps the breaking of ecclesiastical ties will contribute to stemming the tide of liberalism somewhat in other Reformed churches.

Meanwhile, in my opinion there are ominous signs that already all is not well in the South Africa church. The talk of being radical and outspoken and of facing up to socio-political issues has the all-too-familiar ring of the liberalism which has already infested other Reformed denominations.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

"Hyper-Calvinism" and the Call of the Gospel (16)

Rev. David Engelsma

Those who teach a sincere desire of God to save all always appeal to I Timothy 2:4: "Who (God) will have all men to be saved . . ." Turretin will have nothing of such an interpretation of this text. "... the particle, *all*, is here taken not distributively, for the individuals of classes, but collectively, for classes of individuals, that is, as Beza renders it, for all sorts from every nation, condition, age and sex, in this sense, God wills, not that all men individually, but some from every class, or order of men, should be saved, and as Augustine explains it . . ." Against those

who explain the text to mean that God sincerely desires every human to be saved, Turretin argues, "if God wills this, how happens it that it is not done, since his will properly so called is always efficacious, and accomplishes what he wills, and which nothing can resist? Again, God wills them all to come to the knowledge of the truth either absolutely, and so all would come to it, which is false, or under a condition: But what can that be? If they hear it? But he does not have it preached to many; If they believe? But to believe is to have arrived already at the knowl-

edge of the truth.”

The truth of the matter, writes Turretin, is this: “God wills all those to be saved, for whom Christ gave himself as a ransom, so that this is immediately added by the Apostle, v. 6, viz.; as their Mediator, by substituting himself in their place, and suffering in their stead the punishment due to them. Now this cannot be said of all and every man in particular, without by that very thing all and every man being actually saved, which no one would say” (pp. 122, 123).

As for II Peter 3:9, “The Lord . . . is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” the will of God here spoken of “should not be extended further than to the elect and believers, for whose sake God puts off the consummation of ages, until their number shall be completed.” This is evident from “the pronoun, *us*, which precedes, with sufficient clearness designating the elect and believers, as elsewhere more than once, and to explain which he adds, not willing that any, that is, *of us*, should perish” (p. 125).

Our Reformed theologian of this very flourishing period of Reformed theology then takes up the crucial issue of God’s commanding all men, including the reprobate, to repent and believe. It is obvious that God does, in the gospel, command the reprobate to believe on Christ. Those who departed from Reformed orthodoxy in Turretin’s day argued that this command indicated a gracious attitude on God’s part towards the reprobate, a real desire of God that they be saved. Exactly this is the position of the defenders of the offer in our day. On the universal command to believe, they base a sincere desire of God to save all men. They call this desire “God’s revealed will,” in distinction from “God’s hidden will” (of predestination). These two, diametrically opposed wills of God are then supposed to exist side by side in Reformed theology in paradoxical tension: God wills to save everybody and God wills to save only some.

To this position, Hoeksema referred, when he spoke of the “double-track theology” of Reformed churches that championed the well-meant offer and when he spoke of the “Janus head”^{*} of such churches. The advocates of the offer, on their part, denounce the rejection of the offer, i.e., the rejection of a sincere desire of God to save all, made in the name of predestination, as a too-rigorous exercise of logic.

Turretin holds that Scripture does indeed teach a distinction in the will of God. The proper, Biblical distinction is that between God’s decretive will and God’s preceptive will (the will of God’s decree and the will of God’s precept, or command). The former is God’s eternal decree, determining a man’s destiny,

e.g., that He will harden Pharaoh unto damnation; the latter is God’s command to a man, setting forth his duty, e.g., that Pharaoh must let God’s people go. From God’s command, one may not infer God’s intention (sincere desire), for the command, “Let My people go!,” only indicates Pharaoh’s duty and that freeing God’s people, not keeping them in slavery, is pleasing to God. “Nor immediately does he (God) intend what is commanded, since many things are commanded, which are by no means intended. Thus God commanded Pharaoh to let the people go, and yet he cannot be said to have actually intended, either absolutely, or conditionally, their dismissal, since he intended on the contrary the hardening of Pharaoh and the retention of the people” (p. 126).

To explain God’s universal demands of repentance and faith as indicative of a mercy of God for all and of a will of God to save all is to be guilty of ascribing to God two wills that “butt against each other and destroy themselves” and is to be guilty of adopting the Arminian denial of sovereign grace. “So from the command to believe and repent, you would notwithstanding falsely infer that God by that very thing intended the faith and repentance and so the salvation of all those, to whom such an external command is promulgated” (p. 126). “The precept, therefore, signifies that God really wills to enjoin that upon us, but not forthwith that he really wills or intends, that what is commanded should take place” (p. 127).

It is evident from Turretin’s theology that those in the Reformed camp today who defend the offer’s teaching of a sincere, merciful desire in God to save everyone in terms of two, contradictory wills in God have not a leg to stand on, as far as historic Reformed theology is concerned. Reformed theology knows only of a distinction between the will of God’s decree (election) and the will of God’s command (“Repent and believe!”). Reformed theology has expressly denied that the latter implies God’s mercy or will to save everyone to whom the command comes. It has condemned those who taught that the command to believe necessarily indicates a gracious purpose of saving in God. Reformed theology has always held that there is but one gracious will in God which intends salvation for men: election. Therefore, there is not, for Reformed theology, any contradiction in the two-fold will of God. God’s command to Pharaoh, “Let My people go!,” does not contradict God’s decree, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will not let My people go.” For the command does not indicate God’s purpose, but Pharaoh’s calling.

Indeed, although it is true here too that God’s ways are higher than our ways and past finding out, there is harmony in God’s two-fold will. First, the command realizes and maintains that essential charac-

teristic of God's decree that consists of the decree's being fulfilled only in the way of the full maintenance of the complete responsibility of man. Secondly, the command serves the effecting of the decree: By the Word of Jehovah, "Let My people go," the heart of Pharaoh is hardened by God, so that God can make His power known in that proud monarch.

So far Turretin has been touching on the truth of God's call to men in the gospel from the viewpoint of God's decree. He deals with the doctrine of the call directly in the section on "Vocation and Faith" (pp. 382ff.). He defines vocation (the calling) as "an act of the grace of God in Christ, by which he calls men dead in sin and lost in Adam, by the preaching of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit, to union with Christ and to the salvation to be obtained in him" (p. 382). It is apparent that Turretin views the call of the gospel as God's gracious, efficacious drawing of the elect. He states this explicitly: "all the elect, and they alone are called" (p. 383). Yet, Turretin recognizes that Scripture teaches a calling by God in the preaching of the gospel of all who come under the preaching. Therefore, he distinguishes "a twofold vocation . . . viz., an external and internal. The former takes place only by the ministry of the word and sacrament . . . The latter, however, with the additional internal and omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit" (p. 383). With the external calling, God calls also the reprobate; "knocks only at the ears of the body"; and "acts imperatively only, exacting from man duty, but giving no strength to perform it" (p. 383).

Then, Turretin addresses himself to the truth of the "Vocation of Reprobates." In keeping with his method of doing theology, he begins with a question, in which he both sets forth the issue and indicates the direction in which he will go: "Are the Reprobate, who are made partakers of external vocation, called with the design and intention on God's part, that they should become partakers of salvation? And, this being denied, does it follow that God does not deal seriously with them, but hypocritically and falsely; or

that he can be accused of any injustice? We deny" (p. 384).

Immediately, he draws the lines of battle: "This question lies between us and the Lutherans, the Arminians, and the Patrons of Universal Grace; who, to support the universality of vocation, at least as to the preaching of the Gospel in the visible Church, hold that as many as are called by the Word are called by God with the intention of their salvation; because otherwise God would trifle with men and deal not seriously but hypocritically, offering them grace, which, nevertheless, he is unwilling to bestow" (p. 384).

He then clarifies the position of Reformed orthodoxy: "Now although we do not deny that the reprobate, who live in external communion with the Church, are called by God through the Gospel; still we do deny that they are called with the intention that they should be made actual partakers of salvation, which God knew would never be the case, because in his decree he had ordained otherwise concerning them. Nor ought we on this account to think that God can be charged with hypocrisy or dissimulation, but that he always acts most seriously and sincerely" (pp. 384, 385).

Thus does the Reformed faith cry down a plague on the houses both of hyper-Calvinism and the well-meant offer. Against hyper-Calvinism, it maintains that God calls the reprobate through the preaching of the gospel and that He does so "most seriously and sincerely." Against the offer, the Reformed faith denies that this call is made to the reprobate in mercy and with any design or intention of their salvation, and it denies this *in view of predestination*: "because in his decree he had ordained otherwise concerning them." Repudiation of the offer as the innovation of "Patrons of Universal Grace" is not hyper-Calvinism; it is historic Reformed orthodoxy.

*Janus was the Roman god with two faces. Reformed churches that hold the offer, charged Hoeksema, have two faces, an Arminian face of universal grace and a Calvinistic face of particular grace.

STUDENT AID INFORMATION

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FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Hebrews (13:15)

Rev. G. Lubbers

BRINGING CONTINUAL SACRIFICE OF PRAISE TO GOD (Heb. 13:15)

That we bring the sacrifice of praise to God through Jesus Christ follows of necessity from the great sacrifice of Christ which He brought without the gate at Jerusalem. That is the God-intended intent, purpose, and design of salvation itself. The highest and chief end of salvation is the glory of God, the glory of His grace. (Eph. 1:6) That is the end of the work of God's sovereign grace and election in all His redeemed people. Such is the force of the particle "wherefore" in the text. For in the context the writer made it abundantly clear and lucid that, if we are not to be carried away, we must cling to Christ Jesus Who is yesterday, today, and forever the same. All of salvation culminates in the great day of atonement when all is purified in the sacrifice, which is brought at Calvary without the city-gate of Jerusalem!

Were it not for this Jesus, there would be neither praise to bring nor any avenue and way unto the Father to bring it. The text places this very emphatically on the foreground. He is the highpriest Who must place our prayers and praise upon the altar of incense in the holy place before the throne, the ark of the covenant. Hence, it is *through (dia)* Him. No one can come to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6) Repeatedly the Scriptures emphasize this point, and we do well to take notice of this. Is this not the Christ Who ever lives to pray for us as the Highpriest Whose office has no end? His is a priesthood with unbroken continuance. (Heb. 7:3) After He has died for our sins His office before God in the most holy place of heaven has not ended. Shall there be any praise that can come to God and be acceptable, holy, free from all sin, then Christ must purify our praise and place it upon the altar of incense with the prayers of all saints! (Rev. 5:8; 8:3, 4) Hence *by Him*, and by no one else, can we bring our praise to God! The Holy Spirit would have us see this when He takes it all out of Christ and gives it to us, leading us into all the truth of the gospel. Wherefore we read in I Peter 2:5: "Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up

spiritual sacrifices, *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*" (italics added) And, again, we read in I Peter 4:11, "... if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth: that *God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ*, to whom be the praise and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." (italics added) Confer further Rom. 1:8; 16:27; Col. 3:17. From all this it is abundantly clear what the Scriptures teach concerning our sacrifices of praise through Christ Jesus and through Him alone.

It should the meanwhile not be overlooked that this sacrifice is to be brought *continually*. There is a reason for this admonition to incessant thankfulness and praise. In the Old Testament economy of the shadows this sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise had to follow the sacrifice of the sin offering brought for sin by the priest and highpriest. In Lev. 7:11-15 Moses speaks of the ordinance of the thank offering. (*tseebhach-todah*) Writes Westcott on page 443 of his *The Epistle to the Hebrews*: "In this connection *dia tantos* (continually) has a peculiar force. That which was an exceptional service under the Old Dispensation is the normal service under the New." Even the Jewish teachers, says Westcott, gave expression to the thought: R. Pichas, R. Levi, and R. Jochanan said in the name of R. Menachem of Galilee: One day all offerings will cease, only the thankoffering will not cease; all prayers will cease, only the thanksgiving prayer will not cease. This is, indeed, according to what Jeremiah the prophet says in Chapter 33:11, "The voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth forever; and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD."

It is, therefore, quite clear that the only sacrifice which still remains in the New Testament is the sacrifice of praise of those who are ingrafted into Christ with a true faith. This is the sacrifice of believing hearts which confess with the mouth. (Rom.

10:8-10) The word has in Jesus' sacrifice, and by His glorification and outpouring of the Spirit, been brought very nigh unto us, even in our mouth and heart. This is the fruit of the lips. It is "fruit" which is the beginning of the full harvest. We now have pentecostal grace. It is the firstfruits of the eternal song in heaven. That is why it is called "confessing" in the Greek. It is saying the same thing concerning God, Christ, God's people, the sanctuary in the temple, as God does. We recall His goodness, His mercy, and His greatness forever. It is the beginning of the eternal confession of heaven before the great white throne of His grace and majesty.

DOING WELL AND COMMUNICATING (Heb. 13:16)

It is true that the chief part of thankfulness is prayer and song and the extolling of the Lord's greatness and mercy. This is beautifully expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism's answer as to what constitutes true prayer. However, there is another part of thankfulness. This is that we keep the commandments of God, particularly that we love our neighbor as ourselves. This is what the writer here refers to when he writes to the Hebrew believers that they must not "forget" to do well. They must not be Christians who like to go to church and pray and sing, but they must have a living faith which reveals itself in good works. (James 2:14-26; I John 3:18) And of this the Hebrew Christians and we also must not be "forgetful." Often this is not intentional forgetfulness. The writer uses the term "to forget" also in Hebrews 13:2 concerning the love which must be shown to strangers. For these strangers are perhaps angels, and they may even be more: saints in Christ.

The term *to do good* seems to be of a wider implication than is the term "communicate." The term seems to look at all kinds of beautiful deeds. (*eupoias*) We must do unto others as we would have them do unto us. That is the implication of our part of the covenant which is written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. If we say that we love God, and do not love the brother, we lie, and the truth is not in us. And, therefore, this admonition is so very serious. The genuineness of our doing good to our neighbor manifests itself in whether we "communicate." There is much giving and adieu in this world which is not "communicating." Many millions of dollars are doled out by government agencies, insurance policies which are not "sacrifices" which are well-pleasing to the Lord. They are not placed upon the altar of consecration. This communicating to the necessities of the saints is on a very high spiritual plane. It is much more than good business with high interest. It is walking in the light as God is light, in Whom there is no darkness at all. It is covenant fellowship with the

Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is that which is accompanied by perfect joy, a full cup of bliss. (I John 1:1-4)

It is not difficult to understand that the writer underscores this doing good and communicating with the sacrifices of praise. This is the very essence of redemption from sin and the house of bondage. We must remember the widow, the orphan, and the stranger, that they may eat from the altar of the LORD'S mercies. (Ex. 22:21; 23:9) When we have a collection in the church for the poor, this is placing first ourselves, and then also our gifts as dedicated to the LORD and to His loving care for the poor, the weak, and the indigent. Every church service should have such a collection. That is part of our Sabbath Day keeping. (Lord's Day XXXVIII) "... and contribute to the relief of the poor as becomes a christian." The Hebrews must enter into the rest of the completed work of Christ, and not harden their heart. (Heb. 3:3) And they must enter into the rest "today." And so we must also in this very present time communicate and walk in what we confess to believe concerning the communion of saints and the life everlasting.

The writer underscores that God must be well-pleased with our "sacrifices." That, too, we must not forget. All things are naked and opened before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. Think of God's rejecting the sacrifice of Cain and His accepting the sacrifice of Abel. The Lord abhors the sacrifice of the wicked also in Israel. (Gen. 4:5a; Ps. 50:8; Prov. 15:8; 21:3; Isaiah 1:11) To do justice and righteousness is better than sacrifice and is more acceptable to the Lord. When the writer here says "with such sacrifices" God is well-pleased, we should heed and take notice. For such sacrifices are the manifestation of the Lord's love toward His saints as a revelation of His own self-love in perfect holiness in the ontological Trinity. This is the love manifested in the cross to us in our poverty and worthlessness, when God loved us even when we were yet sinners. And now we ought thus to love each other if God so loved us. (I John 4:20, 21)

We must not forget also to bring these sacrifices of doing good and to communicate "through Him," that is, because of His suffering for us without the gate. We do this good, first of all, to the household of faith and also to those who are without. This is the out-reaching love of Christ in His saints, so that with all the saints we may know the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of God. The saints in heathen lands contributed to the poor in Jerusalem by a great collection. (II Cor. 8:1-24; 9:1-15; Acts 11:29, 30)

Too much ritual in the divine services is not good.

However, it might be well that when collections are taken for the poor, more attention be focused on the great meaning and implication on the offerings for the poor, and that we be deeply mindful that when once any money or gifts are placed on the altar of consecration, these are mingled with the prayers of all saints. Such money is no longer ours, but it is the Lord's; and the widows, orphans, and the stranger should feel that when the deacons come to visit them, they have had a visit from Christ Himself. And we

should give in the knowledge that one day we shall hear from the lips of Christ, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me. . . . And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. 25:34-40)

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

Glory Made Wretched (22)

Isaiah 3:24 - 4:1

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

1. *The Loathsome Replacing Finery.* "And it shall come to pass (that) instead of spicy odor there shall be rottenness; and instead of a girdle (apron, Gen. 3:7), a rope; and instead of the work of turned work (artificial curls?), baldness; and instead of an embroidered tuxedo, a girdle of sackcloth, a branding instead of (female) beauty" (3:24, Heb.). "It is evident that the country here described abounds in aromatic herbs; and there is no reason to doubt that in pleasant smells, as well as in other matters, they were luxurious. We see that those nations which are farthest removed from the east are not prevented either by distance or by expense from indulging in that kind of luxury. What may be expected to happen in those places where they are abundant? That they will excite lust and promote luxury is beyond all doubt. He means, therefore, that ointments and *sweet smells* were abused by them in a variety of ways; for the sinful desires of men are ingenious in their contrivances, and can never be satisfied." So wrote John Calvin on this text. All the luxurious feminine finery the women of Zion loved so much would be torn from their bodies, stripping them naked. Instead of their gold, silver and spangled pectoral and pelvic girdles, they would have nothing but a rope; instead of simulated curls, baldness; instead of silk formal wear, sackcloth.

2. *Charmers With No Men to Charm.* "Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy might in the war" (v.25, Heb.). Not only would the women be robbed

of their jewelry, their wardrobes, cosmetics and toiletries, but worst of all, their men. Jeremiah laments this terrible calamity: "the young and the old lie on the ground in the streets; my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword. Thou hast slain them in the day of Thine anger; Thou hast killed and not pitied" (Lam. 2:21). "Thy might shall fall in the war." This idea of a nation's might being destroyed is brought out also by Jeremiah at the time of the beginning of Zedekiah's reign: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Look! I will break the bow of Elam, the main element of their strength (might)' " (Jer. 49:35, Berkeley). The Lord would disable and wreck their "atomic bomb."

"And her gates shall groan and mourn, and she shall sit desolate on the ground" (v. 26). The Lord had warned that the heathen destroyer would level them desolate to the ground. "O daughter of My people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow in ashes; make thee mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation; for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us" (Jer. 6:26). When it happened, Jeremiah lamented it. "The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground and are silent (dumb with grief); they have thrown dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Israel hang their heads to the ground" (Lam. 2:10).

"And in that day, seven women shall fasten upon one man, saying, 'Our bread we will eat, and our raiment we will wear; only let thy name be called

upon us. Take away our reproach.' ” (4:1, Heb.). The daughters of Zion thought themselves the greatest of wives because they were married to men of Judah. But now so devastating will be the destruction that there will be but one man for every seven women. According to the Word of God the husband must provide for and support his wife, “her food, her clothing and her marriage rights” (Ex. 21:10). But the women, too, would agree to support themselves with food and clothing — their own living — to possess the married name and state.

PROMISE OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

Isaiah 4:2-6

1. *The Future Messiah* “In that day the Branch (Offspring) of Jehovah shall be for beauty and for glory, and the fruit of the earth for majestic grandeur, and be beauty for the escaped of Israel” (4:2, Heb.). After the prediction of such terrible judgments and calamities just described, the Lord comforts the faithful of His people with the covenant promise that the tabernacle of God shall be with men. A new Church and its Head shall arise and be kept safe. This promise is not made to all, but to the remnant, the escaped of Israel. “In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people” (28:5). “In that day” is a day which occurs in the beginning of “the last days” (2:2), starting with the birth of Christ, and continuing to the destruction of Jerusalem and on down to this day, this dispensation to its end. This day then points to a person, the Messiah, as the following passages prove beyond all doubt. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jer. 23:5). “In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land” (33:15). “Behold, I will bring forth My Servant the BRANCH” (Zech. 3:8). “Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord” (6:12). He comes *from Jehovah*, so is of divine origin, but also is the fruit of the earth, since He was born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), to grow up as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground (53:2), a fulfilment of “Let the earth open and . . . bring forth salvation” (Isa. 45:8). So here is both His deity, in the Branch of Jehovah, and His humanity through the virgin birth, in “the fruit of the earth.” He shall be the Beauty, the Glory, and the majestic grandeur of Zion. “The sun shall be no more thy light by day: neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting

light, and thy God thy glory” (Isa. 60:19). How this shall be Jeremiah beautifully explains in his thirty-third chapter (vv. 6-9, 11-12). He especially became glory when He arose from the dead, ascended to heaven and sat exalted at the right hand of God. He will be glorious when He appears to come the second time in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him to sit upon the throne of His glory (Mt. 25:31).

“And to be beauty for the escaped of Israel,” “not beautiful and glorious, excellent and comely in the view of all men; only them that believe, who have seen His glory (Jn. 12:41, RCH), and have tasted that He is gracious. These are the remnant according to the election of grace, the preserved of Israel, the chosen of God and precious, who were saved from that untoward generation, the Jews, and escaped the destruction of Jerusalem, and were saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” — John Gill. Of them the Lord further says, “Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated . . . I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations” (Isa. 60:15).

2. *The Future Church*. “And it shall be (that) the one left in Zion and the one left in Jerusalem shall be called holy to Him (Rev. 21:27), all the ones written to the life (lives) in (the New) Jerusalem” (4:3, Heb.), or, “and it shall occur,” and when it does, it will be pure grace that the remnant of grace in Jerusalem shall be *called* holy. Also they shall *become* holy: “and to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as He hath spoken” (Dt. 26:19). For “shall be called” is not the same as “shall be.” But it is sinners, who in themselves are not, are by sovereign grace called holy, and rightly so because they are viewed in the Holy One, the Messiah, and are His saints; and where there are *saints* this prophecy is fulfilled. In Him they are not only *called* holy, not only called sons of God, but they *are* (I Jn. 3:1, ASV). In Him they are predestinated to eternal life, their names being written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world. This book of life is not that in which are written those destined to earthly life (Ex. 32:32f; Ps. 69:29), but that which contains the names of those ordained to eternal life (Ps. 87:46; Dn. 12:1; Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15, 21:27). It is evident from at least two of these texts that there are some whose names are not written in this Book (cp. also Ezek. 13:9). But the elect *are* written there, and that unalterably, for this writing is God’s writing, and He may say better than anyone, “What I have written, I have written.” These elect are chosen to salvation, including sanctification (2 Thes. 2:13; Eph. 1:4). Then they are chosen unconditionally, particularly and personally, for this is not a writing of nations, races or churches, but of

individual persons. Holiness, the eternal security of the saints, their final preservation and perseverance are the fruits of the tree and original root of election.

“O that Adonai shall have washed away the filth (drunkard’s vomit, 28:8; human excrement, 36:12) of the daughters of Zion (the women just mentioned in 3:16), and shall have washed away the bloods of Jerusalem from her midst, with a spirit of judgment and a spirit of destroying” (4:4, Heb.). The elect remnant shall be called holy and shall be actually holy, for “the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion.” Zion, the Church, shall be cleansed from the corruption of the people and especially of those women who loved luxury and flirty finery. The church’s cleansing of its filth is attained by the cutting off of the wicked within. The church will not be kept from corruption unless it is cleansed of the wicked thing. Wickedness is filthiness,

especially bloodshed and murder. These evils defiled the land almost more than any other. The defilement of these sins in our own land is just as rife. The murder rate in the city of Houston is increasing fearfully. The reforming of a city can only be in the cleansing of it, and that effected by the restraining, punishment, and eradication of violence and wickedness. But where is this being done to the extent that an atmosphere of safety is once more restored? However, this failure and laxity in the state must definitely not be tolerated in the church. In the true church it shall not be, for “the Lord shall” do it. The church shall be reformed “not by might nor by power but by My Spirit, saith the Lord” (Zech. 4:6). By His power and grace the church shall be purged of false worship, of corruption in the sacraments, of worship forms not of God, of all immorality and worldliness, of all workers of iniquity. They shall be taken out of Christ’s kingdom and churches. (Matt. 8:12).

FEATURE ARTICLE

Our School in Redlands

Rev. Marvin Kamps

The establishment of our own school and its opening on September 16, 1975 in Redlands is well known to most of you, our brothers and sisters in our beloved Protestant Reformed Churches. You have heard before of our struggles and our aborted attempt of 1973, when at the last moment the way to the opening of our own school was unceremoniously closed. Many of you have undoubtedly brought before God’s throne of grace the needs of our small congregation with regard to truly Reformed covenantal day school instruction. Now we want to announce that our prayers have been answered and our labors abundantly rewarded according to the infinite depths of the love and grace of our covenant God.

But before we tell you about the school building as such, we want to make clear to all that our prayers, labor, and the evidence of our labors is solely the

fruit of God’s irresistible grace. What we did, we did solely because it was the only way of obedience for covenant parents who seek God’s blessing. Therefore, a few questions are presented and answered to make transparent to all what our deepest motivations were in this endeavor.

Why would 20 or 30 men band together to form a Christian School Society? Why would this Society labor year after year to the establishment of a Christian day school in which they might educate their *few* children? Why would this Society in a day of inflation, rising costs, and economic instability *unanimously* vote to buy school property and to build a school building with a total expenditure of nearly \$60,000, which figure represents only the beginning of a financially arduous journey? Why would these men in an age of spiritual apathy, indifference, and



compromise decide unanimously to "go it alone"? Why would this Society do this when the future is sure to present its tensions and hardships in the maintaining of this Christian School? Why? Our flesh confronted us with these questions and more.

There is principally only one answer to the questions above. No, the answer is not that we are ignorant, or that we are foolish fanatics. Certainly, in such a manner many will slander us. But they, of course, who so misrepresent our cause do not know of all the soul searching that went on within us, and they, of course, ignore the fact that we sought our way prayerfully, laboring as before God's face. But the answer to the above questions is to be found in the faith of God's people who constitute the members of our Hope Christian School Society and in the faith of our supporters. A living faith it is that has laid hold of the covenant promises of our God, who is our Father for Christ's Name's sake. It is the activity of a living faith that baffles the keen, analytical minds of unbelieving persons who when they have counted the costs of discipleship conclude that it isn't worth it. The answer, the only answer, to all the questions above is that the believer's faith is a living faith that thankfully appropriates the thrilling testimony of God's Word: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39) A covenant theology of the blessed friendship of Jehovah God in Christ Jesus our Lord and our calling to instruct His children entrusted to our care as God's friend-servants by the power of God's grace and according to His purpose of election; this truth in faith thankfully received is the only answer to all the questions of unbelieving and carnal souls. And it is this truth in Christ that will be the fountain head of our desire to press on in the future in faith.

Thankful to God are we as parents and supporters of our Society for our school. Thankful for the grace

and mercy of Him, Who hath called us and our children into the blessed fellowship of Jesus, His Son. Our salvation, our place in His Church, and all our activity of faith in the *re-establishment* of a Christian school of truly covenantal education for our covenant children are all the fruits of His sovereign irresistible grace. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

One must not overlook the fact that we speak of the *re-establishment* of our own school in Redlands, California. Our fathers here founded the first christian school in our Protestant Reformed circles. The first school was built in 1934; but we lost our school in 1953, when for conscience sake before God it was necessary to separate from the majority which opted for the Arminianism of the DeWolf group. Thus many of the fathers who in awareness of their covenantal calling established the first school were those who labor with us, their children, to build our new school.

What did we build? Our school building is a very beautiful masonry building of two classrooms, two bathrooms, and kitchen area, which doubles as storage area and as a possible third class room. An attractive rust colored tile roof extending six feet beyond the width of the 32' by 77' building provides a shield preventing the glare of the bright sun upon the classroom windows on the north side of the building. Our air conditioned building affords rather comfortable accommodations to our 36 children and our faculty.

Our school was built with all volunteer labor! Fifteen to eighteen of the society members and young people faithfully labored each Saturday from early in January till September enduring all things in patience as we labored in hope! It was a pleasure! And we trust that God used this cooperative effort as a means to further unite us as a body of believers who labor to aid and assist one another to fulfill our



mutual covenantal obligations. Nor must we forget to mention the labor of our good wives and mothers who whole-heartedly supported us in this endeavor. They prepared baked goods and coffee for their husbands and sons who eagerly looked forward to the 9:30 morning coffee break. It was our good wives, as beloved sisters in Christ, who sanded, painted, and scrubbed, making our new building as pleasant and presentable as it was designed to be. Not only did they work hard but they also had to cope with many inconveniences and with exhausted and disgruntled husbands from time to time.

We take this opportunity to thank all of our readers for their prayers and financial support, which was most graciously given us by you, our brothers and sisters who understand and cherish the rich blessings which God bestows upon truly Reformed Christian day school instruction. Please, remember us before God's throne of grace in the future as you have in the past, for our spiritual needs are many. We will undoubtedly experience many difficulties and

hardships in the future. But we labor in faith resting in the sovereign goodness of our covenant God, Who hath begun also this good work in us. We trust that the covenant keeping God will continue to provide for all our needs both material and spiritual in the future even as He hath provided abundantly in the past.

With an eye to the future we are confident that God will use this means of truly Reformed covenant instruction in our school to equip our covenant children to know how to walk in the midst of a wicked world as representatives of His covenant of friendship. We are confident of this blessing according to the testimony of Scripture that our Father in heaven is just and righteous to bless the feeble efforts of covenant parents who endeavor in the strength of God's grace to fulfill obediently their covenantal obligations, and privileges! All this God performs for Christ's name's sake in Whose blessed Name we have prayed and will pray as we look forward to the hope of glory.

ALL AROUND US

GKN Synod Spends Much Time With Kuitert

Rev. H. Veldman

The following is a quotation from the RES News Exchange Letter of Jan. 6, 1976, Vol. XIII, No. 1, page 1136:

(Grand Rapids) Kuitert's theology was a central topic in the synodical meetings of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (GKN) during the latter part of November of the past year. A synodical committee presented a rather lengthy analysis of the thought of Prof. Kuitert. The report concluded that Prof. Kuitert favored the suspension of all ties to the confessions as practiced in the Reformed churches, for he regards this as a dead-end, a way of defending the truth which is in conflict with the "in part" of man's knowledge of God. It also raised questions regarding Kuitert's emphasis on the human form of Scripture. The committee proposed that synod ask Prof. Kuitert to answer questions on five different points of his theology. The synod, however, shied away from this course in the fear that it resembled the beginning of a disciplinary process. It wished to continue the theological discussions without hanging the Damoclean sword over Dr. Kuitert's head. Strong

disappointment was also expressed at the committee's failure to conduct further discussions with Kuitert on the contents of its report. Finally, the matter of Kuitert was referred back to committee so that such discussion could take place.

A full day was devoted to the discussion of Prof. Kuitert's latest book *Zonder Geloof Vaart Niemand Wel* — None Fares Well Without Faith, H.V. (reviewed in RES NE 10/8/74). Reactions ranged from praise to strong critique. The purpose of the book, Kuitert explained, was to try to approach and explain the attractiveness of the Christian faith from the viewpoint of secular man. He wished to show that Christianity is a faith and not a superstition. To do this, he asserted, he could not very well argue from the basis of the authority of Scripture for this is to argue out of the world of faith. "My book" he claimed, "stands in the Reformed tradition." And he compared his effort to explain faith with that of Herman Bavinck.

Several letters objecting to Kuitert's role as a pre-advisor to Synod were dismissed by the synod since the grounds were inextricably associated with the

whole issue of Kuitert's theology. To exclude him would be to prejudice him. Moreover, at the beginning of synod, it was pointed out, Prof. Kuitert had indicated his agreement with the confessions.

In order to continue the theological debate on a non-disciplinary level, the GKN Synod also planned a conference for the beginning of 1976 in which the diverse viewpoints would be expounded by various spokesmen.

Envisioned is not so much a polemical skirmish as a positive exposition of their central concerns. Previously such debate occurred only at the instance of an official protest and then under the aura of a disciplinary investigation. The format of a conference hopes to avoid such an atmosphere. (RES NE 1/6/76).

In connection with the above quotation, we have the following comments. In the first place, we read that Prof. Kuitert had indicated at the beginning of synod that he was in agreement with the confessions. However, this report states that Prof. Kuitert favored the suspension of all ties to the confessions as practiced in the Reformed churches, for he regards this a dead-end, a way of defending the truth which is in conflict with the "in part" of man's knowledge of God. Besides, Prof. Kuitert is simply not in agreement with our reformed confessions. He is certainly not in agreement with what our confessions set forth in

regard to the creation and fall of man as set forth in Genesis 2 and 3. And how can a man with the beliefs of Prof. Kuitert serve as an advisor to a reformed synod? Finally, we must never allow a heretic to tell us what he believes. Prof. Kuitert assured the synod that he was in agreement with the reformed confessions. Of course! A heretic will never tell you that he is not a heretic. A synod will never be able to cope with him along these lines. How weak of a synod to refuse to begin disciplinary action!

Secondly, the GKN Synod also planned a conference for the beginning of 1976 in which the diverse viewpoints would be expounded by various spokesmen. To me, this is hopeless. Prof. Kuitert will also attend this conference? He will attend as one of several reformed spokesmen?

One more thing. Prof. Kuitert asserted that he could not very well argue from the basis of the authority of Scripture for this is to argue out of the world of faith. So, there you have it. My question is this: if Prof. Kuitert argue not out of the world of faith, upon what basis will he argue? There is no such thing as neutrality. The only alternative to faith is unbelief. The only alternative to the acceptance of the authority of Scripture is the denial of the authority of the written Word of God. There is no position between them.

Five Churches Finalize NAPARC

We pass on to our readers the following news item as it appeared in the same RES News Exchange Letter of Jan. 6, 1976, page 1138:

FIVE CHURCHES FINALIZE NAPARC

(Grand Rapids) Representatives from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPNA), met in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, to formally constitute the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).

The constitution and by-laws had earlier been approved by the Synod/Assembly of each of the churches. The council is an organization of Calvinistic/Reformed churches for the purpose of facilitating discussion and consultation on those issues and problems that divide them as well as on

those they face in common and promoting cooperation wherever possible.

Also present were representatives from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP) which had hoped to be one of the founding churches of NAPARC. But because members have to be approved separately by each of the Synods/Assemblies of the member churches, the ARP application cannot be finalized for at least two years.

A suggestion of the RPCES to strengthen the NAPARC statement on biblical infallibility was referred to a study committee. NAPARC took note of and encouraged the work of the National Presbyterian and Reformed Fellowship (see story on page 1135).

Chairman of the council is Rev. John P. Galbraith (OPC), secretary is Rev. J. Baron Payne (RPCES), and treasurer is Albert A. Bel (CRC). (RES NE 1/6/76)

Local Conferences Planned By NPRF

To the above we may add the following, appearing in the same RES News Exchange Letter, page 1135:

LOCAL CONFERENCES PLANNED BY NPRF

(Grand Rapids) Meeting in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, the Board of the National Presbyterian and Reformed Fellowship planned a series of conferences on the Reformed faith for the Bicentennial year. The conferences will be built around a nucleus of recognized authorities in various aspects of Reformed faith and life. A list of these speakers will be made available to local committees in order that two-day meetings may be arranged in different

localities on a wide range of topics. At present conferences have already been projected for Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Atlanta, and Miami.

The Board also elected a new president. Rev. Edward Heerema, a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church, replaces Rev. G. Aiken Taylor, the editor of *The Presbyterian Journal*. (RES NE 1/6/76)

It will be interesting to follow developments of this movement. Incidentally, as far as these conferences are concerned, may I suggest that our churches could supply speakers who can give some truly reformed speeches.

Lower and Higher Criticism

In the Reformed Journal, Harry R. Boer writes on the subject: The humanity of the Bible. In the issue of December, 1975, page 23, he writes:

There is a hiatus to be bridged between the original manuscripts of the Bible and the copied manuscripts which we at present have. The bridging of that gap is the task of lower or textual criticism. But there is an equally significant gap between the way the writers' contemporaries were expected to read these writings and the manner in which we, after more than nineteen centuries, can understand them. The bridging of this cultural, literary, historical, social, religious, and other kind of gap is the task of higher criticism.

So, the church has two tasks: lower and higher criticism. We concede the task of lower criticism. The church surely has the task of attempting to determine which text is more in harmony with the original, inspired manuscript. But higher criticism means that we sit in judgment upon the Word of God and then determine which parts of the Bible are to be accepted as authoritative for our doctrine and life and which parts are to be rejected. And this is surely not the task of the church of God.

Due to our decision to add a fourth teacher to our Staff, the SOUTH HOLLAND PROTESTANT REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL is accepting applications for the position. Anyone interested should write or phone Mr. Menno Poortenga, 18425 Oakwood Ave., Lansing, Illinois 60438. Phone: (312) 474-0675.

Is the Bible the Word of God? (1)

Rev. M. Kamps

The theme of this article expresses the earnest inquiry of many concerning the nature of Scripture. But the theme has a tremendous weakness, for it implies something about one's approach to Scripture. The theme would leave the impression that one is in doubt concerning who it might be that was the author of Scripture. But be assured that for us the matter is settled. We believe that the Bible is in its

entirety the Word of God. We hold that the Bible is the authoritative, infallibly inspired Word of God.

Thus we present a two-fold proposition or thesis: 1) If one takes the position that the Bible is either in its entirety or in part the word of men, he will inevitably discover that the Bible is for him an obscure, closed book; and the consequence will be

that the individual believer will not be able to interpret this obscure book and will be cast upon the mercies of the intellectuals of the ecclesiastical community, the priests of interpretation. 2) Only if we receive the Bible in faith as the Word of God can we hold to an authoritative, perspicuous Bible, which can be read and understood by the individual believer without the aid of the self-appointed priests of the academic world.

We want to show you that priestcraft is not dead. We want to show that priestcraft and an obscure Bible are inseparably joined together; a Bible authored by men is inevitably an obscure, unintelligible Bible, which the "layman" cannot understand. In fact he will not dare attempt to interpret it. Having been intimidated by the priests of priestcraft, he will forfeit his right to interpret the Scriptures.

Priestcraft is an intolerable evil. The expression "priestcraft" is meant to characterize the position that teaches that only some in the church, either by education or by special divine illumination, are able properly to interpret the Scriptures. No one else! The ordinary layman is led to believe that he is not able to interpret the Bible. Thus the "man in the pew" is wholly dependent upon the mercies and caprices of the "priests" on the pulpit and the "priests" in the seminary. Priestcraft!

We must fight this horrible evil with all our spiritual strength. We must not yield to it even though it appeals to the flesh in the sense that by it we might be able to make ourselves believe that the responsibility to interpret the Scriptures is not ours. Priestcraft affords a "cop out," but we must not accept this "cop out" nor the evil which offers it to us. The only way to maintain that the Bible can be read, interpreted and understood by the ordinary believer is to preach, teach and confess that the Bible is the infallible, inspired record of the revelation of God. Unless this is of faith, we will lose the perspicuous, intelligible Scriptures and with it the gospel of Christ for us and our children! Unless the words of the Bible are God's Words, then you and I can never again read, study, interpret, and believe God's Word! Unless the very words of Scripture are God's Words, we do not possess His Word! Then we only possess man's fallible, obscure word. If the Bible is man's word, then of necessity it must be an obscure, unintelligible word and of no benefit to us. For man of himself cannot speak of spiritual, heavenly realities. God alone can speak of Himself, His Son, His Work, His love.

The question, "Is the Bible the Word of God or the word of men?" is a hotly debated subject in the church today. Most striking are the developments of the past years in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. This Lutheran church is one of the largest

Protestant denominations in this country, numbering 2.8 million members. Dr. Jacob A. O. Preus, president of Synod, led a conservative majority in this Lutheran church in the fight for an infallibly inspired Bible. Dr. John Tietjen, president of Concordia seminary (L.C.M.S.), and a liberal minority have been cast out for having depicted the Bible as a manmade, fallible book. The decisive vote in this confrontation was taken this past July, 1975 at Anaheim, California.

Nearer to home, there has been a great deal of debate in the Christian Reformed Church about the question of the infallibility, authority, and nature of Scripture. As evidence of this debate we call your attention to the fact that already in 1961 there was a report and decision on the "Infallibility of Scripture"; in 1971 a report on the "Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority"; and again in 1972 we had Report 44 on the same subject. There were close to fifteen years of constant debate, wrangling, compromise, scholarly reports and decisions. What is the consequence of these debates and synodical edicts? Essentially nothing! The debate goes on within our mother church with more and more evidence each day of a polarization on this matter among her leaders. Our mother is deeply troubled about this most fundamental issue. She, with many others, is gradually succumbing to the tenacious attacks of rationalism. The Church of Christ in her midst needs our prayers. We do not now want to criticize these decisions, but we simply mention them as evidence that the debate about Scripture is a real thing near at home.

What is the real issue today in this debate about the nature of the Bible? Is the Bible a book by man *about God*? Or an infallibly inspired book by God about Himself as revealed in Jesus Christ *to men*? How are we to know? The real issue confronting the Church today is, "Will the Bible be allowed to tell us what kind of book it is or not?" That is the issue. Listen to the late Dr. Edward J. Young, who was since 1936 till his recent death professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary:

When we have once grasped the idea that we must derive our doctrine of inspiration from the Bible we may begin to understand what the real issue before the Church is. The real issue is not whether we are to substitute one doctrine of inspiration for another. That is at the most a somewhat secondary question. The real issue before the Church today, and for that matter before every individual Christian, is whether the Bible is any longer to be regarded and accepted as a trustworthy teacher of doctrine. In other words, when the Bible testifies as to its own nature, are we to pay heed to what it has to say? When the Bible tells us clearly what kind of a Book it is, are we to reject its testimony as unworthy of belief? That is the real issue which faces us today.¹

Secondly, the church ought to consider the consequences of this issue by asking itself the question, "What is there to be lost by denying the inerrancy of Scripture?" We do not want to worship a book and become guilty of a so-called "Bibliolatry," an aspersion which the liberal theologians cast upon those who maintain that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. But we do want to keep the gospel of Christ for us and our children. If we deny that the Bible, in its entirety, is the infallible Word of God, we lose Christ. For without the infallible Word there is no Christ!

The issue debated by the Church today is a matter, ultimately, of obedience or disobedience, life or death, heaven or hell.

* * * * *

In considering our subject, let us do so in the light of history. Let us journey back to the years prior to 1517 and the early life of Martin Luther. Luther's early opinions of Scripture had been taught him by the church of Rome. Luther, especially in his youth was a "child of his times." He was trained by the Roman Catholic church to believe certain things about the Bible and about himself. Rome taught, among other things about Scripture, that the Bible was an obscure book of dark sayings. Thus Rome taught that the laity could not read and understand these obscure Scriptures. Rome feared that, if the laity were told that they were able to interpret Scripture and that if they were placed in the responsible position to do so, then all kinds of heresies and endless wrangling would be fostered. Rome taught, secondly, however, that there was no real need for the laity to read and interpret Scripture. For God in Christ's vicar, the Pope, had provided the infallible interpreter of Scripture. The Church, i.e., the Pope and the clergy inclusive of the bishops, cardinals, and priests, had by virtue of the sacrament of ordination and apostolic succession the right, the ability, and the sole responsibility to interpret Scripture. They alone! This position has been dubbed "priestcraft." Consequently, what the Church (that is the Pope, cardinals, bishops, priests) taught was divine truth. The individual believer, the layman, was not able, need not and did not have the right to interpret the obscure Bible. The laity (technically the laity were the non-clergy and thus non-Church) was simply obligated to submit and accept uncritically the teaching of the Romish Church. No one was allowed, upon the penalty of death, to declare that what the church taught was indeed contrary to the Word of God. John Huss tried to do that, and for his courageous attempt was burned at the stake in 1415. Martin Luther himself had to be "imprisoned" by friends for his own safe keeping.

Rome for centuries taught that the Bible was the

obscure, unintelligible Word. Rome flatly denied the perspicuity of Scripture, i.e., that it is the clear, transparent Word of God, which can be understood by the simplest child of God. By implication Rome was denying that the Scriptures were the infallible record of the revelation of God. For revelation is that which reveals what was at one time hidden; it *shows* and makes visible to those who have eyes to see. The Bible as the Book of God's revelation and the truth of perspicuity are inseparably joined. Though Rome's position was not crystallized in the 15th century, it implicitly taught that the murky character of the Bible was, in part at least, due to the fact that it was the word of man. This is the only conclusion, for revelation is by definition clear and easily understood, as it makes visible that which God wills to make known to man.

Luther in 1509-11 began unconsciously a struggle for freedom from priestcraft. Luther had been fettered spiritually by the mighty chains of priestcraft. He had been denied spiritual freedom and peace before the face of the holy God by the church's teaching (priestcraft) of righteousness by works. Luther was chained by the decisions of councils and popes to their exegesis of the obscure Scriptures. Tradition established by the priests of priestcraft enslaved Luther and his contemporaries. Thus Luther, as a spiritually sensitive young man, felt fettered, encumbered, and threatened by priestcraft i.e., the teachings of those who claimed to have the sole right, ability and responsibility to interpret the Bible.

Luther gradually escaped from the fetters and spiritual prison of priestcraft. It was a gradual process under the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit. As Luther read and studied Scripture as a professor at Wittenberg university (beginning in 1511), the chains of priestcraft, which chained him to the theology of the middle ages, began to break under the heavy hammer blows of the Word of God. By the time of his debate with Dr. John Eck at Leipzig (July, 1519), Luther had broken principally with the authority of Rome and its priestcraft. Note how Luther unequivocally and fearlessly addresses Dr. Eck on this point:

Let it be understood that when I say the authority of the Rome pontiff rests on a human decree I am not counseling disobedience. But we cannot admit that all the sheep of Christ were committed to Peter. What, then, was given to Paul? When Christ said to Peter, "Feed my sheep," he did not mean, did he, that no one else can feed them without Peter's permission? Nor can I agree that the Roman pontiffs cannot err or that they alone can interpret Scripture. The papal decretal by a new grammar turns the words of Christ, "Thou art Peter," into "Thou art the primate." By the decretals the gospel is extinguished. I can hardly restrain myself against the most impious

and perverse blasphemy of this decretal.²

This break with Rome and priestcraft grew month by month and year by year till Luther had matured in his faith as the Reformer of the church of Christ. The Reformation took place first in Luther's heart and then inevitably in the Church.

Luther was delivered from the chains of priestcraft. Luther began to understand more and more clearly that the Bible was God's Word, God's clear speech which the simplest child of God can understand. Allow me to quote Luther about his view of the Bible; "When you read the words of Holy Scripture you must understand that God is speaking . . ."³ Concerning the important truth of perspicuity of Scripture, which truth is vital in the fight to escape priestcraft, Luther had this to say when he rebuked the humanist Erasmus for inclining to:

... that impudent and blasphemous saying, "the Scriptures are obscure." They . . . who deny the all-clearness and all-plainness of the Scriptures leave us nothing else but darkness . . . Moreover I declare against you concerning the whole of Scripture that I will have no one part of it obscure, . . . and to support me stands that which I have brought forth out of Peter, that the Word of God is to us a "lamp shining in a dark place." (II Peter 1:19) But if any part of this lamp does not shine, it is rather a part of the dark place than the lamp itself.⁴

In answer to our question, "Is the Bible the Word of God or the word of men?" Luther taught: "As the Holy Spirit is the divine author of Scripture, so also He is the divine interpreter. The Bible is the Holy Spirit's book."⁵ Strong, unambiguous language Luther chose to express his faith. How weak and insecure by comparison sounds the voice and language of many preachers today when they speak on this subject. Luther accepted the whole of Scripture. Every part and word of the Bible is God's Word of revelation. To accept one part of Scripture as God's

Word and not another part of Scripture was, for Luther, the same as pulling God apart . . . limb by limb. To mutilate the Word was to mutilate God! Note what Skevington Wood tells us about Luther's teaching:

When Luther thus spoke of Scripture as the medium of revelation, he included its totality. He allowed no licence to select or reject. To dispute any one item is to impugn the whole. "My friend," Luther said, "God's Word is God's Word — this point does not require much haggling! When one blasphemously gives the lie to God in a single Word, or says it is of minor importance if God is blasphemed, or called a liar, one blasphemes the entire God and makes light of blasphemy. There is only one God who does not permit Himself to be divided, praised at one place and chided at another, glorified in one word and scorned in another . . . Why is it any wonder, then, if fickle fanatics juggle and play and clown with the word . . . Just as if God must yield to men, and let the authority of the Word depend on whether men are at one or at odds over it."⁶

God had delivered Luther from the deadly hold of priestcraft fastened upon him by the church of Rome. God has delivered his people from priestcraft through Luther. Protestants have long enjoyed the truth that the Bible is the perspicuous Word of God in its entirety and that it is the right and privilege of every believer to read and interpret Scripture under the leading of the Holy Spirit — a precious truth and one too dear to relinquish.

¹ Young, Edward J. *Thy Word Is Truth*, P. 28, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan (1957)

² Bainton, Roland *Here I Stand*, p. 108, Abington Press, Nashville

³ Wood, A. Skevington *Captive To The Word*, p. 140, Wm. B. Eerdmans, (1969)

⁴ Ibid, p. 135

⁵ Ibid, p. 137

⁶ Ibid, p. 136

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Young People's Society of the Hull (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to its President, Rev. J. Kortering, and his family in the passing of his sister, ERMA KORTERING. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Ps. 16: 15).

Gerben L. De Jong, Vice-Pres.

Rachel Jansma, Sec'y.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 11, 1976, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN FABER will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are grateful to God for their covenant instruction throughout the past years. It is our prayer that He may continue to bless and strengthen them in the days that lie ahead.

Their children,
Mr. and Mrs. John W. Faber
Mr. and Mrs. William Faber
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Faber
and seven grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Michigan

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, expresses its sincere sympathy to its Clerk and fellow officebearer, Elder Ervin Kortering, in the bereavement of his sister, ERMA KORTERING.

May our Covenant God give grace and comfort in the assurance that all things work together for good to those that love God. (Romans 8:28).

The Consistory of the
First Protestant Reformed Church
Holland, Michigan.
Pres. — Rev. John A. Heys
Vice Pres. — H. Vander Kolk

LECTURE

Reserve April 1 for another lecture in Kalamazoo! Rev. David Engelsma will speak on the topic "A REFORMED LOOK AT PENTECOSTALISM." Plan now to attend!

News From Our Churches

From week to week a steady stream of church bulletins arrive on Linwood Street. This continuing supply of news is appreciated. News editors who invent their copy in the absence of news to report find themselves in a not too enviable position. Occasionally something just a little bit different arrives in the mail. This week such an item arrived — a church directory. You say, what could be interesting about a church directory? The 1976 directory of our Randolph, Wisconsin, congregation is unlike any directory I have ever seen. In addition to the list of church members with names, addresses, and phone numbers, this directory contains a two page history of the congregation, a picture of their new church building, congregational statistics, times and days of public worship, catechism and societies, church committees and officers, information about the Reformed Witness Hour, birthdays and anniversaries of all church members arranged by month and day, the 1975 church financial report, special collection schedule for 1976, church building use rules, a memorial listing and even a page for 'new listings, additional information, et cetera.' With so much information already in the directory it would be difficult to find much additional 'et cetera' to include!

The council of our South Holland congregation recently announced that the church building debt had been retired — for which they are thankful. The new project in South Holland is the purchase of a new church organ. A special collection for the new organ was taken on December 14. The goal of this collection was \$5,000 or \$50 per family.

Our Southeast congregation celebrated a rather special anniversary with their pastor on February 8. The following notice appeared in the Southeast bulletin: "The Council, along with the congregation takes this opportunity to extend our sincerest congratulations to Rev. Schipper on this his 70th birthday. May God bless him in the remainder of his life upon the earth, even as He has done in the past, giving him the peace and joy of Psalm 16:11 'Thou wilt shew me the

path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' " I believe that Rev. Schipper is the senior minister serving the Protestant Reformed churches — in age that is. Rev. C. Hanko is the senior minister in terms of years of service in the ministry.

The consistory of Pella has asked various ministers to supply their pulpit while their pastor, Rev. G. Lubbers, is in Jamaica for nine weeks. Rev. C. Hanko was requested to fill the Pella pulpit on February 1 and 8. In addition to preaching in Pella, Rev. Hanko plans to show slides of the New Zealand-Australian trip he took with Prof. Hoeksema last summer, in Pella and also in the Hull, Iowa, area if the weather permits travel to northwest Iowa.

During the last two Sundays of 1975, Rev. Dale Kuiper, Hudsonville's missionary pastor, occupied Rev. Hanko's regular place on the pulpit three times. Upon his return to his home in Skowhegan, Maine, Rev. Kuiper reported that he enjoyed his stay in Hudsonville and also the opportunity to break the bread of life.

Hudsonville, as you may recall, has plans to build a new church building. In fact they have sold their church building and are meeting at Hudsonville Public High School. The land which the congregation had purchased for their new church home was subsequently included as part of a new industrial park. Not wishing to have their new church hidden behind a warehouse, the congregation decided to sell their land and purchase another plot in what they hope will be a more desirable location.

A Quiet Thought from the Southeast bulletin:

"Most of us are a bit fearful of what men may say of our actions, but doesn't the thought trouble us more when we think of how God judges our actions? After all, man's judgment is of a passing nature, but God's judgment is perfect and final."

K.G.V.