

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

You know, as I do, that elders and deacons are not very highly esteemed in the church. . . . We stare ourselves blind at their faults, and ignore the fact that Christ deemed them worthy to serve in His office.

“See “Christian Liberty —
Its Place in Our Churches — page 203

CONTENTS:

Meditation —	
The Shield of Faith	194
Editorials —	
Dancing — Full Circle (4)	196
What About Ourselves?	198
The Voice of Our Fathers —	
One, Holy, Catholic Church (2)	199
Triumph Through Trials —	
All Things Work For Good	202
Guest Articles —	
Christian Liberty —	
Its Place in Our Churches (2)	203
Corporate Responsibility in the Church	205
My Sheep Hear My Voice —	
Letter to Timothy	207
In His Fear —	
Blindly Confident	209
All Around Us —	
X-Rating Rock Radio	211
One out of Ten	211
The Church — A Political Machine	212
Dr. Tietjen Ousted	212
Book Review	213 & 215
News From Our Churches	216
Letter From the Seminary	214

THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION

The Shield of Faith

Rev. H. Veldman

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

Above all, taking the shield of faith. That the apostle would lay special stress upon this shield of faith is evident from the fact that he introduces this text with an expression which does not appear in connection with the previous three parts of the Christian's armour: the girdle, the breastplate, and the spiked sandals or shoes.

A common interpretation of the expression, "above all," would explain it merely as meaning: "in addition to." The apostle, therefore, would not lay

special emphasis upon this shield of faith, but he would simply mention now another part of the Christian's armour in addition to what has already been mentioned.

However, we choose the translation: "above all." The shield of faith must certainly have a priority rating — without it the breastplate of righteousness and the spiked shoes of the gospel of peace would surely be impossible. Our righteousness before God in Christ and our enjoyment of peace with God and

therefore with all things are ours only through faith. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. By faith we are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Of course, this shield of faith does not emphasize what we are able to do, but it, too, constitutes a part of the armour of God by which we are able to stand. Faith is that activity of the child of God, as the fruit of God's elective and irresistible grace, whereby he trusts and relies solely upon the God of his salvation as revealed in Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Lord.

* * * * *

We must take the shield of faith. Two kinds of shields were used by the ancient soldier or warrior. The one shield was a small hand shield, circular in shape, used by a soldier when he was lightly armed. The other shield was a large, oblong type of shield, measuring about four feet by two and a half feet and rounded to the shape of the body. The large shield is meant in this text. It protected the soldier from his shoulders to his knees. Joined together, these large shields formed a wall, behind which a body of troops could be protected from the rain of the enemies' missiles, the fiery darts of this word of God. We also understand that the apostle in this scripture speaks of faith as such a shield.

Some would understand this faith objectively, as referring to the Holy Scriptures, the object or content of our faith, what we believe. Now it is true that we often speak of our faith in this objective sense of the word, as when we speak, for example, of the Twelve Articles of Faith. This, however, cannot be the meaning in this text. Then there would be no difference between this shield and the girdle of truth, and we must surely distinguish between these various parts of this Christian armour.

This shield of faith surely refers to our conscious believing. We must take this shield of faith, and this certainly implies that faith here must be understood as our conscious act. As such it is one of the parts of a Christian's armour with which we must fight. Now Scripture surely emphasizes the conscious salvation of the Christian. Indeed, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved," may well be called the keynote of the gospel.

What, then, is faith? We can and must distinguish between the faculty or power or potential of faith on the one hand, and the activity of faith on the other hand. This is naturally true. A child learns to walk and talk only because he was created with these potential powers of walking and speaking. This is also spiritually true. Faith is indeed a gift of God, sovereignly bestowed only upon the elect. That we believe, consciously, is only because of the faculty of faith which we received at our regeneration. What, I ask again, is faith? Faith is that activity of the child of

God whereby he cleaves unto the Lord Jesus Christ, or, whereby he cleaves unto the living God as the God of his salvation revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is always the activity of faith, also essentially. Faith is a living bond, always cleaves unto and lives out of God as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord. This also and surely applies to the Christian soldier in this text. It is always a cleaving unto Christ, a trusting and relying and confiding in the God of our salvation. Faith never doubts or wavers. United with Christ Jesus, we seek Christ, live out of Christ, depend in all things upon Christ, trust in Him and rely upon Him. And whereas this Christ has been revealed to us in the Scriptures, therefore this activity of faith always takes hold of those Scriptures, and the child of God places all his reliance upon the Word of God. And the reason why this faith is called a shield is because by it we are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. This is what a shield does. This is what faith does. And therefore it is called a shield, which protects the Christian warrior completely.

* * * * *

The fiery darts of the wicked.

Literally we read: "wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the darts of the wicked, the fiery ones." So, the apostle lays all emphasis upon the fact that these darts or arrows are fiery, burning darts or arrows.

These darts were "fire-tipped" darts, around which combustible materials were bound or wrapped, which were then set on fire and projected against the enemy. During the old days of colonial America and the frontier days the American Indian resorted to these same tactics. These darts, now, would be rendered harmless by this shield. These military shields, made of wood and covered with thick leather, would ward off these fiery arrows of the enemy. These arrows, their fire extinguished, would fall harmlessly at the foot of the warrior protected by this shield.

The text speaks literally of the evil or wicked one. Indeed, the devil is meant here. He is the supreme field commander of all the forces of sin and darkness. Of course, he operates also through men and through our old nature. It is indeed the wicked men who actually hurl these darts at us. But their murderous intention is under the direction and control of the Evil One. He is the evil one because he is determined to corrupt and destroy us, to destroy the Cause of God and of His Christ, and he is also a brilliant and extremely capable commander-in-chief; we must never take him lightly; he is well qualified to carry on this murderous attack.

What are these fiery darts of the evil one? Now it must surely be granted that they presuppose the burning passions and inflamed ambitions which are

set on fire within us. How well aware of them we are! We know these passions, inflamed ambitions, also sexual passion and lust and desire, pride, discontent, and vanity. And what a fire can rage within us because of these passions! The devil, being the superb commander that he is, will surely avail himself of these evil lusts and passions.

What are these fiery darts? O, he will hurl at you the fiery dart of ridicule and scorn with respect to your position in the midst of the world and in the midst of this conflict. He will remind you of the strength and overpowering might of his own force, at the same time reminding you of your hopeless smallness and insignificance. Besides, he will also accuse you. He will direct your attention to the sin that is within you, to which you are so prone, even day after day. And what shall we answer him? Shall we try to defend and justify ourselves? God forbid! Fact is, we are more wicked than even he knows! He will also hurl at us the fiery dart of ridicule and scorn as far as our righteousness and peace with God are concerned. We have the boldness to put on the breastplate of righteousness and shoe our feet with the preparedness of the gospel of peace? We have the boldness to say that we are righteous in Christ before God, that we have peace with God and therefore with all things? We have boldness to believe that all things work together for our good? How ridiculous and absurd these claims appear to be! These darts are fiery; they are dangerous, very destructive and explosive. They would surely destroy you and separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Indeed, how important is this shield! How important that these fiery darts be extinguished! How important to know that all these darts are powerless, unable to effect what they desire, never able to pierce our armour, never able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

* * * * *

EDITORIALS

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Dancing-Full Circle!

(4)

In our criticism both of the actions (of the past and of the present) of the Christian Reformed Church with respect to worldly amusements – especially the most recent one, concerning dancing – and of *The Outlook's* editorial which futilely bemoans those actions, we do not wish to end on a negative note. There is something positive to be said on this subject,

Wherein, I ask you, lies the power of this shield of faith? Why is it that by it we are able, not in our own strength, but that by it we are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one?

Why? To this there is but one answer: because of Christ Jesus. Faith is the bond that unites us with Christ Jesus; by faith we cling to Him; by faith we look away from ourselves, and our sole strength and confidence are in the God of our salvation, in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

This explains why this shield can extinguish every dart hurled by the wicked forces of darkness. Christ suffered and died for us. He paid for all our sins and trespasses. He merited for us everlasting life and glory. Christ is risen from the dead and exalted at the right hand of God! He is risen! Hence, He died not in vain; He really paid for all our sins and trespasses; we *are* righteous in Christ before God; we do have peace with God because in Christ God made peace. He is exalted in the heavens above. He does control all the forces of hell and of darkness; He directs also their every movement and attack; He causes all things to work together for our good. O, it is true that we do not see this. Is it true that all things appear to be against us. Yet, we believe this; we know this to be true, and therefore we can bear and endure every attack and onslaught of the foe, because we are more than conquerors through Christ Who loves us.

We are more than conquerors! And this shall certainly be revealed. Indeed, it shall not merely be revealed that we are conquerors as such, and finally. But it shall be revealed that we are more than conquerors; all the folly and stupidity of sin and also of these fiery darts will be fully revealed and exposed in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We may believe this, and we must believe this.

Let us, therefore, take up this shield of faith, and believe even until the end.

also something positive which *needs* saying and which needed saying already in 1928 and ever since.

Already in 1928 *The Standard Bearer* sounded this positive note at the conclusion of the article from which I have already quoted large portions. It is interesting to note, by the way, that already in 1928,

though the old accusation of negativism was frequently sounded in those days, *The Standard Bearer* was not critical in a merely negative sense, but offered positive advice and guidance for the benefit of all Reformed believers. In this particular instance Rev. Hoeksema concluded his article about the amusement-problem in the form of advice to the Christian Reformed Synod which would be considering the Report on Worldly Amusements. Some have thought this advice was tongue-in-cheek, but this was not really true. The writer was quite aware, of course, that advice offering by *The Standard Bearer* would have no legal standing at the Christian Reformed Synod and that it would not even be considered. Nevertheless, he was in dead earnest as far as the *contents* of that advice was concerned; and he used this particular literary device in order to focus the attention sharply and concisely on the issues. If only the Christian Reformed Synod had paid attention in those days, who knows what might have been the course of events with respect to that problem of worldly amusements? Here is what Rev. Hoeksema wrote at that time (I translate):

The Standard Bearer also advises the Synod, then (the presupposition in this advice is that our first advice was already heeded and that the insidious doctrine of the Three Points was retracted) to declare:

A. In regard to the report of the Committee:

1. That it greatly appreciates the considerable labor accomplished by its committee, although it greatly regrets the fact that so much reasoning was necessary to make plain that to amuse one's self with the world in theater and movie, in games and dance, is sin; seeing that among serious-minded children of God this is a matter of complete certainty without any reasoning-process.

2. That although the points of advice at the end of the report are better than the report itself might lead one to expect, it nevertheless cannot accept the report as a whole, but very decisively must reject it:

a. Because it cannot go along with the basic view of the Committee, which is rooted in the unscriptural and unreformed doctrine of common grace. It definitely condemns the following:

(1) God in His grace still gives amusements to the ungodly on the way to hell.

(2) And the ungodly can also enjoy himself in those amusements in a non-sinful manner.

(3) The child of God can therefore also play with and amuse himself with the children of evil in this world.

b. Because the Synod cannot go along with the Committee when it does not resolutely condemn the

theater and the movie and the dance as such. Sin may not be played. That which is holy may not be played. And leaping for joy in the Lord is something altogether different than artistic dancing.

B. With regard to the matter itself:

1. That it is the calling of the Christian to live antithetically in the midst of the world, to glorify God over against a world which lies in the Evil One. This world is no playground, but a battlefield.

a. The Christian must not go out of the world.

b. But in the world he must live from the principle of regeneration.

2. That therefore it is spiritually impossible for him to amuse himself and to play with the children of darkness, against whose sin he must testify, for this presupposes a certain basis of friendship. The friendship of the world is itself enmity against God. A child of God has no need of theater, movie, and dance. He vomits of such things.

3. It admonishes all leaders, preachers, professors, teachers:

a. To be in this respect themselves an example of the flock and not to seek the things which are below, but the things which are above.

b. To instruct Christians, to the best of their ability, night and day (for the matter is very serious), in this spiritual, antithetical principle, especially also as it is applicable to so-called "amusements."

c. To beseech the Lord earnestly, with confession of our own guilt and unfaithfulness and laxity (for the leaders frequently give the people a bad example in the seeking of the things below) that He will be merciful to His church, open the eyes of His people, and banish from His church the influence of the ungodly.

4. It admonishes the consistories:

a. Diligently to instruct and to admonish the sheep of the flock, in order that many may come to conversion and be delivered from the power of world-conformity which shall presently corrupt the church.

b. To note those as being spiritually dead and alienated from the life of Christ who, after repeatedly being instructed and admonished, nevertheless continue to show that they have their delight in the things of the world, and to banish them from the midst of the church, in order that they give no offence.

5. It declares:

a. That there is indeed a place in the life of the child of God for true relaxation, spiritually and physically, although that place is very small and limited.

b. But that it is fully assured that if only we act in harmony with the above principles and the church again strives to live purely in a spiritual-antithetical manner, the place and the nature of these recreations can safely be left to everyone's conscience. The so-called "amusements-problem" will cease to be a problem.

Thus Rev. Hoeksema concluded his editorial fifty years ago.

That was sound advice.

It was sound advice, in the first place, because it was firmly rooted in the Reformed and Scriptural principle of the antithesis. There is no conflict in this advice between the principle advocated and the practical measures advised. That, after all, was the trouble with the 1928 Report on Amusements adopted by the CRC. And, as we have stated before, principles work through. The practical measures advised, weak as they were, could not possibly be maintained and enforced from the outset — simply because they had no foundation in principle. They never "took" in the churches. At first they were somewhat feared, but clandestinely ignored and violated. Gradually these violations became more common and open. After a while they were very boldly and brazenly flouted, and the 1928 decisions were mocked and sneered at. Still later there came a movement to repeal them. And most recently — mind you, in the name of the very principle of common grace set forth already in the 1928 Report — the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church has placed its imprimatur, its stamp of approval, upon the very amusements it once condemned and warned against. It is not my purpose now so much to emphasize the wrong and the evil of the principle of common grace. What I wish to emphasize strongly is that *principles work through*. Principle and practice are inseparable. Correct practices which are not firmly rooted in sound principles can never survive. Ministers may negativistically harp about practical evils from the pulpit, they may even rant and rave against them; elders may do the same in family visitation or on disciplinary calls; all will be ultimately of no avail — unless there is sound, positive, Scriptural, Reformed principle at the basis.

And I mean principle in which the church and the people of God are thoroughly and carefully instructed!

It was sound advice, in the second place, because it avoided the pitfall of *legalism*. It avoided the temptation to attempt to solve any problems by synodical decree. After all, such synodical decrees never solve anything. A synod adjourns, and it is gone. Its decrees end up in the dead file of the Acts or in the archives of classes and consistories. But it placed the responsibility squarely where it belonged: in the congregations, in the pulpit, in the catechism class, in the hands of the elders. But notice, too, that there is no mention of any troika of mortal sins, nor any attempt to lay down line upon line and precept upon precept. Not at all! Let the principle of the spiritual antithesis be taught, let the church learn to live from that principle vigorously and positively. Then the place and the nature of recreations and amusements can safely be left to the sanctified, Word-guided, conscience of the children of God. They will simply be spiritually nauseated by the corrupt amusements and entertainments of the world. You see, that is the principle of Christian liberty!

I said that this was sound advice fifty years ago.

I add: it is sound advice today!

To those who are genuinely concerned about these things in the Christian Reformed Church, I say: this is still the only sound course to follow with regard to the amusements problem. For the church as a whole, I fear it is too late. Even the very language of the antithesis has become foreign for the most part. Nevertheless, there is no other way to face and to solve the problem than that outlined above.

And to our own Protestant Reformed Churches and people, I want to stress this with all possible emphasis. Let the spiritual antithesis be preached. Let it be drummed into our covenant seed day and night, in home and church and school. This is our only salvation with regard to worldly amusements and with regard to the entire amusements question. Then, as was stated at the conclusion of the quotation above, the problem will cease to be a problem!

What About Ourselves?

This question was suggested to me in connection with my editorials about the dancing-issue in the Christian Reformed Church. Perhaps this same question arose in the minds of some of our readers. Perhaps when it arose, it even had the implication: you don't have to hang up the dirty wash of the

Christian Reformed Church, for you have enough dirty laundry of your own which needs attention.

Now I deny, of course, that I intended to display anyone's dirty washing. In that I have absolutely no interest, either editorially or otherwise. My interest is

in the truth and its maintenance, and in God's children walking according to truth.

But I am quite willing to face the question: what about ourselves?

Then, in the first place, I wish to state that one would have to be blind and deaf not to recognize the fact that among our people and our churches there is, in a sense, an "amusements problem." There is a problem in the sense that there is indulgence in illicit amusements among our people. Perhaps this is even more widespread than some know or would care to admit. Those who are not aware of it should wake up and — I was going to say "smell the coffee." I probably should say "smell the smoke — of hell-fire." And I am not being flippant.

This is not a new problem, only perhaps more aggravated in our day.

But the problem has been with us many years. Being a "preacher's kid" sometimes was a restraint on the confidences shared with you by fellow young people. But it was not enough of a restraint to prevent me from knowing that movie attendance was too common already when I was a teenager.

Further, I am almost nineteen years removed from the pastorate; but this does not mean I have forgotten those occasions in the consistory room when young

people who came to profess their faith shamefacedly had to admit indulgence in worldly entertainments. And the occasions were too frequent!

Neither is the seminary so much of an "ivory tower" as to remove me from some of the stark realities of life today. I know of them, and I hear of them. In a future editorial I hope to write of them.

In the second place, I wish to point out this important difference: our Protestant Reformed Churches do not officially condone and even promote this indulgence in carnal entertainments. In fact — and I trust that our consistories actually practice this — we officially condemn it and oppose it and guard against the inroads of these practices in our churches. Still more, we do so on the basis of sound principle, the principle of the absolute antithesis.

But, in the third place, I wish to emphasize that the question is nevertheless a legitimate one, even a salutary one: what about ourselves? It is a question of self-examination for us as churches and self-examination for us as families and individuals.

Such self-examination, properly conducted, can only have a good effect.

We intend to help in this examination in the future in these columns.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

One, Holy, Catholic Church (2)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

"We believe and profess, one catholic or universal Church, which is an holy congregation, of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by his blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost. This Church hath been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof; which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal King, which without subjects, cannot be. And this holy Church is preserved or supported by God, against the rage of the whole world; though she sometimes (for a while) appears very small, and in the eyes of men, to be reduced to nothing: as during the perilous reign of Ahab, the Lord reserved unto him seven thousand men, who had not bowed their knees to Baal. Furthermore, this holy Church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed over the whole world; and yet is joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and the same spirit."

The Belgic Confession, Article XXVII

In the previous issue we emphasized that the *Confession* speaks of the Church not as it appears in the world, but as it is an article of the faith of the believer. We *believe* that the Church is and that the

Church is one, holy, and catholic. The content of that faith is found only in the Holy Scriptures. In His Word God tells us what the Church is and what its calling is. We also emphasized in that same connec-

tion that the Church is emphatically God's Church. It is not an association of men who agree to unite and form a church. It is not merely a social institution, but it is God's Church. The Church is conceived by God, given life and existence by Him, and preserved and saved and glorified by God.

God's Church according to Scripture has certain attributes or characteristics which are mentioned in the *Confession*. The Church is *one*. There are not many churches, many faiths, many doctrines, but only one Church united in one truth and doctrine. Again, when one observes the Church as it appears in the world he cannot see that. What one sees of the church in the world is division and all kinds of differences of doctrine and belief and practice. Although the Church appears in the world as separated by space, time, and barriers of nationality and language, and as divided by differences of creed and confession, yet the Church is actually one in Christ. We confess: "... She is joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and same Spirit." The deepest principle of this unity or oneness of the Church is found in Jesus Christ its head. The Church is chosen *in Christ* (Ephesians 1:3 ff.) and made alive *with Christ* (Ephesians 2:5) and is thus *one* in Christ. For this reason Scripture often speaks of the Church as the Body of which Christ is the Head. (Cf. Romans 12; I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 1:22, 23) Christ is, therefore, the principle of the life of the Church and He is the mind and the will of the Church. Never may the Church be conceived of apart from Jesus Christ. Thus believers are exhorted to walk worthy of their calling, endeavoring to keep the unity (oneness) of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The ground of this exhortation is the fact that they are "called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:1-6)

"Furthermore, this holy Church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed over the whole world..." It is in these terms that the *Confession* affirms the *catholicity* of the Church. The Church is universal. The Roman Catholic Church claims to be alone the catholic church in the true sense of the word. But this is not the case. The Body of Christ, united in true faith and in the truth of the Scriptures, is alone truly catholic. Although for a time the Church was limited almost exclusively to the nation of the Jews, on Pentecost (Acts 2) it burst through these national boundaries and became catholic (universal) in the true sense of the word.

The purpose of this catholicity is twofold. On the one hand it is the means of accomplishing the pluriformity of the Church. And on the other hand, it

is the means of saving the human race. By this we do not mean that all men are saved, but the Church is the true human race. The Church, therefore, is gathered and saved out of every nation, tribe, and tongue. The catholicity of the Church is accomplished by means of the preaching of the Word. This is precisely why Christ commissioned the Apostles to go into all the world baptizing and preaching the gospel in order to make disciples of all nations. This is why too on Pentecost the Spirit-filled Apostle Peter preached and the Lord added three thousand souls to His Church. Subsequently, as the Biblical record in Acts clearly testifies, the Apostles went everywhere preaching and baptizing. By the mighty, divine, wonder-working power of preaching the Church grew and spread and became dispersed throughout the entire world.

The third attribute of the Church is its holiness. Once again it must be borne in mind that the Church is holy as it is conceived in the counsel of God and described in Scripture. We confess the holiness of the Church by faith. As the Church appears in the world it is far from holy. There are at least two reasons for this. The first is that the saints themselves are not perfect. Much sin cleaves to them according to their sinful natures. Against those sinful natures the saints must wage constant warfare. Daily they must put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. (Ephesians 4:22) The holiness of the members of the Church is but a small beginning or principle. The other reason is that there is always present in the Church the carnal element. In plain words the Church must ever contend with wicked men in its own midst. That carnal element became manifest almost immediately after the fall in Cain and his seed. Against them Enoch had to prophesy concerning the Lord's coming in judgment (Jude). An entire generation among Israel, the Old Dispensational Church, could not enter the promised land because of unbelief and perished in the wilderness. And always in Israel there was but a small remnant according to the election of grace who sincerely loved the Lord and looked for the fulfilment of the promise. Because the carnal element had gained the ascendancy in the Church of the sixteenth century the Protestant Reformation became a necessity and God raised up great men such as Luther and Calvin and others in order to reform the Church. Thus it has been all through the Church's history. For this reason the Church is called to exercise discipline especially through the office of elder. The elders of the Church must ever be vigilant and watch lest the people of God be led astray either in doctrine or in life. Nevertheless, as an object of faith, the Church is holy. The Church expects all its salvation in Jesus Christ: "... being washed by his blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost."

We ought to note that various distinctions have been adopted to describe the one, holy, catholic Church. The Church is spoken of as an organism and an institute. When the Church is spoken of as an organism, it is emphasized that the Church is the living Body of which Christ is the Head. The Church is governed by its Head, Christ, and receives all of its life out of Jesus Christ by faith. When we speak of the institute of the Church we mean the Church from the viewpoint of the ministry of the Word and the administration of the sacraments together with the special offices of the elder and deacon and the office of all believers. It is as institute that the Church comes to manifestation in its local congregations. The Church may also be distinguished as militant, triumphant, and the latent. The Church militant is the Church on earth which has not attained to its final victory, but is called to fight the battle of faith in the world marching as the army of Jesus Christ under the banner of His cross. But even in that battle the militant Church is "more than conqueror" for the victory has been won at the cross and sealed in the resurrection of its Lord. Besides, faith is the victory which overcomes the world. The Church which is now in glory is the Church Triumphant. For this part of the Church the battle is over, the noise and the fury have ceased. These saints have exchanged their weapons for the crown of glory and they rest from their works and toil for they rest in the fellowship of their God. But even for these the victory is not complete and will not be until the Church is completely saved and their bodies are raised from the grave and their blood has been avenged on their enemies. (Cf. Rev. 6:9-11) The Church Latent is the Church not yet born. As history progresses the Church latent grows smaller while the Church triumphant grows steadily larger with the departing of each saint.

Sometimes too the Church is distinguished as visible and invisible. The Church visible is the Church from the point of view of the life of its members in the world as they manifest in their lives the kingdom of heaven to which they belong and as they live their lives under the shadow of the cross. The Church invisible is the Church from the viewpoint of its inner spiritual life of grace and the blessings of Jesus Christ.

The *Confession* also makes the point that the Church has been from the very beginning of time and will continue to the end thereof. We must maintain this precious truth over against all forms of dispensationalism. The Church was born not on Pentecost, but in Paradise. God gathers His Church is the line of continued generations from the beginning to the end of time so that there is only one Church. One can easily follow that line as it is revealed in Scriptures. There is the "seed of the woman" over against the "seed of the serpent." That seed of the woman is

Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem (With Japheth dwelling in his tents), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and twelve tribes of Israel, Judah, the House of David, the remnant according to the election of grace. Finally that seed of the woman which becomes the seed of Abraham is Christ and all who are in Him by faith. (Galatians 3) That is the Church. It is true that in the Old Dispensation (the age of the types and shadows) the Church was limited almost entirely to the Jews. But even then there were exceptions (some of whom one will find in the genealogies of Christ, cf. Matthew 1 and Luke 3). And, all the prophets spoke of the "Day of the Lord" when the Church would be universal. This is proved by the fact, the *Confession* asserts, that Christ is an eternal King which without subjects cannot be. Apparently the argument is that Christ as the eternal King is the only King of His people. Another King there is not. The people of God, therefore, are one Church under the sovereign rule of Jesus Christ. Especially as that rule becomes manifest in time and history, there never was a moment when Christ was without His subjects.

Finally let us understand and never forget that the establishment of the Church in the world is a wonder of grace. By His divine power of grace God has called the Church out of darkness into His marvelous light. The foundations of the Church lie in divine election in Christ Jesus. The saints and faithful at Ephesus are the ones whom God chose in Christ "before the foundation of the world." (Ephesians 1:4) In Thessalonica the believers knew their election. (I Thessalonians 1:4) The "strangers" to whom Peter wrote became that "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." (I Peter 1:2) On the behalf of these elect God sent His only begotten Son into the world. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep given Him of the Father (John 10) and took it again in the resurrection. Upon His ascension Christ poured out His Spirit into that Church in order that it might be filled with all the blessings of salvation and guided into all the truth.

In that faith we rejoice in the assurance that "this holy Church is preserved or supported by God, against the rage of the whole world." The Church may appear very small at times, as during the perilous reign of Ahab when apparently the Church had perished. But even then the Lord preserved an elect remnant, seven thousand, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. The Church is always just that, a remnant, a hut in a cucumber patch, a force not to be reckoned with compared with the millions of this world. The Church always has a hard battle. There is the devil who goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; there is the world which rages against the Church; and there is the sinful flesh of the members of the Church. There is too the enemy from

within. False teachers privily bring in damnable heresies (II Peter 2) and scoffers taunt the Church concerning the coming of its Lord (II Peter 3). Against these enemies the Church must wage unceasing warfare. The Church must not dream of world conquest, for it is a besieged city, and always will be. For the believer this means that he must fight the

good fight of faith. He must separate himself from the evil world and live as a pilgrim and stranger who seeks the city which has the foundations whose builder and maker is God. In the battle he never despairs for he remembers the word of the King of the Church: "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world."

TRIUMPH THROUGH TRIALS

All Things Work For Good

Rev. J. Kortering

What a blessed confession. Bold, to be sure, but most blessed.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," Rom. 8:28.

Do you know this? Are you one of them who loves God?

This is the knowledge of peace.

FOR GOOD

All things work together for good! What is good? God is the only good. In His goodness to us, He has willed our salvation. In the context here, Paul deals with the reality of that salvation. "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," Rom 8:15. This salvation includes the redemption of our body, verse 23. Through our salvation, God is glorified as God.

And that is good.

That goodness however is not complete as yet. We are yet in the world of sin and death. We do not always live out of that salvation with the fervor and zeal that we should. Our faith is often weak, we doubt, we are attracted to the wrong things, we succumb to temptations. Sins still stain our conscience. We know guilt and we fear judgment.

We can understand that there must be a working for that good. Constantly we must be brought to repentance of sin. Daily we must get our thinking straight. Rather than becoming too attracted to this world and its treasures and pleasures, we must be directed to the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness. Instead of enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, we must count it greater joy to suffer affliction

with God's people. We must look at the rich fool who boasted of his luxury and ease but lost his own soul, and tremble lest we be foolish. The kingdom of our Lord must be before our eyes constantly.

Here we are assured that all things work for that great end, for good!

ALL THINGS WORK FOR GOOD

The inspired Paul beholds his life as a living organism. Look at a flower. The blossom is the attractive part of the plant. Yet, there could never be such a blossom without roots, stems, leaves, photosynthesis, nutrition, and all the rest. So it is with us: there cannot be the attractive expression of a living faith without all the experiences of life. Everything in our lives contributes to our salvation. Since that salvation is active in the expression of a living faith, God is glorified through such activity.

All things work together for that.

Are you healthy so that you can arise in the morning and work? Are you diseased, hospitalized, and limited in your activity?

Do you have your husband or wife and are now enjoying the riches of covenant home life with your children? Are you a widow or widower, entrusted with the care of the family alone? Do you know loneliness?

Are you young and full of the zest of life; or have you perhaps lived a full life and know the frailties of old age?

Are you in command of your physical faculties, — that is, can you see, can you hear, can you eat with relish, are you still alive and in contact with the earth

and its fulness? Or are you blind, deaf, lame, and in some measure shut out of the earth?

Maybe you have a brilliant mind, can still read, grasp thoughts, meditate upon the promises of God; others may have lost their ability to reason, to recollect, to meditate.

Are you full of life or near to death?

"All things" covers a great deal.

Thank God, all who love God and who know they are called according to His purpose can say in truth, all things work together for good.

WE KNOW THIS

You notice the apostle is very sure of himself. "And we know!"

How do we know this?

First, on the basis of God's revelation. God tells us that this is true. The blessed truth of creation, providence, redemption, salvation, and the hope of glory are all wrapped up in this, God is working for our good! The God who reached into hell with His

precious Son, surely will work all things by His almighty providence so that we may enjoy that salvation.

Secondly, we know this on the basis of experience. Look at your life, your past, Doesn't it all testify to this truth that every experience, whether to your liking or burdensome, contributed to your spiritual good? The greatest moments of testing in your life were so blessed by God that they made you more spiritual, more concerned about living to God's glory.

That's good, the highest good.

Finally, we know this on the basis of God's promises. Not only may we look *back* and believe this, we may also look *ahead*. The blessedness of such a passage is that these words were placed upon the pages of Holy Writ as a declaration of faith for the future. We know that all things work together for good, now, as they have in the past, and will continue to work in the future, for good. God's Word never fails. It also applies to our future.

Do you know this, dear reader?

Let's say, "We know it!"

GUEST ARTICLE

Rev. C. Hanko

Rev. Arie den Hartog

Christian Liberty—Its Place in Our Churches

(2)

Christian liberty, therefore, is simply this, that we willingly walk in the narrow confines of God's commandments and find our happiness there. To our flesh this sounds like a paradox: a liberty which subjects itself to the cruelest taskmaster possible. Our flesh often rebels, kicks the traces, breaks away from the narrow limits of the law. In fact, when the law says, "Do not touch!" we say, "I want to touch; who says I can't?" There is always the urge to test the wet paint sign, or deliberately to oppose the "Keep off the grass" sign by walking on the grass. Just as the lion is prodded to anger when aroused, so also our human nature reveals the lion in us when confronted with God's commandments.

That is where our spiritual tension comes in: the struggle to do the good, while our inclination is evil. Only by grace do we learn to say, "O how love I Thy law; it is my meditation all the day." Let me give just two examples of what I have in mind. Consider, for example, a fish that you draw out of the narrow confines of a fish tank. You take it from the tank; you give it the whole wide world in which to move

about; yet that fish immediately begins to gasp and struggle. If you keep it in that kind of freedom too long, it dies. Thus also a child of God must live in the atmosphere of God's Word and His church. A child of God must breathe the spiritual air of the church. For to live apart from God is death. Or another example. When you plan a long trip, you obtain a road map which you study carefully. On your trip you refer to the map constantly, in order to remain within the narrow confines of the map, no matter how appealing the side roads may be. For you know that you will never reach your destination unless you follow the map closely. Thus the psalmist had learned to say, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light upon my path." The child of God walks at the hand of his heavenly Father, and is safe, ever sure of his destination. He can confess, "And I will walk at liberty, because Thy Word I keep." Or as Asaph expresses it, "Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

To apply this to our churches and to our times, I

refer once more to I Peter 2:16. The main thought in the context of this verse is that we must submit to those whom God has placed over us. Although Peter wrote in a time of religious persecution by the magistrate, Peter still maintains that God set the magistrates over us; and we must submit to them. Moreover, those in authority must be esteemed by us because of their divinely entrusted authority. We may never use our Christian liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, as an excuse to defy their authority. Office bearers must consider this very seriously. You know, as I do, that elders and deacons are not very highly esteemed in the church. Members tend to call them by their first name, to regard them as their equals, and even to criticize them quite freely. We stare ourselves blind at their faults, and ignore the fact that Christ deemed them worthy to serve in His office. Christ calls them as His ambassadors, places them over us, vested with His authority to speak and act in His name. Elders are ambassadors of the King, who must be feared for the sake of their office. They open and close the kingdom of heaven. Even ministers are under their authority. Deacons represent our merciful High Priest. Through them Christ comes to us, bringing His gifts to the poor and His compassion to the afflicted. Therefore it is the duty of the office bearer to live an exemplary life, to rule his family well, and to be faithful in His office always.

This authority of Christ must be maintained by Christian discipline in the congregation. One of the first evidences that Christ has withdrawn from a certain congregation is that Christian discipline is no longer exercised. Elders sometimes tend to be lax in exercising the keys of the kingdom because they are aware of their own imperfections. Often a double standard is applied in the church. Children and young people are, as it were, free from discipline. They are considered young, foolish maybe; but they have a right to have their fun. They are allowed to speak disrespectfully of the magistrate, the police, their teachers, the minister, and even of their parents. The parents tend to overlook this by saying, "I was not so good either when I was young," as if to imply, "And I still turned out well." We have the solemn duty to walk in love to the Lord our God, to live by faith, and seek God's glory. That is the whole duty of man. Children, young people, are no exception to that rule. We may be sound in doctrine; but if we do not live our doctrine, we will certainly suffer disaster in our generations.

In conclusion, I want to refer once more to Galatians 5:13. The entire section from vss. 13-16 reads: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one

another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." The figure used here should not be slighted. Like cannibals, we tend to eat, to devour each other. Scripture points out to us that if we love God, we manifest that love by loving the neighbor. Loving the neighbor does not begin in China or Singapore, but at home. Our closest neighbors are our own husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, as well as the next door neighbor. My chief concern is the *disintegration of the home*. It takes a lot of money to pay for a nice home, an automobile or two, an occasional vacation, a few luxuries, and besides all that, our church budget and school tuition. The result is that father has to keep his nose to the grindstone to keep the wolf from the door, and often mother has to step in and earn an extra income also. If we are honest with ourselves, we realize that this is all an excuse. We do not need all the luxuries we strive after. Just because everybody else has those luxuries, it does not mean that we really need them. Our parents never had all the conveniences we have. They worked often ten or twelve hours a day, six days a week. They walked to work, to church, to buy groceries. They rarely, if ever, needed a vacation. Yet they were happy. And they had time to spend with their families. The winter evenings found the family happily gathered around the glowing coal stove. Today many families do not even have one daily meal together. We complain, "It cannot be done!" We prefer not to ask, "Why not?" Even when the family is at home, where is the togetherness? One watches TV, another sits in her room, another is busy elsewhere. I know, we shrug our shoulders and say, "It's the times." But I assure you that the main ingredient for a happy home is lacking: love, love for one another, so that we enjoy each other's company and want to be together. We seek the things that perish; and we neglect the one thing that is all-important, love revealing itself in companionship. What good does an expression of love do when it is not evident in reality?

The day is not far off when we shall have to give up all these things we cherish most highly. Soon we will not be able to buy or sell without denying our faith. Soon we will be confronted with the question: do I stand for the cause of Christ, or do I join Antichrist? In that day we might find ourselves already deeply involved in Antichrist. Disintegrated homes do not help us to prepare for that day. Yes, God preserves His church. He is Abraham's God, and the God of Abraham's seed. That is our comfort. But eternal vigilance is the price we pay in a covenant family. This begins with the office bearers in the church. We do well to take heed to ourselves and to the flock entrusted to us! Many first shall be last, and many last shall be first!

Corporate Responsibility in the Church

The church is one. She is one in Jesus Christ her Lord. This is one of her most beautiful attributes. The unity of the church is from eternity. She is one because she was chosen as one body in Christ Jesus from before the foundations of the world. She is one because she has her life and salvation out of the one Jesus Christ. She is one because she is called and gathered by the one Word and Spirit of Christ. She is one because she is gathered as one organism centrally from the line of the generations of believers according to the promise of God's covenant. She is one because she is built upon the foundation of the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church has one calling in the midst of the world: to confess, to proclaim, and to maintain that one true doctrine of Christ Jesus and by His grace to live according to that doctrine to His glory.

It is because the church is one that she is also a corporation. The church is not an aggregate of individuals who have little or nothing to do with one another. The church is one body the members of which are integrally related to one another and who are together responsible before God and to one another to fulfill the great calling of the church. God has made the church such a corporate unity and He always deals with her as such.

Corporate responsibility means that each member of the church has the responsibility to maintain and promote the essential unity of the church in Christ Jesus and to strive as member of the church in the one calling of the church: to proclaim the gospel, to defend the truth, and to walk worthy of the gospel of Christ Jesus. The calling that the church has to preach the gospel is one that belongs not only to ministers and missionaries and officebearers but one which belongs to all the members. Each member of the church must see to it that the church to which he belongs preaches the whole counsel of God, that she is faithful to the doctrine of scripture, and that in every regard the church fulfills her calling in faithfulness unto Christ Jesus and that she maintains and promotes true Christian living.

The apostle Paul speaks of this corporate unity of the church in two beautiful passages of scripture. In Ephesians 4:3-6 he exhorts the church thus: "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Again in the same passage Paul emphasizes that all the special offices and gifts are given to the church unto the end: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the

knowledge of the Son of God unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Verse 13) In Philippians 1:27 Paul expresses the desire unto the church that he may hear of their affairs: "That ye stand fast in one mind and one Spirit striving together for the faith of the gospel."

The truth of corporate responsibility in the church implies that each member must guard and watch over his church that nothing is allowed to enter that destroys the unity of the church or the one true doctrine which is the foundation of that church. The chief means that God has given to the church as a corporation to do this is the exercise of the keys of the kingdom. Through the proper use of the keys of the kingdom, the preaching of the Word and the exercise of Christian discipline, the church as a whole must be kept pure and holy and the life and confession of each member of the church must be guarded. The keys of the kingdom must be exercised against all those whose confession and life is contrary to the doctrine of Christ Jesus. This is the corporate responsibility of all the members of the church. It is the obligation of each member of the church to see to it that teachers of false doctrine, if they do not show repentance after the proper exercise of Christian discipline, are expelled from the church. The member of the church who does not fulfill his corporate responsibility toward the false doctrine that is maintained in the church of which he is member necessarily makes himself guilty of that false doctrine. When unconfessed public sin is openly tolerated in the church without discipline the whole church and each member becomes guilty of that sin. No member of the church may rest at ease in his church while there are those who openly promote false doctrine or practice in his church. If we remain silent under such circumstances we bring the judgment of God upon ourselves and upon the church to which we belong.

Positively, corporate responsibility means that each member of the church must strive to confess and to promote the truth of Christ Jesus in all of its fullness and purity and glory. We may indeed say that the church does this chiefly through her officebearers and through those in particular who have the high calling to be leaders in the church, such as ministers and professors in the seminary. However, this is also the calling of each member of the church. He must zealously study the truth of the Word of God and the heritage of the understanding of that Word of God as it was delivered to him of God in the church. He must seek to grow in that truth and seek to stand together with His fellow saints in the defense and proclamation of that truth to the world and to live according to that truth to the glory of God.

Corporate responsibility exists first of all of course on the level of our own local congregation. We believe in the autonomy of the local congregation. We believe that each local church is the complete manifestation of the body of Christ Jesus. When we make confession of faith we confess also the truth of our corporate responsibility in the church when we answer the questions: "Do you acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and the New Testaments and in the Articles of Christian faith and taught here in this Christian Church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation? Have you resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to lead a new, godly life?" The calling of each member of the church is exercised particularly in that he is a living member of the local church, that he faithfully attends the worship services and that he takes an active part in all of the rest of the life of the church. This is his responsibility as member of the church of Jesus Christ. He cannot exercise that responsibility by staying at home, much less by never becoming a member of a specific local church. One person is not and cannot be the church of Jesus Christ by himself. This is of course obvious. Yet there are many in our day who profess to be Christian who have little or no regard for membership in a local church of Jesus Christ.

Corporate responsibility extends also to the level of our denomination. A denomination is a federation of churches that agree in doctrine with one another. Denominations are formed because various local churches have a common faith and desire to manifest the broader unity of the church of Jesus Christ by banding together in a federation where they can be of assistance to one another in fulfilling their common calling. Although in the apostolic era there were as yet no denominations as such, there is in scripture indeed the mandate for churches to form into denominations to manifest thereby the broader unity of the church. The resultant denomination is then also a corporation. Each church is responsible for the other. Furthermore the fact that we are in such a denomination and profess to agree in doctrine means that we all as members of that denomination are corporately responsible to one another in the same way as we are in our local church.

The truth of corporate responsibility is widely neglected or denied in our day. There are in denominations and even local congregations widely divergent confessions and different teachings on matters of Christian living. These differences are not merely a matter of different perspectives on the same truths of scripture. They are differences even of opposites with regard to the fundamental doctrines of scripture. They are differences that involve obvious heresies and

false doctrines. I hardly need mention examples. One need only consider the differences that exist in the same denominations on such fundamental questions as the doctrine of scripture, the doctrines of sovereign grace, the doctrine of predestination, to name only a few. There are differences on questions of Christian practice such as on marriage, on homosexuality, and on women in office in the church. There is public disagreement with the confessions and the historic faith of the church. In many of these churches there are professed conservatives who disagree with much that their own church teaches. Yet they for the most part remain silent. Through the years there is less and less militancy against error in these churches. Thousands seem to be able to justify themselves that they can remain in churches that are very clearly tolerating very serious denials of the doctrine of Christ Jesus and refuse to exercise discipline. These seek to justify themselves by saying that they themselves do not hold to such false doctrines or that the particular local church they belong to does not maintain such false doctrine.

There is, furthermore, current in many churches that call themselves Reformed a rank individualism. Along with apostasy from many other doctrines of scripture has gone apostasy from the doctrine of the nature of the church. Few today understand what the church is and what it means to be member of the church. The inroads of Arminianism and Fundamentalism are to a large extent responsible for this. Salvation is considered a wholly individualistic matter. There is really no such thing as a church especially not a church that comes to manifestation to the gathering of believers and in the God ordained offices. The church as an institution is regarded as having very little importance. Each individual is responsible therefore only for himself and for his own salvation.

That God always deals with His church as a corporation is very clear from the scriptures. The history of Israel testifies of this over and over. Think of all the times when Israel was punished in the wilderness. Though almost always there were only a certain number in Israel that sinned, yet God's wrath came upon the whole congregation. Think of the sin of the golden calf, how Moses was called to separate out of the camp of Israel all those who were on the Lord's side before judgment and executed. Think of the cursing mongrel in the camp of Israel, how all those who had heard him blaspheme had to lay their hands on his head and then all the congregation had to stone him. Perhaps one of the most striking examples of corporate responsibility in the Old Testament is the sin of Achan and the consequence of this sin for all Israel. Through the history of Israel in the land of Canaan they were again and again punished as a whole nation for the sin of only part of the nation.

In the Old Testament it was impossible for anyone to separate himself from apostate Israel. The godly remnant always had to suffer with the wicked.

In the New Testament we have many evidences of this same truth of corporate responsibility in the church. Paul's letter to the church at Corinth is an example of this. In this letter he severely admonishes the church, the whole church, because she tolerated those who held false doctrine and one who was a fornicator in her midst. In chapter 11 of the first letter Paul shows the church how God's anger was kindled against the whole church because some were desecrating the celebration of the Lord's supper. The letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation exhort the churches to exercise their corporate responsibility and discipline wicked sinful members lest the wrath of God fall upon the whole church. In the letter to the church of Laodicea we read of Christ standing at the door of the church and knocking to call out the faithful lest the wrath of God fall upon them with this apostate church.

This matter of corporate responsibility is indeed a very urgent matter. One cannot remain silent in a church that maintains false doctrines or that fails to discipline members who continue in public sin without becoming partaker of the guilt. The calling of the Christian is clear. He must protest against errors in the church and if these protests are not heard or they become impossible, he is under the solemn obligation to leave that church to join with another and if that is not possible to begin by the process of reformation another church. This is by no means an easy calling since it will sometimes mean he must leave the church he was long member of and that he must do something that will inevitably cause division even in his

own family. This is nevertheless his calling if he is to escape the judgment of God. This he must do for the sake of the glory of God, for the maintaining of the true church of Christ and for the sake of his own covenant generations.

There are also many positive implications to this matter of corporate responsibility. We all have a calling to confess, to maintain, and to develop the glorious truth of Christ Jesus which we as a church have received. There is a constant danger that we must guard against that we too deny the matter of corporate responsibility because we neglect our own calling in the church. How well are we acquainted with the Reformed heritage that is ours? How much time do we spend in growing and developing in the truth of the word of God? How much zeal do we have for the blessed Reformed truth that God has given us? How much do we know about what our denomination stands for? How much do we read in the periodicals and publications of our church? How much of an interest do we take in what goes on at our synodical gatherings? We have by the grace of God not had any major doctrinal controversies in our midst for some years now. This is indeed a blessing. But there is a danger that because of this we become complacent and careless. How much of a place does the church have in our lives? How much do we love that church and feel our obligation toward her? How zealously do we speak of the faith that is ours as Protestant Reformed people to one another and to those outside of our churches?

May it be true of us what Paul as a servant of Christ Jesus desired of the church of Philippi, namely that we strive together with one mind and one spirit for the faith of the gospel.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

February 1, 1978

Dear Timothy,

There were especially two points which we made in the last letter: one was the fact that the offices of priest and king were kept rigidly separate from each other in the Old Testament; the other was the fact that the office of prophet was a separate office on the one hand and was, on the other hand, shared by both kings and priests. In this letter I want to look into the duties of these officebearers a bit; and, if there is time, I want to begin to apply this whole matter to the New Dispensational Church.

First of all then, what were the specific duties of the officebearers in Israel?

It will probably be wise to start with the prophets.

There is no need, I think, to discuss this subject in any detail, for the whole office of prophet (especially as far as the function of this office is concerned) has been developed by Rev. Hoeksema both in his *Dogmatics* and his *Triple Knowledge*. And this is true not only of the office of prophet, but of all the offices. We will limit our discussion only to such matters as relate directly to our subject and purpose.

In keeping with the main idea of the Hebrew word for prophet, the prophet was directly appointed by God as the means through whom God brought His Word to His people. The office of prophet was the instrument of divine revelation. God made Himself known to His people through the prophets.

In the dispensation of types and shadows, God revealed Himself directly through various events in Israel's history such as the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, the miracles which took place in the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the defeat of the Canaanites, the establishment of the throne of David and Solomon, etc. But the prophets interpreted these events for the people and explained their meaning in connection with the promise of God. But the prophets also spoke the Word of God more generally. If you read the books of the prophets you cannot help but be struck by the fact that the prophecies soared far beyond Israel's boundaries and history. What the prophets spoke concerned all the nations which surrounded Israel, soared far into the future, even to the end of time to reveal what God had in store for His people in all ages and entered even into the final age which shall only be realized when the promise was to be fulfilled completely in the day of the Lord.

But in addition to all this, the prophets often functioned as pastors to God's people. The prophet Elisha always strikes me as being an outstanding example of this. He followed upon Elijah, the prophet of judgment who spoke of God's wrath against an apostate nation. But one of the closing revelations of God to Elijah concerned the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And Elisha was sent to bring the Word of God in a very pastoral way to that remnant according to the election of grace. There are no miracles in all the Old Testament which more closely resemble the miracles of our Lord Himself than do the miracles of Elisha. And such glimpses as we have of his life are usually glimpses which reveal him as a man who lived in close and intimate contact with the Godly people who remained in the apostate northern kingdom. He brought God's Word to God's people in their everyday life.

This office of prophet, however, was shared by the kings and priests. They too brought the Word of God. While the prophets occupied a special office in distinction from the other offices, their office was also, in a certain sense, shared. The fact is that the kings and priests brought the Word of God to Israel (and were thus prophets too) in connection with the specific functions of their offices. The priests were busy in the service of God in the tabernacle and temple. All the ceremonies of the worship of God in the tabernacle and temple were so many Words of God to His people. It was especially in connection with these Words of God in the temple service that the priests functioned as instruments of divine revelation. There were exceptions. David consulted Abiathar the priest concerning matters pertaining to his own course of action when he was fleeing from

Saul because David was far from the temple. But these exceptions were due to the fact that these offices were types and the lines were not always clearly drawn.

But the office of priest was itself clear. The priests represented Israel before the face of God. And they represented Israel especially by bringing Israel's sacrifices to God and, by sacrifices, imploring God's mercy upon Israel. They were the office of mercy therefore; and bringing Israel's sacrifices to God, they obtained mercy for the other people.

The same was true of the office of king. Israel did not, as such, sin when the nation asked for a king. Already while Israel was east of the Jordan God had spoken of the time when Israel would be ruled by a king. Israel's sin was asking for a king like the other nations; and in asking for such a king, rather than a king of God's choice, they rejected God. See Duet. 17:14-20.

But when God gave Israel a king of His choice, He gave a king who could rule, in the strictest sense, over the theocracy. I.e., he was a king who would represent God in the nation and God's rule among the people. Such a king, therefore, was required to fight Israel's battles against all the enemies of the nation who threatened to destroy God's heritage. Such a king was to insure the boundaries of Palestine promised to the old patriarch Abraham and his seed. Such a king had to represent right and justice in the nation in the relationships of the people among themselves. He *ruled*. And he ruled in such a way that the life of the nation was governed by God's law and God's truth.

These kings were also prophets. But they brought the Word of God, as a rule, in connection with the specific office which they held. And because this was the case, they themselves were also dependent upon the Word of the prophets. David consulted prophets — as, e.g., when he determined to begin building the temple. Hezekiah and Josiah consulted prophets at crucial times in their reign. And God Himself sent prophets to them to bring specific Words of God from God's mouth to these kings in connection with their work.

It is, however, interesting that the prophecies of David and Solomon (in Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs) sometimes soar beyond the limitations of their offices as kings so that they are all but prophets in their own right when they penned the Words of the revelation of God found in these books.

Now all of this has its New Testament counterpart.

And centrally all these offices were fulfilled in Christ. The Old Testament offices were only dim and fleeting shadows of the one office which Christ held.

Centrally, and of basic significance is the fact that Christ is God's prophet. He was eternally anointed to this office, and He was (and is) the One through Whom alone God's Word could come to God's people. This is because of the fact that Christ does not merely *bring* God's Word to His Church. After all, His earthly ministry was rather limited. He preached publicly for only about three and one-half years. He met only a limited number of people. And when all His ministry was over there were really only about one hundred twenty people in church. He is God's prophet because He *is* the Word of God. He is, in His own person and natures, in His work which He performed through His cross and resurrection and ascension, *the* Word of God. Thus there can be no revelation of God apart from Christ. *All* revelation is centrally through Him. This was not true only in the years of His earthly ministry; it was always true, is always true, and will be true into all eternity. Christ was speaking through the types and shadows of the Old Dispensation. Christ was speaking through the prophets. Christ speaks through the Church. And only Christ can speak because Christ *is* the one Word of God.

He is the Word of God also as King and Priest. He, in our place, brings the perfect sacrifice for sin and implores God's mercy upon us. He gains that mercy from God and brings it to us that we may, for His sake, be the objects of mercy. He fights against all the enemies of His people and secures for them the destruction of all those who oppose us. He gains for us the glory of His own everlasting kingdom. He rules over His people with truth and justice. He makes His kingdom the perfect kingdom of God's righteousness where God is all in all.

And in doing all these things, He remains our prophet. Both as Priest and King, He brings God's

Word. Or, to be more exact, as Priest and King, He is God's Word; and as God's Word, He brings that Word to us by bringing Himself.

Thus Christ is the only Officebearer in the Church. This was according to God's purpose from the very beginning of time — even from eternity. God realizes all His purpose in Christ. God eternally intends to set Christ as the One great Representative in the house of God Himself. And Christ is God's Representative because He is Himself God — in our flesh, and realizes all God's purpose in the new house of God in the everlasting glorified creation.

But while the Church is still on earth it is also true that Christ is God's only Officebearer. All the work of the Church is done by Christ. This was sharply brought home to me once again the other day when a colleague and I were discussing the many things we would like to do but didn't seem to have the time to accomplish. He remarked: "Isn't it always true that we never finish our work really, but that the work of the kingdom nevertheless always gets done?" How true this is, Timothy. And there is a great deal of comfort in this, for in the consciousness that Christ alone does the work which has to be done in the Church can we labor with the assurance of blessing.

All the work is done by Christ. Through us, no doubt. But by Christ, for all that. Whether we are ministers, elders, or deacons, Christ is doing the work that needs to be done. He is doing it all perfectly and completely so that it is all accomplished, all done without mistake, all perfectly executed so that God's purpose is realized.

And with this I must close for the time being. We shall have to discuss how this relates to the offices in the New Testament Church in our next letter.

Fraternally,
H. Hanko

IN HIS FEAR

Blindly Confident

Rev. M. Joostens

I think it is often true, that the simplest lessons of Scripture are hardest learned. It is only with the largest of difficulty that we are able to put into practice such simple admonitions as: "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all these things shall be added unto you"; "To obey is better than sacrifice, to hearken than the fat of lambs"; "He that is last shall be first"; and "Love God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength."

Such a recurring and simple lesson was called to mind again just the other evening. I was busy catechizing the little children. The lesson concerned Elisha the prophet who by God's divine intervention was able to reveal the plans of Benhadad king of Syria to the king of Israel at Samaria. The king of Syria was very wroth with the servant of Jehovah and, after having spied out that Elisha was at Dothan, sent an host of horses and chariots to capture Elisha. When

this was discovered by the servant of Elisha who had risen early and gone forth, he asked the prophet, "Alas my Master! How shall we do?" In response Elisha prayed the Lord that the eyes of the young man who was his servant might be opened. And the Lord answering this prayer opened the eyes of the young man and he beheld "the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Having not seen these, yet believing by faith in their presence, Elisha had said to his servant, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." (II Kings 6:16)

The church of our Lord Jesus Christ as manifested here below is numerically small and seemingly insignificant. The forces of the world often loom large and treacherous round about the children of God. It seems that we are continually as the small band of Christ ready to be devoured by the mighty forces of the antichrist. And who will deliver us? We are not the many, powerful, rich, influential, mighty men of the world. Rather, God's church is recruited by Christ from the poor, insignificant, and meek.

It is the lot of the church of Christ collectively, as well as of the child of God individually, to live in the very bosom of this antichristian world. Our place is often precarious and insecure. The seed of the woman is continually being pursued to be devoured. For us in many differing ways the hills about Dothan are spread with the mighty hosts of the Syrians. We often feel besieged without an avenue of escape or a prayer of hope! Often the question silently rises in our soul, "Alas, my master! How shall we do?"

The simple little lesson of the Scriptures to which I refer, as you have no doubt gathered by now, is confidence in God! Trust in Him. The problems of care, worry, and anxiety which are the result of a littleness in faith trouble many saints of God. The variety of the Syrian forces that God's children encounter are as varied as the number of pews they occupy. Fear is struck in the hearts of God's children! I think of this especially after we have just stood in the threshold of a new year. God has wisely spread a veil over the future. Yet the uncertainty of it all makes us fearful. Some of us are preoccupied with the sufficient care of our families. Others fear the alarming percentage of sickness, such as cancer, that also spreads its tentacles into the Church. Many more are actually led by our God in deep ways of affliction and grief. All in all, the clouds of darkness continually hover over God's children!

In all this, we have not learned the calm of Elisha, or, if we have, our memories are often so short. We react as did Elisha's servant! "Alas! How shall we do?" We see the army of the Syrians, but we do not reckon with the face of God. Oh, it is no wonder that Elisha's servant rose early that morning letting his

eyes circumspect the horizon around Dothan. He saw that which was naturally visible. It is the natural, the carnal, that which belongs to this earth that readily makes an impression upon our retina. Our carnal recognition and reasoning quickly tabulate the odds against us. It was no great feat for Elisha's servant to calculate the might of the host of the Syrians that had come to capture him and his master. It takes little effort for us to recognize the dangers that often encroach upon us here below, whatever they may be!

It is a real spiritual ability to see what Elisha saw. For this can be seen by faith alone! He saw an innumerable host of horses and chariots of fire round about him. "... they that be with us are more than they that be with them." We are not so much concerned with the actual physical representations that were seen on the hill surrounding Dothan. Whether they were real or visionary, they no doubt represent the host of Jehovah our God. It is an heavenly host of great power as indicated by the fact that they are chariots and horses of fire. They have the power to consume and destroy! I think we must take this in connection with passages such as Psalm 34:7: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Or the passage Christ quotes when tempted by the Devil early in His earthly ministry. "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against the stone." (Ps. 91:11, 12) And mark the words of Christ to Peter after He rebuked him for smiting off the Malchian's ear, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53) To see such an innumerable host of angels who continually watch over us takes an eye of faith.

When the eye of faith is keen, all doubts and fears are dispelled! Having seen the innumerable host of God's protesting fiery band, Elisha and his servant proceed toward the Syrians out of Dothan's gates. And Elisha prayed the Lord that the visible, dreadful host be struck with blindness. And Jehovah smote them with blindness according to the petition of Elisha. And Elisha led the blind band captive into the walls of Samaria, that the Syrians might know that God protects His people. "So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." (II Kings 6:23b)

Too often our fear, worry, and anxiety is due to our spiritual blindness. We are as Elisha's servant. We need to pray the petition of Elisha, "Lord open our eyes that we may see!" Oh, if we could only see continually the innumerable hosts of angels that keep guard over us. For then our hearts would not fail when we encounter the enemy on every side. Whether it be in poverty, sickness, temptation, distress, yea even death itself, we shall not fear. For, conscious of

such an heavenly host, we with Elisha and his servant would bravely encounter the enemy, knowing that they that are with us are more than they with them. Visible to the human eye? Oh no! But to the eye of faith.

If God be for us who can be against us? We live in the fear of the Lord! Blindly confident in faith.

“When evildoers came To make my life their prey,
They stumbled in their shame and fell in sore
dismay;
Tho hosts make war on every side,
Still fearless I in God confide.”

(Psalter 71)

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

X-Rating Rock Radio

Christianity Today, Nov. 18, 1977, contains several editorial warnings which are much to the point. The first concerns some of the evil songs which are so very popular today. The warning of danger is appropriate — also for us. Especially our youth face the temptations of going along with current trends. Young people all too easily are affected and influenced by the “popular” things of the day. Nor do they want to be left out or be different from their peers. It seems natural to want to talk about the latest “hit.” One hears, at times, worldly and corrupt songs blaring from car radios of our youth; or hears this in the homes and even the outings of our youth. There is reason for real concern.

The editor of *Christianity Today* lists some of the titles of current popular songs — titles too explicit even to print, I think. There is no doubt about the contents of their song when one reads the titles. These are largely concerned with sex and “love” in their most perverted forms. He writes:

Although concerned parents do what they can to reduce the amount of sex and violence their children see on television, few of them realize that what is heard on the radio may do far more damage. (Then follows a listing of the current “hits.”)

... Sex on radio is nothing new. ... But many of the risqué lyrics of the sixties were either unintelligible to the listener or else drowned out by driving rhythms and twanging guitars. Today the lyrics are more prominent. This is unfortunate, because musical groups are now expressing perverted views of love and sex even more explicitly.

Three factors contribute to the mindnumbing effect of radio. First, it can be everywhere — in the student’s bedroom, in the car, in school study halls,

and in stores and restaurants. He wakes to it every morning, and goes to sleep to it at night. Second, composers combine debased lyrics with catchy tunes or rhythms. Third, repetition increases the problem. The more popular a song becomes, the more often it is played. The biggest hits can be heard two, three, or even four times an hour. . . .

The editor continues to give some advice to parents, advice with which I would not wholly agree. Perhaps, though, parents ought to consider several things. First, what are our children hearing? With earphones (which only allow the listener to hear), and at parties and outings where only young people gather, or in the privacy of the auto — what are our children hearing? Do we know?

Secondly, there ought to be place for discussion of the songs which are apparently so appealing even to children of the church. There is no useful purpose served if parents merely “yell” at children to turn off that awful noise. Parents do surely have the Scriptural right and duty to demand (not simply request) that their children in obedience to God and their parents do not listen to these worldly songs. But also, there ought to be room to consider these songs, especially their words, in the light of the Word of God. Can the Christian ever listen to or sing that which caters to our flesh? That which is contrary to God’s Word? Can one spiritually enjoy the music which is admittedly adapted to the corrupt lyrics? Let our children face the question: are we reflecting the life of Christ in these things which we want to hear? Nor is it even a question of what we “like,” but of what God demands of us. Just let us remember: it is impossible to sing or enjoy these worldly songs in “a Christian manner.”

One out of Ten

The same magazine presents a short editorial on social drinking. There appears to be some indication

that this is growing in popularity in our midst as well. Though none of us would object to alcoholic bev-

erages *per se*, the regular use of this, especially in social drinking, can lead to terrible sins and awful consequences. Think of this:

How many people would fly if they knew that there was a one out of ten chance that the plane would crash? Probably not many. But flying is in fact safer (on the basis of fatalities per passenger mile) than riding in a car.

How many people would drink alcoholic beverages if they knew that there was a one out of ten chance that by doing so they would become alcoholics? Yet, the number of people who drink is rising despite the high incidence of alcoholism. And alcoholism affects not only the sufferer himself, but those around him.

Nor is alcoholism an inconvenience, such as minor automobile accident from which one quickly recovers, but it is chronically debilitating.

Social pressures to drink are apparently increasing, and at younger and younger ages. Many Christians defend drinking in moderation. But in the light of the high incidence of alcoholism in many societies around the world, Christians and anyone else interested in being a good steward of the creation entrusted to us by God should seriously question the wisdom of drinking. Is it right to take such a needless risk of becoming an alcoholic? Is it right to set an example for others that can lead to their becoming alcoholics? The chances are one out of ten — for those who drink.

The Church—A Political Machine

Another warning, along a different vein, comes in the *Outlook* of December 1977, by Rev. Peter De Jong. In his lucid style, Rev. De Jong pinpoints a part of the problem he observes in connection with synodical decisions in the Christian Reformed Church. The problem actually comes down to that old bugaboo, hierarchy. That danger ever exists in the churches. We too must ever be on our guard against this. He writes:

But, aren't these procedures, letting the Clerk cut the Agenda and letting five men assign committees and their jobs, more efficient ways of getting the work done? Of course, they are. But if efficiency of operation is to be our over-riding criterion, an even more sensible and efficient procedure is to skip having the delegates meet at all. Why not elect the five men who increasingly control the procedure, by mail and let them handle all of the business? Think of all the time and expense that we would save. And the results might not be appreciably different. A further improvement on that procedure in the interest of even greater efficiency is not inconceivable. Why not let one man take care of everything? Then we would not even be burdening five men with it. Such suggestions are not absurd fantasy. They have a long history of practice in the annals of the Christian Church. And they were in many ways undeniably efficient. There

was only one major objection to them. When oligarchy and monarchy become the accepted structure and order in the church that church organization had moved so far from the Lord's direction and pattern for His Church that our Reformed fathers had to denounce the institution in the Belgic Confession as no *true church* at all (Articles 29-32). Anyone who is at all familiar with that Roman Catholic history and structure will observe some remarkable parallels between the way it developed and the way our church organization is increasingly developing. The Roman Catholic development, however, took centuries. Our movement in that direction is happening in a much shorter time, in mere decades and years.

One can understand De Jong's concern. Perhaps he can now also better understand our own deep grief and concern as churches when, high-handedly, two classes took it upon themselves to suspend and depose consistories and ministers in that long-age time of 1924-25. When one once begins on the road of hierarchy, it is understandable that there will be developments and refinements. De Jong concludes: "Aroused people must seek reform and be willing to pray, work and fight for it." I wonder if De Jong in his heart does not believe that his denomination has gone far too far down that road of hierarchy to have any sort of reform.

Dr. Tietjen Ousted

The *Christian News*, Nov. 7, 1977, reports the ouster of Dr. Rev. Tietjen from the Missouri Synod — Lutheran Church. There is now a cry to mount open rebellion against this action — coming understandably from Seminex, the seminary which was formed when the majority of students and professors refused to recognize the condemnation of Dr. Tietjen in Concordia Seminary in 1974. The report states:

The Seminex faculty has urged the members of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod to ignore the expulsion of Seminex President the Rev. Dr. John H. Tietjen from the Synod's clergy roster and to invite him into their pulpits "to preach the Gospel they confess with him." In a letter mailed to pastors in the church body, the faculty encouraged those who believe and teach like Dr. Tietjen to state so publicly.

The faculty reminded the Synod's members that "to be silent now is to consent to and share in the unjust action of the synod."

Entitled "The Reformation: A Call for Confessional Commitment," the faculty statement was mailed October 31 on the anniversary of the day when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Saxony in 1517.

The faculty urges members of the Synod

- to invite Dr. Tietjen into their pulpits;
- to express their unity with all who share their confession both in and outside the Missouri Synod;
- to share the exhilaration which comes from knowing that God is creating new freedom of confession and new relationships of fellowship;
- to share in the jeopardy that often comes from ecclesiastical structures."

The faculty states that "if you share our confession and your ministry with us, you will experience repression and opposition. There is always risk in confessional action. But it is a risk that is tied to the cross."

So, rebellion is being encouraged in the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. The struggle there between "conservative" and "moderate" (or more properly: liberal) is not over. Many, perhaps most, of the "moderates" remain in the Missouri Synod. If these do not have the upper hand today, it appears they will seek to create dissension and unrest until such time as they can regain control in the church machinery. Unless that church rids itself entirely of this "moderate" element, the measure of reform recently begun will not long continue.

Book Reviews

THE CASE FOR CREATIONISM, FALLACIES OF EVOLUTION; by Arlie J. Hoover; Baker Book House, 1977; 85 pp., \$2.50 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

The author is dean of Columbia Christian College in Portland, Oregon. He has succeeded in preparing an interesting and easy-to-read book on the fallacies of the theory of evolutionism. The main point which the book strives to make is that evolutionism is guilty of several serious logical errors. He points these errors out in a witty and easily understood way. His conclusions are: 1) Evolutionism is not proved by the evidence. 2) Evolutionism is not capable of proof because the whole matter of origins lies beyond the reach of empirical evidence. 3) Both creationism and evolutionism are capable of interpreting the existing data. 4) Thus both are viable options and both ought to be taught in the public school systems.

These last two points are, of course, quite revealing. The author is not discussing the question of creation vs. evolution from a religious viewpoint but from a purely scientific viewpoint. His main purpose is to persuade all concerned that creationism has as much a place in the classroom as evolutionism and that both should be presented with their strengths and weaknesses — from a scientific perspective. Here is exactly the rub. There are a few remarks that need to be made in this connection. 1) In a certain limited way we can sympathize with those who agonize over the fact that evolutionism is taught in the public schools as the only explanation of the origin of the universe. We can then sympathize too with the desire to see both presented in the classroom. 2) It is not, however, possible to teach creationism from a purely scientific viewpoint. It is legitimate to point out the

logical and scientific fallacies of evolutionism. It is also important to point out that creationism can indeed explain all the data which is uncovered by the natural sciences. It is not correct to present creationism as a strictly scientific theory. Scripture makes this a matter of faith: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God. . . ." (Heb. 11:3.) 3) It is true that this makes creationism a matter of religion, and that the Supreme Court has forbidden the teaching of religion in the public school system. But about this: a) As the author points out, evolutionism is also a religion, though it be a religion of scientism or naturalistic humanism. This kind of religion the Supreme Court condones. There is an impossible contradiction here. b) This situation can never be changed as long as education in this land is taken away from parents (to whom it belongs according to God's decree) and given to the state. There is no solution to this dilemma — except our own Christian schools. 4) If creationism is a matter of faith, it is not and never can be a viable option. It is the only truth and God demands, upon pain of direst punishment, that it be believed. Those who support creationism ought to have the courage to see these things.

Nevertheless, the book is recommended. Our children both in Junior High and Senior High can profit from it.

STUDIES IN II TIMOTHY, STUDIES IN COLOSSIANS AND PHILEMON, STUDIES IN HEBREWS, by H.C.G. Moule; Kregel Publications, 1977; II TIMOTHY, 180 pp., \$2.95; COLOSSIANS AND PHILEMON, 195 pp., \$2.95; HEBREWS, 120 pp.,

(Book Reviews con't. on page 215)

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

... OF THE ...

PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

4949 IVANREST AVENUE, S.W.

GRANDVILLE, MICHIGAN 49418

February 1, 1978

Beloved people of God:

Another semester is over in the Seminary. Exams were written during the latter part of January and the second semester is now under way. The first half of the school year has gone by swiftly, and in it we have had many tokens of God's favor, not the least of which is the progress of our students. Conscious of God's blessing, we are mindful of the many prayers which you make for us.

The chief purpose of this letter, however, is to give you some news concerning work which is being done for the expansion of our library.

If you have read the Acts of the last Synod, you probably noticed that Synod decided to microfilm all Synodical archives which are at present in the home of Synod's Stated Clerk. We have asked the Synodical Committee and the Theological School Committee to carry out this mandate of Synod for the benefit of our Seminary Library. We hope that two microfilm copies can be made of the archives—one for the churches and one for the School Library.

If these microfilmed archives are to have value for the students and faculty, however, we need what is called a reader. We are presently investigating the purchase of such a reader which can also be used as a copier to copy anything on microfilm for personal or class use. There are additional advantages to such a reader-copier. For one thing, there are many valuable books which are out of print but which can be purchased on microfilm and which can be added to the Library in this way. For another thing, we are considering the possibility of expanding this section of our Library to include anything which is of historical interest to our Protestant Reformed Churches. Exactly what this will include has not yet been determined. But such a section in our Library will be valuable for historical research of many different kinds.

All of this will require a considerable outlay of money—somewhere in the neighborhood of \$3000.00 to purchase the equipment. We are working with the T.S.C. to see if the money can be raised. We consider this to be a valuable addition to the Library and commend this cause to you.

In the meantime we are buying new and used books all the time. This is possible because of the generous gifts of the readers of the Standard Bearer; and we express our thanks to all of you who have contributed to this cause.

As your prayers are for us, so our prayers are for you and for God's blessing upon our Churches and all the cause of His kingdom.

Fraternally,
The Faculty

\$2.45; all paperback. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

These commentaries are all part of the "Kregel Popular Commentary Series." They were written by Moule who was Dean of Trinity College in Cambridge, England and Principal of Ridley Hall in Cambridge. He died in 1920 but left many writings on the New Testament. Some of these are printed in this series by Kregel's.

These commentaries have their chief value in giving a general meaning of every passage in the book treated. They particularly concentrate on individual words and phrases. The format is in the nature of notes on the text, very similar to the format used by "Barnes Notes." On the whole, they are sound and can be used with profit. They are too brief to be of help for a detailed study of the text, but can be particularly useful for society study. They are sufficiently easy to read for our young people to profit by them in their study for society and Catechism.

What I have said above does not concern the commentary on Hebrews. This book is composed of thirteen short essays on the book of Hebrews which sketch the book very generally and are not of great value in a study of the text. The book is useful only in helping to gain a general idea of the epistle as a whole.

We recommend the books, however, as helpful and cheap additions to home libraries. The price is well worth it.

THE MIND OF THE MASTER, by Robert E. Coleman; Fleming H. Revell Company, 1977; 128 pp., \$5.95 (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

The author of this book, Professor of Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary, wrote out of the conviction that we must know and share in the mind of Christ if we are to be effective in the work of evangelism. This book, therefore, is intended to acquaint us with the mind of Christ. Six different aspects of "the inner thought life of Christ" are discussed: Christ's unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, His prayer life, His knowledge of the Scriptures, His understanding of God's plan for dealing with mankind, His awareness of His own role within that plan, and His thoughts of the coming glory. Apart from the question of whether the author understands "the mind of Christ," there is too much emphasis in the book on Christ the Example and not sufficient emphasis on the Christ Who saves His own and empowers them by His Holy Spirit.

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For further information call (616) 669-5247 or (616) 457-3258, or write Andrew Brummel, 2381 Oak Hollow Drive, Jenison, Michigan 49428. We ask that you give this your prayerful consideration.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere sympathy to our member, Mrs. Irene Holstege, in the death of her father, MR. EDWARD J. VAN FAROWE. May the Lord comfort her in her bereavement and may she know that He who controls all things, doeth them well.

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
Mrs. Hib Kuiper, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet on March 1, 1978, at South Holland, Illinois, at 8:30 A.M. Material for the agenda must be given to the stated Clerk thirty days before the convening of Classis. Delegates in need of lodging should inform the Clerk of the South Holland Council of their need.

Rev. David Engelsma
Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

A number of items of interest have arrived during the past several weeks concerning our Southwest Church in Wyoming, Michigan. On Saturday morning, December 31, the Southwest Mr. & Mrs. Society sponsored a pancake breakfast at Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School. Payment for this delicious breakfast was by way of donations which will be used to furnish the nursery in the new Southwest Church building now under construction. And, speaking of the new building, the latest progress report received (the middle of December) announced that the walls of the new building were partially up.

A special congregational meeting was scheduled at Southwest on January 10 to consider a proposal from the church council to accept an offer to buy their present church building.

The Southwest council has also granted the request of their pastor, Rev. Herman Veldman, for emeritation and will request the approbation of Classis East at their next meeting.

On his way to Christchurch, New Zealand, Rev. Ronald Van Overloop and his family stopped over the weekend in Redlands, California. Rev. Van Overloop led the Sunday morning worship service in our Redlands Church on December 18.

Beginning with the New Year, Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas, has changed the time of their morning worship service from 10:30 to 9:30. The Sunday School follows the worship service. The congregation in Houston has undergone a slight expansion as Rev. Bekkering and his family rejoice in the birth of a baby girl, Wanda Joy, born on December 20.

After the special meeting of Classis West in Randolph, Wisconsin, on December 13, the pastors of our churches in Doon and Hull, Iowa and Edgerton, Minnesota, set up a three way pulpit exchange on December 18. Rev. Hoeksema of Hull preached in Edgerton, Rev. Slopsema of Edgerton preached in Doon, and Rev. Kamps of Doon preached in Hull.

These same three churches sponsor an organization called the Reformed Witness Committee. This Com-

mittee recently sponsored a lecture in Sheldon, Iowa. Response to this lecture was unusually good with 50 to 75 people from outside of our churches attending. Because of the response, a second lecture is planned for early February.

Our Church in Holland, Michigan, has recently made two changes in their order of worship. The reading of Scripture will now immediately precede the sermon. Also the Consistory will file out of the auditorium after the service before the congregation.

The collection taken during the Old Year's Night service in Holland was designated for the Church Publication Committee Fund. This fund is used to underwrite the cost of sending tape recordings of the church services to points as far away as Jamaica, New York, Washington, and Florida. Other of our churches such as Hope, First, and Kalamazoo are also active in this area, sending cassette recordings of church services, lectures, Bible lessons, and Reformed Witness Hour radio programs from Ireland to Australia and the Far East. It has proved to be an effective and inexpensive way to bring the Word.

The song services sponsored by the young people after the evening service the last Sunday of the month continue in First Church. The congregation gathered to sing Christmas carols on Christmas Sunday evening. During the November song service, another attempt was made to sing Dutch Psalms — in Dutch, of course! The volume was considerably greater this time as a number of Dutch Psalters were available.

The Young People's Societies in the Grand Rapids area gathered for a Christmas Mass Meeting on the Sunday before Christmas at First Church at 2 P.M. Rev. Joostens spoke on "An Unbelievable Story."

There appears to be considerable activity among the young people in our South Holland, Illinois, congregation making plans for the 1978 Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention if the number of bulletin announcements concerning Steering Committee meetings is any indication.

K.G.V.