

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Family devotions and family fellowship are being sacrificed for the rush and tumble of our daily existence. Family rooms are but a name. Our homes are more like hotels, with tenants coming and going. . . . We are too preoccupied with entertainments and pleasures of all sorts. Well may we be watchful in prayer, striving to hold that which we have and to pass it on to the generations to come, that no man take our crown. Ultimately, our own families, our own churches, our own personal faith, and our own blessedness are at stake.

See "God's Providence in 1953 . . ."

— page 116

CONTENTS:

Meditation —	
The Only Possible Mediator	98
Editorials —	
Dordt Did Not Cultivate a TULIP	101
Don't Destroy the TULIP!	102
Lest We Forget —	
The Doctrinal Issues of 1953 (2)	104
Signs of the Times —	
Signs in Society (4) - Racism	107
Bible Study Guide —	
Jude — Contend Earnestly for the Faith	109
All Around Us —	
What about Christmas?	112
Mrs. Marchiene Rienstra Resigns	113
Correspondence and Reply	114
Guest Article —	
God's Providence in 1953, and	
Our Calling to Instruct Our Children	116
News From Our Churches	120

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MEDITATION

The Only Possible Mediator

Rev. C. Hanko

*"Why must he be very man, and also perfectly righteous?"**"Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which hath sinned, should likewise make satisfaction for sin; and one, who is himself a sinner, cannot satisfy for others."**"Why must he in one person be also very God?"**"That he might, by the power of his Godhead sustain in his human nature, the burden of God's wrath, and might obtain for, and restore to us, righteousness and life."**"Who then is that Mediator, who is in one person both very God, and a real righteous man?"**"Our Lord Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."*

The Song of Redemption

The apostle John writes in Revelation, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'" (Rev. 5:13).

The echo of that song rings in our hearts when we read question and answer 18. It is as if we hear the sound as of a great thunder, like the voice of many waters carrying the song of deliverance and of victory.

We notice at once that Christ is presented in *all His fulness*. Not piecemeal, as if we must learn to know Him bit by bit, but in full harmony with our faith, we embrace the complete Savior. Even a small child knows in his simple way the confession: "Our Lord Jesus Christ."

We also notice that when the writers of our Book of Instruction come to this point, words fail them. Who dares to attempt to put in his own words such a glorious gospel of salvation, especially when Scripture is at hand in which God tells us about it? We can appreciate the fact that our fathers wisely turn to the Scriptures. The answer to question 18 is almost literally a quotation from I Corinthians 1:30. Here Christ is spoken of as the revelation of the wisdom of God to us. That Wisdom is revealed to us as Christ our Righteousness, and also our Sanctification. To sum it all up, He is our full Redemption!

Finally, what even adds to the beauty of this answer is the fact that this is a *confession*. You and I are placed before the question, "Who then is that Mediator?" To which we answer in one accord with the church of all ages, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." We hear Job testifying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." We hear the church of the shadows, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." This is my comfort, that I am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

The Only Mediator

Our Catechism has been writing mediator with a small *m*. A mediator is generally defined as "one who mediates or interposes between parties at variance for the purpose of reconciling them." Such a mediator seeks to remove the enmity between two parties, in order to bring harmony between them. He is in that sense a "go-between." But human definitions fail us

when we are speaking of things heavenly and spiritual. Actually Scripture never speaks of God and man as two parties at variance, who must be reconciled to each other. We are always the guilty ones, who are unfaithful by our willful disobedience. Even though His justice is offended, and satisfaction must be made. God always keeps covenant. God is like the faithful husband who still loves and seeks his erring wife, even though she has grossly sinned against him with her adulteries. Therefore Scripture speaks of God reconciling us unto Himself, never to reckon our sins against us.

We are now writing Mediator with a capital *M*. It may have seemed to us as if the Catechism was slow in reaching this point. Lord's Day 5 spoke of the kind of mediator we must seek for. The first part of Lord's Day 6 asks, as did Anselm of Canterbury centuries before, Why must the mediator be man, why righteous man, why very God in one person? All this is no vain speculation, but drives home to us, on the one hand, how desperately hopeless our salvation is, if it in any way depends on us. On the other hand, it shows the love of God Who keeps covenant forever. No, still more, it shows the wonder of our salvation, for "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (I Timothy 3:16).

The Perfect Mediator

"Who then is that Mediator, who is in one person both very God, and a real, righteous man?"

"Our Lord Jesus Christ." We hear the angels singing upon the fields of Ephratha, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14).

Our Mediator is *Jesus*. The name Jesus, let us never forget, means Jehovah-salvation. God came into the flesh, born of a virgin. Deny that wonder, and you have no Savior, not now or ever. Maintain that wonder, and you see the dawning of the new, eternal day in that Babe of Bethlehem, the person of the Son of God with a complete, yet weakened human nature. He is Immanuel, God incarnate. He is like us, except for the fact that He is righteous, sinless. God sent His own Son into the world to shed His blood and to redeem us from our sins.

Our Mediator is the *Christ*. He stands eternally before the face of God as God's Anointed, chief Servant in God's House to carry out the eternal purpose of His will. He is the Face of God, the revelation of Him Whom no eye can see, nor ever will see. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of Whom are all things, through Whom are all things, that in Him all the fulness of glory may

dwell forever. To our adorable God must be the glory unto all eternity.

Our *Lord!* Already then, when He stood in the presence of God as our eternal Mediator, He was appointed to be Lord of His Church. When He dwelled among us the disciples saw His glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth. At first they addressed Him as Rabbi, but the more they saw of His glory the more they were prompted to address Him as Lord. After the victory of the cross and His glorious resurrection from the dead, Thomas says, "My Lord and my God." Christ's Lordship was fully realized when He ascended to heaven and took His position of power at the Father's right hand. Christ is exalted as Lord over all, with a Name above all names in heaven, on earth, and down to the deepest hell, yet always as Head of His Church. Christ rules out of Zion, carrying out the counsel of God unto its consummation in the great and glorious Day of the Lord when every knee must bow and every tongue must confess that He is Lord, to the glory of the Father.

The Gift of God

Our Lord Jesus Christ! We utter His Name in awesome adoration, for He is made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification; yea, complete redemption!

Wisdom of God.

Have you never read with rapt wonder that amazing 8th chapter of Proverbs, where Christ speaks of Himself as the Wisdom of God saying, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. . . . Then was I by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before him." The figure seems to be of a child who admires everything that father does, so that father finds his joy in his son. Christ is the wisdom of God already in the decree, that in Him all fulness of blessedness should dwell, and that as Head of the Church. He is the revelation of God's eternal wisdom in creation, specifically in the creation of Adam. We cannot overlook the fact, that in question 16 we read, not, "I who have sinned must also make satisfaction for my own sin." Then salvation would be forever impossible. But we read, "*The same human nature* which hath sinned should likewise make satisfaction for sin." That immediately reminds us of the wisdom of God that made Adam our representative head and our first father. Only because Adam was our representative head in paradise could Christ, the last Adam, be our representative Head by coming in the flesh and bearing the sin of

mankind. Marvellous wisdom of God made it possible for Jesus to be born of a virgin, to tabernacle among us, to atone for our sins by His horrible death on the cross, to die our death, to arise again, and to be exalted to glory. This same Jesus comes with His Spirit into our hearts to teach us true wisdom. Christ, the wisdom of God, tells us of God's promises, the secrets of Father's heart, the mighty working of the power of His might in raising Christ Jesus, and in exalting Him to glory for our sakes. He teaches us God's precepts, which alone can lead us in wisdom's ways, to bring us to Himself in the glory He has prepared for us with Him in heaven. "Blessed is the man who heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." (Proverbs 8:34). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! . . . For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

God's Wisdom is revealed to us in righteousness. The Holy Word assures us that Christ is our Righteousness. When Christ during His earthly ministry walked the way of the cross, we walked that way with Him. When He spread His arms to be spiked to the accursed beam, we spread our arms in Him. When He cried out in anguish of hell under the consuming wrath of God, we cried out in Him. When He died, we died. When He was buried, we were buried. When He arose, we arose. When He ascended to heaven to sit at the Father's right hand, we attained that exalted position with Him. In holy wonder the apostle Paul declares, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Even now God clothes us from head to foot in the garments of Christ's righteousness, so that when He sees us, He sees Christ in us, and declares us free from sin and guilt, worthy of eternal life. When we finally stand before the great white throne we shall be declared righteous on the basis of Christ's merit, and be given our own place in glory with Him.

God's wisdom is also revealed to us in sanctification. Notice the difference, Christ *is* our Righteousness, but not our holiness. He is our sanctification. Holiness was merited for us on the cross, and is worked in us by Christ's Spirit. The same Spirit Who gives us our rebirth by implanting the life of Christ in us, also brings us to repentance, and the longing for forgiveness. He likewise teaches us to hate sin, to flee from it, to fight off temptations, and to walk in a new and holy life. We do not merely have the right to be sons; we are sons, with the beginning of eternal life in our hearts, a life which reaches out to Christ and for the perfection to come.

Sum it all up in that one glorious word: Redemption. Christ is our Redeemer, for He is our Savior, our Justifier, our Sanctifier, our Resurrection and our

Life. In Him is all our salvation.

Let him who glories, glory in the Lord!

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Dordt Did Not Cultivate a TULIP

Reformation Today is a magazine published by Cuckfield Baptist Church, Sussex, England. Its editor is Erroll Hulse, with whose writings I first became acquainted through his little booklet, *Billy Graham, The Pastor's Dilemma*. The magazine mentioned above is the voice of a whole group of so-called Reformed Baptists. However, it is becoming increasingly evident, especially from their increasing emphasis on the so-called "free offer of the gospel" and a proportionate decreasing emphasis on and departure from genuine Reformed and Calvinist truths, that there is little that is Reformed and much that is after all Arminian about them. This is disappointing. When I first read the booklet mentioned above, I was somehow led to hope that Mr. Hulse, who was at one time deeply involved in Graham's crusade evangelism, was moving in the right direction. Apparently this is not the case. For his recent writings indicate an increasing movement in the direction of Arminian generalism. Some time ago we criticized his booklet on the "free offer." The September-October, 1978 issue of *Reformation Today* contains two extensive articles from Hulse's pen which militate strongly against the Reformed faith.

The first article is entitled "Are we on the right track?" (pp. 14-16). The *Standard Bearer* probably would have criticized it anyway; but at the special request of a reader in England we offer a more detailed criticism of it and of the second article, "Did Christ Come To Save The Whole World?"

Mr. Hulse begins by misrepresenting both Dordrecht and TULIP. He writes:

Are we producing 'TULIP Calvinists' or 'Biblical Calvinists'? We need to remember the origin of TULIP. Arminius reacted against Beza who unlike

Calvin, his predecessor, did not hold the doctrines of grace in an harmonious proportion. Orthodox Dutch Christians in turn reacted against Arminius. They produced the formularies of Dordt. These were fine Scriptural statements. Part of the Confession consisted of a refutation of Arminius' five points. The five points countering Arminius came to be known as the five points of Calvinism, even though Calvin had no part in composing them.

In the next paragraph Hulse continues: "Since Dordt (1620) scores of books have been written based upon the outline known as TULIP. It is here that many have gone off the right track. They have forgotten that a system taken from a controversy in the past has to be studied in that context. It is so easy to go off balance on the one side or the other."

Now there is considerable mythology in this little introduction:

1. There is the slanderous myth that Beza differed doctrinally from Calvin. Mr. Hulse is not alone in this; in fact, he must have learned this tale from someone else. But it is nevertheless a slander of a very godly and learned Reformed scholar, for whom Calvin himself had only the highest respect and warmest friendship.

2. It is not true that Arminius reacted against Beza, and especially not that he reacted against Beza in distinction from Calvin. The truth is that he reacted against the Reformed faith as it was already established and confessed in the Netherlands, even to the extent that the Arminian party sought a revision of the existent creeds, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession (neither of which can be traced to Beza, by the way). Arminius and his followers (among whom were friends and fellow-travellers of

the Socinians!) manifested a fundamental antipathy against Calvinism itself, not merely against a supposedly extreme brand of Calvinism taught by Beza. The battle was not between moderate and extreme Calvinists, but between Calvinists and anti-Calvinists.

3. TULIP did not originate at Dordrecht. The Synod of Dordrecht did not cultivate a TULIP. A cursory study of the Canons of Dordrecht will make this plain. TULIP is a mnemonic (memory aid) to assist in remembering the so-called Five Points of Calvinism in the following order: 1) Total depravity; 2) Unconditional election; 3) Limited Atonement; 4) Irresistible grace; 5) Perseverance of the saints. But the above five points are not the same as the Canons of Dordrecht either in *order* or in *language*. The Canons of Dordrecht are the following: 1) Of Divine Predestination; 2) Of The Death Of Christ, And The Redemption Of Men Thereby; 3 & 4) Of The Corruption Of Man, His Conversion To God, And The Manner Thereof; 5) Of The Perseverance Of The Saints. It is obvious that significant differences in order and language prevent the use of TULIP with application to the Canons of Dordrecht. However famous the Netherlands may be for its tulips, this "TULIP" was not cultivated at Dordrecht.

4. Mr. Hulse nevertheless draws a false disjunction

between what he calls "TULIP Calvinists" and "Biblical Calvinists." For if it is true, as he says, that "the formularies of Dordt" were "fine Scriptural statements," then it also follows that what he calls "TULIP Calvinists" must be identical with "Biblical Calvinists."

All of which is not to say that there is anything fundamentally wrong with TULIP — provided, of course, that one remembers that it is nothing more than a mnemonic, a *pons assinorum*, an "asses' bridge." One must certainly not elevate either the order or the terminology of a mnemonic to the status of dogma. And as is the case with all mnemonics, if one remembers the mnemonic, but fails to remember that of which it is intended to be a reminder, the mnemonic is of no value. Still more, one must remember not only the *names* of the Five Points of Calvinism, but must know and understand and believe the *doctrines* covered by those names. If he does that, he will unreservedly take his stand with the Canons of Dordrecht, those "fine Scriptural statements." And then eventually he will find little or no need of a mnemonic such as TULIP.

Nevertheless, it is historically inaccurate to ascribe the cultivation of TULIP to Dordrecht.

Don't Destroy the TULIP!

This is what Erroll Hulse does.

You understand, I am now referring to TULIP in its proper sense, as a mnemonic reminding us of the so-called Five Points of Calvinism as maintained and expounded in the Canons of Dordrecht, those "fine Scriptural statements."

In fact, in one way or another Pastor Hulse pulls all the petals from this flower; and he literally proposes the substitution of a new flower, TCUIPP, facetiously suggesting that "In another language a word might be made of it."

In the first place, Hulse seeks to destroy the flower by suggesting that "essential truths such as human responsibility are omitted in TULIP." With an appeal to J.I. Packer, he speaks of the fact that human responsibility and divine sovereignty must be held together. But what does he mean by this human responsibility? The telling statement is: "There is such a thing as 'antinomy', seeming contradiction to

human reason, but no contradiction in the mind of God." I propose that the Canons of Dordrecht indeed maintain the responsibility of both the Christian and the unbeliever without resort to "seeming contradiction."

In the second place, he claims never to have heard "a really satisfactory treatment" of limited atonement. Again, I refer him to the Canons of Dordrecht, Chapter II, both the negative and positive sections. And if he desires more, there are numerous passages in our Protestant Reformed writings, both in books and in *The Standard Bearer*.

In the third place, he sharply militates against irresistible calling when he takes exception to the interpretation of Matthew 23:37 which applies "thy children" to the elect. This is the well-known passage which reads: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy

children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Hulse calls it "a distortion" to make "thy children" apply to the elect. But the choice confronting him is plain. Either Jerusalem's children here are elect children whom Christ willed to gather, and then Christ's will also prevailed over against the will of wicked Jerusalem, which "would not." Or they are not elect, and Christ graciously willed to gather them, but the will of wicked Jerusalem prevailed over the will of Christ — a form of resistible grace and a genuine Arminian doctrine. Hulse, with an additional appeal to Luke 19:41-44, chooses the latter and speaks of "those who had missed their time of opportunity."

In the fourth place, in presenting a chart which purports to set forth the comparative positions of Arminianism, Calvinism, and Hyper-Calvinism, he distorts these positions in more than one respect, so that Calvinism is watered down and so that what is true Calvinism is presented as Hyper-Calvinism. Two examples of watered down Calvinism: 1. Total depravity: "Man has fallen in all his faculties including his will." Three remarks: a. The third point of the Remonstrants in 1610 was stronger than this. b. An Arminian like Billy Graham says the same thing in *World Aflame*. c. Pastor Hulse's own description in *Billy Graham — The Pastor's Dilemma* is better than this. The question is: is natural man dead in trespasses and sins (not a Hyper-Calvinist doctrine)? Is he incapable of any good, and inclined to all evil by nature? 2. Perseverance of the Saints: "Through faith the elect persevere to salvation." The Arminian teaches this, too. The question is whether the elect persevere *because they are infallibly preserved*. Two examples of misrepresented Hyper-Calvinism: 1. Limited Atonement: "God deals lovingly with the elect and only wrathfully with the non-elect for whom there are no benefits from the atonement and no common grace." Not only is there nothing peculiarly Hyper-Calvinistic about this statement, but it is thoroughly in keeping with the Canons of Dordrecht, those "fine Scriptural statements." 2. Irresistible Grace: "The Holy Spirit regenerates the elect without prior preparation." This is a way of stating the truth of "immediate regeneration," a doctrine repugnant to all Baptists, of course. But again, there is nothing peculiarly Hyper-Calvinistic about it; and it is in thorough harmony with Dordrecht.

Worst of all, however, are the distortions which Hulse presents as being exposition of Scripture and as being "the best way." The first is an alleged substitution of "particular redemption" for "limited atonement." No Reformed man, of course, can object to speaking of particular redemption. But when a disjunction is created between particular redemption and limited atonement and when the statement is made (in question form) "that no limitation in the

atonement is suggested in the context of preaching the Gospel to all," one can only be reminded of that form of general atonement which is unlimited in its desire, its sufficiency, and its availability, but limited in its efficacy, a la Prof. Harold Dekker and the Christian Reformed Church.

Along with this goes a goodly dosage of philosophizing about common grace on the part of Hulse. Pastor Hulse speaks of "Exposition of Scripture the best way." Let him remember that exposition of Scripture is more, much more, than simply giving references and quoting texts. For example, he appeals to Romans 1:19 to 2:16 as proving that the apostle expounded "the doctrine of common grace which essentially precedes and is preparatory to saving grace." Let Pastor Hulse begin at Rom. 1:18 ("For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven. . ."), and let him demonstrate how this passage teaches any grace of God to the reprobate. The entire last section of Romans 1 speaks of wrath, nothing but wrath! It speaks of the fact repeatedly that God in that wrath visited sin with more sin and corruption. Some grace! Furthermore, let Pastor Hulse consider seriously the fact that the doctrine of common grace which he proposes in the statement quoted above is exactly the Arminian doctrine of common grace. And let him consider, too, the fact that the only time the Canons of Dordrecht speak of common grace, they place it in the mouth of the Arminians. Finally, let him consider that even the acknowledged greatest authority on common grace (Abraham Kuyper, the author of three large volumes on the subject) never wanted to connect common grace with saving grace and with the preaching of the gospel, but always insisted on the particularity of grace in that area.

No, when you change TULIP to TCUIPP (total depravity, common grace, unconditional election, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints and particular redemption) you have distorted and destroyed TULIP.

That no genuine lover of the doctrines of grace will ever do! (Next time: Did Christ come to save the whole world? My answer is Yes. Erroll Hulse's answer is really No.)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church extends their heartfelt sympathy to one of their fellow members, Mrs. Frank Soodsma, and to her husband in the death of their infant son, LUCAS JOHN, on October 18, 1978. May they find their comfort in the covenant promise of our Faithful Father. "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Matthew 18:14

The Ladies Society

LEST WE FORGET

The Doctrinal Issues of 1953 (2)

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

4. What was the substance of the minority report which was adopted by Classis East in May of 1953 with respect to the two statements of the Rev. H. De Wolf?

The main thrust of their report, as adopted by Classis East, is contained in the following paragraphs:

"We, the undersigned, members of the committee appointed to study the protests of the Rev. Hoeksema and the Rev. Ophoff against their consistory in re its action with the Rev. De Wolf cannot agree with the necessity nor with all the contents of the long document which precedes the advice given by the other members of our committee. Neither can we sign the advice that they have drawn up. Instead, as our minority report we present the following:

"1. We cannot agree that the Consistory should maintain its former stand that the statement 'God promises everyone of you that if you believe you will be saved' is not a concise statement of the truth. In our opinion both the statements which the protestants condemn are literally heretical regardless of what the Rev. De Wolf meant by them, regardless of how he explains them. We take this stand:

"a. because the protestants have clearly shown from the Scriptures and the confessions that the literal statements are heretical.

"b. and because we believe this is necessary for us to state in the light of our past experiences and history with the Liberated churches who use these Arminian expressions."

5. What was the final and complete form of the decision of Classis East as it was transmitted to the Consistory of First Church?

That "Decision re the Hoeksema, Ophoff-Fuller Case" was very lengthy and thorough. But because of its importance we quote it in its entirety:

"1. In our opinion both the statements which the protestants condemn are literally heretical regardless of what the Rev. De Wolf meant by them, regardless of how he explains them because:

the first teaches a general promise of God unto salvation to all that externally hear the preaching of the gospel, head for head and soul for soul, limited by a condition which man must fulfill, while Scripture and our confessions plainly teach:

1. That, indeed, the proclamation of the gospel comes to all to whom God in His good pleasure sends it.

2. That, however, in our proclamation of the gospel, we may never say that God promises salvation to everyone of the hearers, on condition of faith, for the promise itself is particular, unconditional, and only for the elect; for it is an oath of God which He, in His everlasting mercy and grace, swears by Himself to His beloved elect; which He, by sovereign grace, fulfills only to and in them, without any condition or prerequisite to be fulfilled by them; and which promise implies that, by His Holy Spirit, He causes them to receive and appropriate salvation by a true and living faith.

the second teaches that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter the Kingdom of God, which means that we convert and humble ourselves before we are translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, while Scripture and the Confessions plainly teach:

1. That the whole work of our conversion, regeneration in its narrower as well as in its wider sense, in virtue of which we humble ourselves, is sovereignly wrought by God, by His Spirit and Word, through the preaching of the gospel in His elect.

2. That this entire work of conversion is our translation and entering into the kingdom of God. Hence, it is not, cannot be *before** but THROUGH our conversion that we enter the kingdom. We humble ourselves IN the light, never IN darkness; we humble ourselves, whether initially or repeatedly, IN the kingdom, never OUTSIDE of it. Hence, our ACT of conversion is never antecedent to our entering in, but always is performed IN the kingdom of God, and there are no prerequisites.

Grounds:

a. the protestants have clearly shown from Scripture and the confessions that the literal statements are heretical.

b. we believe this is necessary for us to state in the light of our past experiences and history with the Liberated churches who use these Arminian expressions.

“2. Classis advises the Consistory of the First Church:

a. to demand that the Rev. De Wolf make a public apology for having made the two statements in question.

b. that the Consistory also publicly apologize for having supported the Rev. De Wolf with respect to the two statements in question.

“Grounds in re the first statement:

a. Scripture: Heb. 6:16-18, Rom. 9:6-8, 16, 18, Acts 13:48, John 6:36 and 37, John 10:26-30.

b. Confessions: Heid. Cat. 20, 65, 66; Confession 22, 33-35, Canons I, A, 6, 7, 10; I, B, 2, 3, 5; II, A, 5, 8.

“Grounds in re the second statement:

a. Scripture: Col. 1:13, Eph. 2:1-3, John 3:3-5, Phil. 2:12-13.

b. Confession: Heid. Cat. 8, Canons III, IV, 1-3, 10-12; V. 6-8.

“3. Classis further advises the Consistory of First Church:

a. that in case the Rev. De Wolf should refuse to apologize, which our God graciously forbid, the Consistory proceed to suspend him from the office of the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, according to the pertinent articles of the D.K.O. (Note: “D.K.O.” is a Dutch abbreviation for “Church Order of Dordrecht.” HCH)

b. that in case any elder or elders should refuse to

submit to the proposed action as stipulated under No. 2, b, which God graciously forbid, such elder or elders be disciplined according to the articles of the D.K.O. pertaining thereto.

Grounds: Art. 79, 80, D.K.O. (Note: These are the articles of the Church Order concerning the discipline of ministers, elders, and deacons. HCH)

“4. That Classis appoint a delegation of three ministers and two elders to personally acquaint the Consistory with the above decisions and advice at the earliest consistory meeting:

Grounds:

a. Almost all the elders of the First Church are absent from Classis meeting and thus are not aware of the five days of deliberation which preceded the above advice.

b. The matter is one of great magnitude and importance.

c. We owe the mother church of our entire denomination such courtesy and respect.

d. We should spare no efforts on our behalf, under the blessings of our Covenant God, to save the dear brethren involved.”

For the sake of clarity it is necessary to insert some historical notes at this point, especially for those readers who did not live through this history.

It was the above decision of Classis East which precipitated the so-called split in our churches. Or, if you will, it was the above decision which constituted a kind of declaration of Reformation in our churches.

I cannot very well tell the whole story in all its details at this point; that would take us too far afield. What follows is but the barest sketch of a period of storm and battle in which men's souls were severely tried and in which congregations and whole families and hundreds of members were put to the test as to their loyalty to our Protestant Reformed heritage. From a certain point of view those were glorious times: times of renewed dedication to the cause of the truth, times of renewed zeal in the pulpit, times of relief from the well-nigh intolerable tensions of strife and of release from a terrible atmosphere of disloyalty and suspicion. But from another point of view, considered from the point of view of the tearing apart of churches and families, the decimation of congregations, the parting of the ways among those who had once been officebearers and members in a small and closeknit denomination, or from the point of view of the tremendous struggle it required to reconstitute churches, to hold congregations and the denomination together, to face the myriad problems attendant upon the struggle to keep or to reacquire church properties — I say, from this point of view,

one could never wish to live through such times again. Nevertheless, the Lord made all things well for our churches. Let us never forget that!

What happened as a result of that momentous decision of Classis East?

When the special committee of Classis East conveyed the decision to the Consistory of First Church, the latter decided on June 1, 1953 to adopt the decision of Classis and to act accordingly. However, when it came to executing that decision later in June, neither the Rev. De Wolf nor the elders agreeing with him would apologize. Consequently Rev. De Wolf was suspended and the elders were deposed. But they did not submit to this discipline, not even under protest. On the contrary, they made it known that they intended to take over First Church and to hold services in the church building. The faithful consistory, rather than bring about an open physical conflict for the property, held services after the break in the auditorium of the Grand Rapids Christian High School. There they continued to meet until the property question was settled many months later. First Church, therefore, was "split" from this time on. That was June, 1953.

Farther than that the separation did not proceed during the summer of 1953 in Classis East, which at that time included all congregations east of the Mississippi River.

Surprisingly enough, the split next affected the churches of Classis West. The consistory of First Church had quite properly sent notices to all sister consistories of the denomination notifying them of the suspension from office of the Rev. De Wolf. Several churches in Classis West took occasion from this notification to "take sides" rather than recognize even formally and temporarily the suspension of De Wolf. And not only did those churches take sides, but they sent overtures to the September session of Classis West urging them to take sides in favor of De Wolf and opposed to the legal consistory of First Church. There was even an overture at that early date to oust Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff from the Theological School. Classis West heeded these overtures by various decisions. The result was that the conflict spread like wildfire through the churches of Classis West even before there was any further activity in the east. What was the outcome? In Classis West there

was only one entire congregation and one minister who remained Protestant Reformed. The congregation was Doon, Iowa, and the minister was the writer of these lines. There were four congregations (Hull, Iowa; Edgerton, Minnesota; Redlands, California; and Lynden, Washington) which were split, and in which the faithful element of the congregation had to be reconstituted. All of these were also temporarily without ministers. Later Pella, Iowa was also reconstituted. On the other hand, no fewer than six entire congregations left the Protestant Reformed Churches and later either disbanded or eventually found their way into the Christian Reformed denomination along with the rest of the De Wolf group. Ten of the eleven ministers of Classis West went along with De Wolf.

In October, 1953 the storm struck Classis East. The De Wolf faction tried to have delegates seated at the October continued session of classis. When they failed in this and when Classis decided that the Hoeksema-Hanko consistory was the legitimate consistory of First Church, those who sided with De Wolf stood with him and left the denomination. It is safe to say that also in Classis East no church was left completely unaffected. But in several churches there was a division. Creston (Grand Rapids), Second Church of Grand Rapids (Southwest at present), Fourth Church (now Southeast), and Holland saw splits. Kalamazoo actually became so small that it was a branch of First Church for a little while, until it was reconstituted. Of the ministers of Classis East, four sided with De Wolf and said farewell to our denomination; and several years later the Rev. R. Veldman added his name to that group, subjecting Southeast Church to another split.

This, in briefest outline, accounts for the radical difference in the denominational statistics of 1952 and 1954 which I quoted last time.

But the issues were doctrinal issues. And they were not insignificant doctrinal issues, but issues which went to the very heart of our Protestant Reformed heritage. That is the reason why our churches and membership were willing to undergo the tribulation of the separation in 1953.

And to these important doctrinal issues we shall call attention in greater detail.

Lest we forget!

AN IDEAL CHRISTMAS GIFT
A Subscription To The
STANDARD BEARER

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Signs in Society (4)

Racism

Rev. Mark Hoeksema

In the light of the teaching of the Scriptures, particularly the visions of Revelation 13, we have been examining various aspects of signs of the times as they become manifest in society. We have stressed the idea that in order for the antichristian kingdom to become a reality, there must be, as much as possible, uniformity in society, and a general equality among mankind. We have looked at two social phenomena or movements that clearly point in this direction, the women's liberation movement and the gay rights movement. In harmony with the theme of this series of articles, we now turn our attention to another factor in the growing trend toward unity in society, namely racism.

This darker side of our society (and others) is known variously as class struggle, at least when the emphasis falls upon economically-based distinctions, or sometimes as intergroup conflict. But whatever its name, racism in whatever form consists of conflict between various groups in society based upon noticeable physical or cultural differences between those groups. Though it has assumed many forms in the course of history, in our day its most common form is discrimination because of race or national origin. Thus, in America, the most common objects of racism are blacks, persons of Spanish descent, such as Mexicans or Puerto Ricans, and American Indians. Together these groups make up about 16% of our population, which makes them a definite minority, and likely candidates for discrimination. This discrimination, or differential treatment of such persons due to their characteristics, takes the form of job or

employment discrimination, of educational discrimination, of economic discrimination, and sometimes of religious discrimination, as well as discrimination in housing and in the administration of justice. In all of these areas these minorities are inferior: they are usually at the bottom of the job ladder, are more poorly educated than whites, are over-represented in the category of those who are poor, have been relegated to substandard housing in big-city ghettos, and often do not receive fair treatment in the courts of the land.

That all of these facts are true has been demonstrated repeatedly, so that no lengthy proof is required here. And that all of this discrimination in its various forms has caused sometimes violent upheavals in American society is also well known. That the whole American way of life has been affected by an awareness of racism is also clear. One need only have lived during the 1960's to be conscious of these truths; during that time especially the news media were literally full of news concerning racism and efforts to overcome it. And the same is true today, though perhaps on a lesser scale, as is witnessed by the continuing controversy over school busing in many cities across the land.

The causes of racism are many and complex. Some would argue that the distinction between classes and the resulting differential treatment of them is due to economic factors. Others argue that it is due to cultural patterns which have been ingrained through many generations. Still others look for the cause along the lines of various psychological theories. It is

not my intention to try to enumerate all of these theories, or to evaluate their worth or truthfulness. Nor is it appropriate here to moralize or to preach concerning our attitude towards racism as manifested in our society. And surely anyone who knows anything about the history, causes, and manifestations of racism in all its intricacies will not attempt to offer any instant panacea for it. At bottom, of course, racism is rooted in the hatred of the natural man, hatred against God, but hatred which shows itself in maltreatment of his fellow man. And the only real cure for any form of hatred is the love of Christ in the heart.

But the significant thing is not racism itself, nor even its causes. After all, the differences between the races are God-ordained, and of long standing; the distinctions can be traced all the way back to Babel and the confusion of languages. And to the Christian the hatred that is evident in society is no surprise either in the light of what the Scriptures have to say about the nature and results of sin. The history books are full of wars, persecutions, and atrocities by one people against another, a scenario which will not change appreciably until the end of time. The conclusion must not be drawn from all of this that racism is justified (this reasoning has been used); the conclusion is that conflict between groups in society, whether within nations or between nations, is a reality of life today, as it always has been.

The significant thing in this whole matter of racism in relationship to the signs of the times is the attempt to overcome and eradicate it. To modern man racism is intolerable; it is a blot on the record of human history, and an embarrassing reminder of the failure of "civilized" man to live with his fellow man. And therefore it must be eliminated if at all possible; no expense or trouble must be spared. And particularly since the last decade, when man became highly conscious of this problem, it has occupied center stage in the drama of human endeavor. Today we hear a great deal about the relations between the developed and wealthy nations of the world and the Third World nations. The nations of the world freely give of their advice to such countries as Ireland and South Africa. Stories of genocide originate from Southeast Asia regularly. All the world knows of the nationalistic and cultural violence in the Middle East. And the President of the United States is now embarked on a campaign for human rights throughout the world.

But this same pattern may be seen in our own country. When reading history books one would think that racism was dead after the Civil War, for both by war and by subsequent legislation the black minority was made equal to the white majority, cf. the Thirteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Acts of

1866 and 1875. But racism was not dead at all; it flourished for almost one hundred years, especially under the doctrine of "separate but equal." Then came 1954, when the Supreme Court decided that the principle of separate but equal was unconstitutional with specific application to educational opportunities. After this decision was enforced by the federal government by the use of the military, and after mounting pressure from civil rights groups, another civil rights act was passed in 1959 and another in 1960, both of which were aimed at protecting voting rights of all peoples. Then came the 1960's and with them, rapid and drastic change. The black power movement arose and exerted considerable influence in American society, and various committees and organizations sprang up, all seeking equality in various ways. Largely in response to all of this, discrimination in housing, in jobs, in education, and in voting was outlawed, cf. especially the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968. Many government programs were initiated to help minorities: Medicare and Medicaid, Job Corps, Model Cities, Head Start Program, Urban Renewal programs, National Health Centers, and Neighborhood Youth Corps are just a few examples. More recently, the courts have decreed equality of opportunity and integration by means of the busing of children to various schools in the cities of the land. It is now illegal, in fact as well as in theory, to discriminate against anyone because of his race, creed, or national origin.

What is striking is that all of these laws and programs are efforts to eliminate racism. But even more significant is the underlying assumption that there should not be any differences between races. If this were not true, then there would be no reason for the prohibition of all discrimination. The goal of man today is to make everyone equal in every way possible. And therein lies one of the signs of the times. Equality, uniformity, are necessary for the success of the antichristian world power. If all the peoples of the world are to be truly united, willingly and voluntarily, under the universal dominion of antichrist, then it is above all else needful that they be as much as possible the same. We are seeing before our very eyes an overt and flagrant attempt to bring about that kingdom as soon as possible. And in the context of the beast who had the deadly wound that was healed (Revelation 13) this attempt to overcome the God-ordained division of Babel shall be for a time apparently successful; all outward differences among the peoples of the world shall be overcome to the point that they will unite under the headship of antichrist. This ungodly union will, of course, exclude the people of God, who will be the objects of the most violent persecution in the history of the world. But according to Revelation, this spurious union will dissolve, for once more nation will rise against nation

and people against people, and their hatred will culminate in the final battle of Armageddon, which will signal the destruction of this world, the return of Christ, and the salvation of His elect people.

What then should be our stance regarding all of this? As Christians, faithful to the Scriptures, we believe that there are essentially only two kinds of people, namely, believers and unbelievers. This implies that we are not trapped into some version of the social gospel, nor devote our time and efforts in cooperation with the attempts to obliterate racism in

the world, but instead that we live as citizens of the heavenly kingdom. Solving the problems of the world is *not* the church's business, contrary to popular opinion today. Rather, our calling as Reformed Christians is to seek the company of believers, and to be discriminating on the proper basis of the principle of a true faith and walk. Then matters of race are of little importance, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek. And our calling is to read the sign of the attempted amalgamation of the peoples of the world, and in the light of the imminence of the kingdom of antichrist, to seek the heavenly country and city.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Jude - Contend Earnestly For the Faith

Rev. J. Kortering

One thing we are most concerned about when considering the welfare of the church today is how to deal with apostasy. True, we are concerned about the general decay in society, the lawlessness of our age, and the utter contempt for that which is good. When this spirit is expressed in the church by disregard for the Scripture, by demanding the right to violate God's law and go unpunished, and by scoffing at the faithful who follow God's ways, we become very much concerned. This is apostasy in the church. The book of Jude deals with this important subject.

AUTHOR

He describes himself in verse 1 as "servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James." Ultimately the Author is Christ Who writes through Jude, a shortened form for the name Judas. There were two disciples of Christ named Judas: the one called Thaddaeus, Matt. 10:3, and the other Judas Iscariot, Matt. 10:4. Whether the author of this book was one of them is

subject to debate. He only designates himself as servant of Jesus Christ and not as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He also refers to certain "words spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ," verse 17, seeming to exclude himself. John Calvin considers him one of the apostles and does not find sufficient proof to do otherwise. Besides this, he is "brother of James." This James was the brother of Jesus, Matt. 13:55, and also author of the Epistle of James. He was a leader in the church at Jerusalem. This makes Jude a brother of Jesus; he is listed in the family, Matt. 13:55 (the Judas there is Jude). If I Cor. 9:5 refers to him, and it appears as if it does, he was a married man and travelled about as a preacher. Rather than calling himself "brother of Jesus," he calls himself "brother of James," in keeping with the de-emphasis upon the blood tie with Christ. Since his older brother James was well known in the churches, the readers would know his identity.

DATE

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact year. There are two different views. The one suggests that it was written between A.D. 70-80, after the destruction of Jerusalem and after the writing of II Peter, from which it is suggested Jude quotes (verses 6, 7 from II Peter 2). The other view has it written at an earlier period, A.D. 66-70. Most conservative Bible scholars place it during the earlier period. The significance of the date is seen in that it is near the close of the apostolic age and just prior to the terrible destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. The people of God in those times needed the warning and comfort of this book.

THE MESSAGE

Keeping with the style of writing letters in those days, Jude identified himself as the writer and then mentions the ones to whom he writes: "to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called," verse 1. This is a complete description of God's people in the world: called, sanctified, and preserved. From the letter, we cannot learn whether he had any special group of Christians in mind. It is a fact that apostasy was widespread then, and the need for this epistle was general.

He pronounced upon them the blessing of Christ: "Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied," verse 2. Mercy is mentioned first, since this need is critical for the church struggling with apostasy. She needs the love of Christ that delivers them from evil.

The purpose for writing the letter is stated in verse 4. Jude evidently had a different purpose originally (to write concerning the truths of salvation), but changed this due to the need to exhort them to contend earnestly for the faith. There were certain men who justified their wicked deeds and actively taught others to follow them. They, "turned the grace of God into lasciviousness" (lustful, sexual expression). They were antinomian (against the law of God), claiming that grace freed a man from the obligation to keep the law.

From this short letter we learn how terrible these men were. We will list the things mentioned: they were secretive, vs. 4, denied Christ, vs. 4, proud and disdained those in authority, vs. 8; they were ignorant and brash, vs. 10, hypocritical and deceitful, even joined the love feasts of the church, vs. 12; they did a lot of grumbling about some people and flattered others, whichever was to their own advantage, vs. 16, and finally were schismatic, causing division, vs. 19.

Jude shows how bad they were by placing them in the company of wicked men in past history. Those mentioned include the stiff-necked Israelites who complained in the wilderness, vs. 5, the angels who

joined Satan in the rebellion, vs. 6, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah who were homosexuals (going after strange flesh) vs. 7, and the people who lived on the earth at the time of Enoch and persecuted him, vs. 15.

Because of this, Jude declares that God will judge them as he did the wicked people in years gone by. He reminds them that, concerning the rebels in the wilderness, "God afterward destroyed them," vs. 5; the fallen angels are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day," vs. 6; the inhabitants of Sodom "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire," vs. 7; and Enoch pronounced upon his enemies, "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all and to convince all that are ungodly among them . . ." vs. 15.

We may ask, why did Jude spend so much time describing these wicked people and pointing out the nature of their sins? The answer comes in verses 17 and 18: "remember the words . . . how they told you there should be mockers." We must expect to see them and be able to identify them. This is also crucial today. It is so easy to excuse apostasy as ignorance — people mean well, they don't know any better. The fact is that anyone who *justifies* the lie and *excuses* sin is wicked. Such people are brought up within the church, know the truth, but reject it. They are a corrupting influence and must be rooted out.

In order to do this, we must be spiritually strong ourselves. We must build up ourselves in the most holy faith, pray in the Holy Ghost, and keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for Christ to come, vs. 20, 21.

Jude mentions an important balance which is necessary if we are to deal with apostasy effectively. We must know the error, be strong ourselves, but also be personally concerned for those who walk in sin. Even though he describes their sin in awful detail, he does not say "Let them go to hell," "kick them out of the church and be done with it." No, listen: "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh," vs. 22, 23. Some must be rebuked firmly and severely; others must be gently led to see their evil, using discretion and wisdom. In all instances, sin must be abhorred as a contaminated garment (probably referring to one a leper wore).

He assures his readers that the only hope for safety and salvation is in Jesus Christ, Who is "able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion, and power both now and forever. Amen," vs. 24, 25.

SPECIAL POINTS

In a more detailed discussion of this letter, there are three questions that would inevitably arise. We will deal with them briefly.

1. Does verse 4 prove reprobation? "For there are certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation. . . ." The original word for "ordained to this condemnation" is "wrote before of this condemnation or punishment." The prophets and apostles predicted that these evil men would suffer God's judgment. This prophecy, however, in order to be true is rooted in God's counsel of reprobation.

2. Are the verses 9 (Michael contending with the devil over the body of Moses) and 14, 15 (Enoch's prophecy) quotations from some apocryphal book, and if so does that lend credence to them? Origin, the church father, claims verse 9 to be a reference to the book entitled, "Assumption of Moses"; and some commentators claim verses 14, 15 to be a quotation from the "Book of Enoch" 1:9. Neither the Assumption of Moses nor the Book of Enoch are included in what we call the Apocryphal Books as listed in Art. 6 of our Netherlands Confession. Two considerations enter here. More than likely the reference is to part of the Jewish tradition that lived in the mind of Jude. It could be a reference without quotation. Even if it is a quotation (something hard to prove or disprove), it would be no different from Paul's reference to the philosophers (Acts 17:28, Titus 1:12). It would not mean an endorsement of all the ideas, especially not of the apocryphal writings, but simply making a certain point that applied.

3. Were the apostate people referred to (the libertines) the Gnostics of the second century? These people openly taught that sin was of the "flesh" and of no real consequence. We should realize that the

spirit of the libertines infects every age, including the New Testament age. The apostles had to deal with it repeatedly: Corinth (chapters 5:1-13, 6:13-20, 11:17-22), Colosse (2:16-23, 3:5-11), Thyatira with the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:14, 15, 20). This evil spirit reached its culmination in the Gnostics of the second century. The old devilry of, "let us sin that grace may abound," Rom. 6:1, has its appeal in every age.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. What is included in the "faith once delivered unto the saints," verse 3? Would this be the contents of the entire Bible?

2. Who are the libertines in our day? How could they be "spots in our feasts of charity"? verse 12.

3. Some of these apostates are outside the local congregation and in other churches, yet they claim to be part of the church of Christ. What should be our response to them?

4. Discuss how different methods of approach must be used when dealing with people who are walking in sin, verses 22, 23. Is this even true when correcting children that have different natures? A family, especially with young people, might discuss what this involves.

5. How does this letter show the seriousness of dealing with sin?

6. Contending with the faith involves growing in the faith ourselves. What does this involve? How can this best be done?

This letter reveals sharp condemnation of all who teach that it is all right for a Christian to sin. Nothing can be more destructive of Christ's cause in the world than such a lie and its accompanying immorality.

We do well to contend *earnestly* for the faith.

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ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

What about Christmas?

About a year ago there appeared in this rubric a quotation from *Christianity Today* concerning the evils in the celebration of halloween. Trouble was, the quotation appeared more than a month after the celebration of that notorious day. In response to the article, two letters were received which sought to apply some of the same objections to the celebration of our Christmas — but the letters were received after Christmas. Rather than presenting them in this column several months after Christmas, I have held on to them til this season. My apologies to the writers for holding them so long, but I trust they will understand.

Read these — what do you think?

Dear Editor:

The article by Rev. G. Van Baren entitled, "Happy Halloween" (Vol. 54, No. 6; December 1977) was very enlightening, but conveniently so. After all, it is not likely to affect anyone much when almost everyone is caught up in the spirit of Christmas (whatever that is). Perhaps someone will reflect momentarily and seriously contemplate, "I simply must consider that next Halloween."

In the meantime, perhaps your readers should seriously consider the equally pagan origins of Christmas. It is well known that pagan Imperial Rome observed weeklong solstice celebrations called Saturnalia and Juvenalia which culminated in Brumalia on the 25th of December. It was a time of merry-making, exchanging gifts, lighting candles, and wine drinking. Any Ecclesiastical Encyclopedia will verify this.

Consonant with Romish evangelistic methodology the pagan rites of Caesar's Rome were simply sanctified for the use of Papal Rome. The heathenish "harmless" elements were transformed into the "Christ-Mass" cycle of holidays. This cycle gradually evolved around the day of Christ's supposed nativity.

Other customs such as the Christmas tree, mistletoe, the feasting on large dinners of pork, mincemeat,

etc. have their origin, not in the pagan Roman festival, but from Celtic and Teutonic people's customs. Again, the Roman Church simply "baptized" these formerly pagan ideas into Christian usage.

If you represent true Biblical faith and in the best Protestant tradition, you will not only refuse to observe Halloween, but Christmas as well. It was the Lutherans, you remember, that maintained that all Romish holidays and observances were permissible so long as they were not prohibited in the Scripture. Luther simply "baptized" the so-called church calendar of the Roman Catholics into Protestant usage. The Calvinists held that no doctrine, church government, discipline, or element of worship should be acknowledged as valid except those which Scripture specified. The most consistent and thorough-going Reformers in Switzerland, France, England, Scotland, and Holland *absolutely prohibited* the observance of the Christmas.

It is of no use to protest that the rites of pagan antiquity have lost their anti-Christian meaning. That same excuse might be made for the Navaho rain dance (I suppose few Navaho's really believe it evokes the gods). But since most Reformed people do not do the Navaho Rain Dance, it probably does not touch your conscience. Doubtless the name "Christ", in vulgar usage has lost its meaning to most people, but I hope you would forbid its irreverent usage anyway.

I realize that this letter comes at a convenient time (Dec. 27), but I hope you will seriously consider it next December. In the meantime, and on Halloween and Christmas and Easter, Protestants must be consistent in their condemnation of the Roman Church for its compromising with the pagan world.

Sincerely,
(Rev.) Karl A. Hubenthal
Knox Orthodox
Presbyterian Church
Lansdowne, Pa.

P.S. Rev. Van Baren wonders whether we should tell our children about the pagan origins of Halloween, or

just let them have fun while they are young. I suggest we tell them the truth! "Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed Him, If ye abide in My word, then ye are truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:31-32.

In response to the postscript, I would only suggest that I assumed that all would take the statement as the "tongue-in-cheek" statement it was meant to be. The intent was to bring one exactly to the conclusion of the writer of the letter: "I suggest we tell them the truth!" I do regret that the writer of the letter took this as a serious suggestion on my part. On the rest of the letter I hope to comment later.

A second letter was also received from a member of our congregation at Hudsonville. He raises many of the same points as the earlier writer. He writes:

In the Dec. 15, 1977 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, you wrote an article entitled, "Happy Halloween." You quoted from an article which was written in *Christianity Today* by John W. Howe. His article was very instructive and informative, and I am in full agreement with it.

We discussed this article with several other couples, and each time our attention was taken away from "Halloween" and turned toward "Christmas." Why do we condemn one pagan holiday and not others? The celebration of "Christmas" has bothered me for several years, and I would like to see some articles about this day in the *Standard Bearer*.

We have talked about this day with many, many couples, some agreeing that maybe we should not celebrate it, while others disagreeing.

Are we as churches afraid to talk and write about it? Is the origin any less pagan than Halloween? I

think not. What about the exchanging of gifts at Christmas time? What about the Christmas tree? What about the date? How and what was Calvin's ideas about this day? Or did the church and the pagans also have a wedding for this celebration? Is it *necessary* that the church set apart a day to remember the birth of Jesus, especially December 25? Were the fathers of our Church Order wise in making this decision? Do we tell our children about Christ-mas, or do we keep silent, and go along with the world with our trees, presents, etc.?

I would like some answers to these questions in a future *Standard Bearer* article. Remember, to be consistent with the Halloween article, we may not go under the so often heard phrase, "That's our Christian liberty." If that be the case, then we may "trick or treat" on Halloween, have Easter eggs and bunnies on so-called Easter, have our trees, presents, and you name it, on so-called Christmas Day.

Where is our separateness, our distinctiveness? Church and Babylon? No, we must be warned against this, of course.

Yours in Christ,
Phil Dykstra

P.S. Maybe this paper can be printed in the *Standard Bearer* and then a reply by you or some other minister could follow.

I trust that the above will give everyone something to think about as the Christmas season comes upon us. Perhaps some would want to use the above material for discussions on the subject.

Brother Phil expects also my response in this rubric. I intend, D.V., to give some comments on the subject next time.

Mrs. Marchiene Rienstra Resigns

The *Banner*, October 27, 1978, contains a "letter to the editor" from Mrs. Marchiene Rienstra informing the readers of the *Banner* that she has resigned her membership in the Christian Reformed Church. She had gone through Calvin Seminary and had applied to the Synod of 1978 for admittance into the ministry — the first woman who would serve in such capacity in that denomination. Though the Synod admitted women to the office of deacon (provided they did not rule within the church), the Synod denied the request of Mrs. Rienstra — a request supported by some of the professors of Calvin Seminary. As a result of that decision, she resigned membership in the

C.R.C. and remains affiliated with a United Presbyterian Church in Grand Rapids where she had served as interim pastor (and already had membership while still member in the C.R.C.). She insists that her loyalty to Christ in His call to her for the ministry must be considered greater than her loyalty to a denomination in which she was born and trained. One can only be amazed at a "loyalty" which can so easily ignore the teachings and practices of the church throughout the past thousands of years, and the teachings and practices presented in Scripture itself — the ultimate test of proper loyalty.

CORRESPONDENCE AND REPLY

Calvin College
November 1, 1978

Rev. Gise Van Baren
Standard Bearer Editorial Office
4975 Ivanrest SW
Grandville, MI 49418

Dear Rev. Van Baren:

I was hurt and grieved by your allegations in the October 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer* in which you say (without documentation) that the church which nurtured me and which I love "already holds many positions contrary to Scripture and the creeds" (p. 41). I presume you have in mind common grace, women deacons, and the like. You give the unmistakable impression that when we are faced by these issues we ignore the Bible and our doctrinal standards and take positions either arbitrarily or under pressure of the times. Such is far from the case. We take the Bible and the creeds very seriously and all of our positions that we take are based upon them. It is true that we read them differently than do you. But what warrant does that give you for claiming that we take positions contrary to these standards? We could as well say the same of you. But that would be unparalleled arrogance. Since the Lord has seen fit to give neither of us infallible interpretative powers we do well to listen to John Calvin, the prince of exegetes when he says in the preface to his commentary on the Romans, "God never designed in such a way to exercise liberality towards His servants as that each should be endowed with a full and perfect understanding on every point, and doubtless in this respect, he intended in the first place to keep us humble, and next of all to keep up and maintain the desire and the exercise of brotherly love and communion." It seems to me that the cause of Christ would be better served if we kept this salutary advice in mind.

Sincerely yours,
w/s/ John Bratt, Th.D
Religion and Theology Department

P.S. I would appreciate placement of this letter on your page.

Hudsonville, MI
November 14, 1978

Dr. John Bratt
Religion and Theology Department
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI

Dear Dr. Bratt,

I would express appreciation and thanks to your response to my article, and especially since it gives me an opportunity to elaborate on the brief statement to which you objected.

I would also state that I am sorry to have made any statement to hurt or grieve you. That was not my intent. For me, it was a matter of grief to have made the claim I did — for I would wish and pray it were not true. But in light of the history of the past 20 years and more, the reader (who knows this history) can judge whether the claim is correct. I would dare to say that thousands of voices arise from within the C.R.C. itself crying, in sorrow, "Amen" to the statement found offensive by you.

I appreciated your quote from "Uncle John" (as your *Banner* editor prefers to call Calvin). And I would express a wholehearted agreement with that. Nor was it my intention to leave the impression that I had a "full and perfect understanding on every point." I have learned increasingly how incomplete and imperfect my understanding is. But, Dr. Bratt, are you not wrongly applying Calvin's statement to my claim? It was not in my mind a question of two who have differing, but *Scriptural*, interpretations of certain texts of the Bible. If it were, the quote would have been pertinent. The question at issue is whether two can have *different*, opposing, views of a certain passage — yet ignore such difference under the guise of being endowed with but imperfect understanding. Can one call a color "black," while another calls it "white" — yet claim that the difference in viewpoint is due to lack of complete understanding? Can two with equal validity claim that women *may* and at the same time *may not* serve as deacons — on the basis of the same Scripture? I think you know well that such

was never Calvin's position. In fact, the paragraph just before that which you quoted, states, "And if it be deemed a great wickedness to contaminate anything that is dedicated to God, he surely cannot be endured, who, with impure, or even unprepared hands, will handle that very thing, which of all things is the most sacred on earth. It is therefore an audacity, closely allied to a sacrilege, rashly to turn Scripture in any way we please, and to indulge our fancies as in sport; which has been done by many in former times."

You mention that the offending phrase is without documentation. I am certain that I can provide that if it is necessary. In the meantime, I have but to remind you that the *Standard Bearer* has repeatedly pointed out on many occasions the "positions contrary to Scripture" adopted by your various Synods. I also refer you to various of the issues of *Outlook* magazine where writers who were nurtured also by and are members of the same church as you are, have made charges similar to mine – and with documentation. If you wish, I'll give you specific references where these can be found. You have probably perused the book, "A Handbook of C.R.C. Issues," published by the A.C.R.L. (Box 1303, Grand Rapids, MI., 49501; cost: \$7.95). Abundant documentation for these "many positions contrary to Scripture and the creeds" can be found there – prepared by members of the same church which nurtured you.

You bring up the issue of "common grace." I did not mention that in the article. But since you did, may I ask: can God's position be one of *favor* and of *wrath* against the wicked at the same time? Can God have a *free offer* of salvation to all who hear the preaching, and at the same time NOT give such a free offer? This, briefly, represents the difference between us. The views on these issues are mutually exclusive. And the church which nurtured you, did so judge too in 1924 and 1925. Call it, if you will, "unparalleled arrogance," but the fact is that judgment was made. Ministers and consistories were required to submit to this judgment. When, for conscience' sake some could not, they were suspended and deposed from office. "Unparalleled arrogance"? Perhaps. But certainly there were the conflicting, contradictory views – both of which could not be right at the same time.

You are aware of the other issues. There is that of women serving in the office (for the time being, as deacons without privilege of rule – whatever that may mean). Formerly, the C.R.C. (together with most of the church over the past 2000 years) said that women may serve in *no* office within the church. *We* still say that. Now *your* churches say that the woman can serve in at least one office – on the basis of the very Scriptures which were used to condemn the practice before. You would say that for 2000

years the church did not understand Scripture? Now suddenly it does? That smacks of "unparalleled arrogance" it seems to me.

I won't burden you with extended treatment of other points. Briefly, I would remind you of the changed position on divorce and remarriage of the guilty party. Formerly, the C.R.C. (and we with them) maintained that the guilty party, when remarrying, was living in continual adultery. Now the C.R.C. insists that this represents but a single act of adultery which does not require severance of the new relationship. Similarly, you have your "Report 44" on the nature and extent of Biblical Authority. There is your altered stand on worldly entertainment: the movie and the dance especially. Along this same line, you know well the agitation within your church to allow lodge members to become church members. You know well of the attempt to extend the "women in office" idea even to that of the ministry. You know well that many within your churches interpret Genesis 1-11 contrary to the common and traditional interpretation of your church in the past. You know of the conflicting views within your church on the extent of Christ's atonement. You know well of the recent writings about election and reprobation which are admittedly contrary to the position of the creeds and earlier teachings within your church. All of this represents not equally legitimate Scriptural interpretations, but deviations from that which was maintained in the past. The views are conflicting ones. It is not a question of "limited understanding" as you know. Either your church was in conflict with Scripture and the confessions in the past – or it is now. It simply can not be correct *both* then and *now*.

At the risk of being accused again of "unparalleled arrogance," I would maintain that our P.R. churches are far more like the C.R.C. of a generation ago than the present C.R.C. is. I think this is why some within your church (though with you, nurtured by her in the past) are turning to our churches to receive that kind of spiritual nurture for themselves and *for their children* to which they were accustomed in years gone by. And unless there should be a split in the C.R.C. soon (which I personally do not foresee), I would dare predict that more will find a welcome home within the P.R.C. in the future.

We have surely no "full and perfect understanding on every point," but we do continue to insist that "white" can not be at the same time "black." Nor ought you to suggest that.

I do hope that all this does not further "hurt or grieve" you, but I believe that I must answer sincerely to that which so troubled you in my earlier article.

Sincerely,
G. Van Baren

GUEST ARTICLE

Rev. C. Hanko

God's Providence in 1953

And Our Calling To Instruct Our Children*

Our subject for this evening, I want you to know, creates in me a mixed feeling.

On the one hand, I consider 1953 as one of the darkest periods in my life; one that I certainly would not like to live over. First, my closest friends, in whom I had confided and with whom I had associated very intimately turned against us to introduce error into the churches. Second, controversy at best is never pleasant, as all of you who have gone through that experience will agree. But when it involves the household of faith, one's pulpit, one's consistory meetings, and every aspect of one's ecclesiastical life, it is extremely painful. You who in 1953 had a similar experience in your congregation will know what I mean. Besides, we saw many of our churches weakened by loss of membership, and some congregations were lost completely; while also a number of ministers left us to walk no more with us. They deliberately turned their backs to the truth they once professed to have cherished. Of all those who left us, I was convinced then and am convinced now, that there were among them many conscientious believers who were swept along without realizing all that was involved.

On the other hand, I am thankful and rejoice in the fact that the Lord preserved us as Protestant Reformed Churches, even as through fire. We can be the more thankful when we see the churches round about us being infiltrated with various errors.

Our subject for this evening is very important, and that for at least three reasons. First, this took place 25 years ago. Many of our people were still too young to realize just what was happening. Others of our younger generation were not yet born.

Second, there has always been a serious misunderstanding about the controversy of 1953. At the time of the controversy the lines were not always sharply drawn. Although much was written about conditional theology and this was openly defended from the pulpit, the defenders still maintained that they were Protestant Reformed. Not they who introduced this

error into our churches, but Rev. Herman Hoeksema, Rev. G. M. Ophoff, and those who stood with them did not preach any more as before. Besides, on one occasion a soundly Reformed sermon could be preached, on another occasion conditional theology would be heard from the pulpit. Out of that confusion arose the notion among many that the whole controversy was nothing more than a clash of personalities. Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Rev. G. M. Ophoff were branded as men difficult to get along with. This notion persisted for a long time and I ran into it even some years afterward.

Third, one reason for the rise of the controversy was dissatisfaction among the ministers and a certain complacency among the people. There was a lack of zeal for the cause, a lack of love for the truth as we professed and defended it, an unwillingness to sacrifice for the cause of the truth.

It is now 25 years later. Rev. Herman Hoeksema made the remark early in our history, that a church must expect a reformation approximately every 25 years. In that case, we are about due for another upheaval — which may God graciously forbid. Yet, to be honest with you, when I see the complacency creeping in among our people today, the lack of zeal for society activities, the lack of interest in the *Standard Bearer* and *Beacon Lights*, and other religious periodicals, then I fear that we are going into a slump out of which the Lord may have to arouse us with a strong hand.

Therefore my subject is most fitting at this time: God's Providence in 1953 and Our Calling to Instruct our Children.

Consider with me:

- I. God's Providential Preservation at that Time.
- II. The Necessity for that Preservation.
- III. Our Calling in the Light of it.

I. God's Providential Preservation in 1953.

In order to understand the controversy of '53 in its

(*Speech delivered for the Men's and Ladies' League, October 10, 1978)

proper light, it should be understood that the errors that were being introduced into our churches at that time struck at the very heart of the doctrine of our Protestant Reformed Churches. In 1924 our churches came into existence because we denied two things: The whole idea of Common Grace, that is, that God shows favor to the reprobate wicked; and the preaching of the Word as an offer of salvation to all who hear it. Now to deny something, no matter how serious that error may be, is still to take a negative position. We publicly denied those errors in preaching and in teaching. Yet it soon became evident that to take a negative position already implies something definitely positive. We found ourselves defending a positively Reformed view of God's covenant. In fact, the Lord used Rev. Herman Hoeksema to develop a most beautiful Reformed view of God's covenant, which clearly stands out in the Scriptures. It is our position that God's covenant is not a contract or agreement between two parties, but rather that the covenant of God is a relationship of friendship between God and His people in Christ. Although that idea was not foreign to earlier theologians, it was never fully developed. Particularly in that respect our churches are distinctly Protestant Reformed. There are many churches, many denominations which maintain Calvinism. There are five point Calvinists, four point Calvinists, Calvinist Baptists, and other variations. There are also many churches that profess to believe the Three Forms of Unity, namely, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt. But there is no other denomination that holds the rich and beautiful view of the covenant that God has entrusted to us. It was this view of the covenant that was being assaulted and that had to be defended for the future of our churches, or we would have lost our right of existence.

Let me try to clarify this a moment. The name of Dr. Schilder was often mentioned in connection with '53. Dr. Schilder was a leader of the group in the Netherlands that called themselves "Liberated." These Liberated have a view of the covenant which teaches that the promise of the covenant comes to *all* baptized children. They stress that when a child is baptized God says to that child, "I, Jehovah, baptize thee, John, Mary, or whomever, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This means that every baptized child receives the promise of salvation. He is a son in God's family, an heir to eternal life. Yet, you say, all baptized children are not saved. They realize that also. Therefore they teach that this promise is *conditional*. That is, the promise is given, but each child as he grows up must either accept or reject that promise. It is like an offer of salvation which, if not accepted, becomes null and void. The example has been used of a bank check. On the check is written the name of the person to whom

a certain amount of money designated on the check is assured. If that person never takes that check to the bank to cash it, that check is worthless. God promises salvation on the condition that each baptized child will accept that salvation offered to him. If he fails to do that, he is a covenant breaker and is lost. That, you understand, is nothing less than the offer of salvation applied to holy baptism. That error we could never sanction in our churches.

You ask, how did this error ever lift its head among us? Well, in 1939, before the split in the Netherlands, Dr. Schilder was invited to come to America by some of the ministers of the Christian Reformed Church. Already then Dr. Schilder was suspect because of his views on the covenant and other issues. Certain ministers of the CRC warned against his coming, so that when he arrived many of the invitations to speak had been cancelled and he was refused the pulpit in the CRC. In total disgust he turned to us, had various conferences with us, spoke in some of our churches, lodged in some of our homes, and made himself quite friendly with us. Although there was the difference on the covenant, we enjoyed his visit. In 1943 he was deposed from the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands and helped to form the "Liberated" group. In 1946 Dr. Schilder came to America again and was heartily welcomed among our ministers and requested to speak in our churches. About that time and afterward there was a strong influx of immigrants from the Liberated churches of the Netherlands both in the United States and in Canada. These were instructed by their ministers in the Netherlands to seek affiliation with the PRC. These immigrants, having just come out of the controversy in the Netherlands, were strong on their conditional theology. Yet after some discussion with our ministers they expressed agreement with our doctrine so that two churches were organized in Canada, one in Hamilton, and the other in Chatham. Rev. Herman Veldman was minister in the Hamilton congregation for about two years. In 1950 our Synod drew up a "Declaration of Principles" which you can still find in our Church Order book. In this "Declaration of Principles" we publicly declare that we are opposed to the errors of common grace and the offer of salvation, but we also declare that we are opposed to the conditional theology of the "Liberated." Proof is given from the Confessions that we maintain the position held by the fathers. Evidently spurred on by the desire to draw these Liberated people into our churches, some of our ministers began to write in favor of conditions unto salvation, even defending the idea that faith is a condition unto salvation. Although these ministers, with one exception, voted in favor of the "Declaration" in 1950, they strongly opposed it afterward. Rev. De Wolf, one of the ministers in First Church, Grand Rapids, soon followed their lead. He

made the statement from the pulpit, "God promises to every one of you, that if you believe, you shall be saved." Notice the "to every one of you," and also the phrase, "if you believe." This particular statement brought a storm of protest from the congregation. Later another statement was made: "Our act of conversion is a pre-requisite to entering into the kingdom." Upon those two statements, although there were also other questionable sermons that were delivered at that time, Rev. De Wolf was suspended from office. The result was, that many other ministers defended him and left us, taking along many of our members. The two churches in Canada had already left us to organize their own churches.

Although all this was exceedingly painful, we can see the providence of God in it. What appeared to be evil, the Lord turned to our good. The whole controversy brought the matter of the covenant in sharp focus. Ministers and members alike had to take a stand for or against the truth. Many of those who opposed us, many who were luke-warm in their convictions, many indifferent individuals were exposed and left us. '53 was a purging, a reformation, by the good hand of the Lord upon us. Well may we say that the Lord preserved us, even when those who turned against us sought to destroy us, or we should certainly have perished. Our existence today is the result of the purging that we experienced 25 years ago.

II. The Necessity for that Preservation.

We ask ourselves, why was that purging necessary only 25 years after our churches were first organized?

The answer is, first of all, that the adage holds true, "All that glitters is not gold." All those who joined us were not zealous for the cause.

This was true among the members. Already in 1924 and in the years that followed there were those who joined us out of ulterior motives. Some came because they enjoyed the excitement of a new movement, others because they were unhappy in their own churches, and others possibly for other personal reasons. As time progressed, young men and young women joined our churches through marriage. Some of these became good, stable members, but others were never happy with us, showed little interest and often agitated in various ways against the church. All of these unhappy and recalcitrant members brought a lot of dissension in our churches. The years before '53 were marked by long classical meetings and long synodical gatherings, just because of the many protests that were brought to these gatherings. So many problems arose that we were sometimes referred to by outsiders as "a fighting bunch." One grew weary of the constant strife within our ranks. How different our history has been since '53.

But also among the ministers there was a growing

evidence of dissatisfaction. There was a failure to bear with each others weaknesses. Especially Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Rev. G. M. Ophoff were criticized as being domineering and giving poor leadership. Some failed to see that God used men of that character and makeup to serve His purpose. There was an obvious failure to work together, small as we were. For example, in Michigan a paper was published that was called "The Church News"; the ministers in the mid-west published a paper that was called "Concordia." The churches already had the "Reformed Witness Hour," but the churches in the mid-west began the "Sovereign Grace Hour." Our synod had published catechism books to be used in our churches, but individual ministers began to publish their own books. Already then the harmony was disrupted. In the mid-west, conferences were held with the German Reformed Churches which resulted in an effort to unite with these churches. When Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff opposed a hasty union because these churches were not Reformed, there was a certain unhappiness among the ministers about this. Later Prof. Schilder came to America and great enthusiasm was shown for his person. There was an attempt to bring the Liberated people into our churches, which also accounted for the effort to defend a "conditional theology." Ministers opposed the "Declaration of Principles" even though at first they had voted in favor of it. All of this culminated in the split of '53.

But, you ask, even though this was the occasion for the split, was there not another necessity for such a separation, viewed now from the aspect of God's providence? The answer must be: most certainly. Churches tend to become complacent, resting on their laurels. Another generation had arisen that had not experienced the struggle of 1924 and could not appreciate it. They were PR merely because their parents were or because this was convenient for them. Parents did not instruct their children in the truth, ministers were no longer fired with zeal for the cause. The result was that members of the church could readily be drawn away from the truth. Remarks were made that there is not that much difference between the CRC and the PRC. Many were offended by references to being "distinctively PR." The efforts to begin our own Adams school and Hope school met with much opposition, even from some of the ministers. It was only the strong determination and positive conviction of some of our men and of the mothers' club which, under the grace of God, brought these schools into existence. There was a growing conflict in the church papers. But the Lord used also this internal strife to arouse the faithful members to a greater zeal for the truth and eagerness to fight to maintain the truth of God's sovereign grace as God had entrusted that to us. There was a new interest in reading the church periodicals. There was a new in-

terest in society meetings, in catechetical instruction, in the preaching of the Word. New life sprang into being. From that point of view it was a good time to live. Even though some of us were deprived of our church home permanently or for a time, there was a unity and harmony that thrilled the souls of the faithful.

III. Our Calling in the Light of '53.

The question is, what does all this mean to us today?

First of all, it should fill our hearts with thankfulness that the Lord has preserved us by the wonder of His providence. There is no reason in any of us to boast. There were times during those years of strife when it appeared as if we were to be swallowed up. The devil used the instrument of the evil tongue in gossip, backbiting, and slander, so that many sincere members hardly knew where they stood. Sin certainly runs rampant in a time of controversy. The split cut right down the center line of our churches, taking half or more of some congregations, taking half or more of our churches. One could only marvel at the strong determination of the faithful members among us. The Sunday after the suspension of Rev. De Wolf no one had the slightest idea how many people would congregate, not in their own church building at Fuller and Franklin, but in Grand Rapids Central Christian High School. Other churches went through a similar experience, as many of you will recall. To our amazement, the auditorium was filled, giving us some 200 families in First Church which the Lord had spared out of the conflict. Likewise in our other churches there were faithful members who were willing to continue with but a handful of those who cherished the truth sufficiently to suffer for it. In Pella there were four faithful people, two couples, who hung on tenaciously until a viable congregation could once more enjoy a full church life. Our churches have grown, new congregations have been added, our mission endeavors have extended beyond our own country to Canada, to Jamaica, to Australasia, and to Singapore. Our seminary has been producing young men thoroughly trained for the ministry, and zealous for their calling. We may be deeply grateful to God for all that.

Secondly, we can be thankful for the unity that is still evident among us. Our people support the ministry of the Word and missions, as well as other causes. We still have our Christian schools, in an ever increasing number. Our teachers are faithful to the Word of God. Our consistories report harmony and unity in the congregations. Our classical and synodical meetings have not been troubled with serious doctrinal issues or matters of internal strife. All this fills our hearts with joy and thankfulness.

Thirdly, the lesson we must take home with us

tonight is that we can never cease to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. Eternal vigilance is the price we pay for the heritage that is ours. Faith, and faith only, is the victory that overcomes the world. Therefore we must continue to attend our divine worship services in our own churches as faithfully as possible. We must diligently attend our society meetings to study the Scriptures together, and to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Communion of saints is a precious gift of God. We must read our church periodicals, the *Standard Bearer* and *Beacon Lights*, as well as other publications of our churches. We must be alert for sound preaching, supporting and encouraging our ministers in the defence of sound doctrine. Heresy as such usually begins in the seminary and on the pulpit. But the occasion for heresy to creep in rests in the pew. People become lax. They grow weary of long sermons, formal worship services. They want watered down preaching, a relaxing of discipline. The pulpit sometimes gives in to this so that the congregation is gradually lulled to sleep. And slowly but surely, even unawares, false doctrines creep in, while no one is prepared to oppose them. The devil finds fertile soil for the seed of error which grows so readily in a church that is half asleep. A generation arises that knows not the Lord, and that generation is ready to depart still farther from the truth. At last we become like Laodicea, the lukewarm church that is neither hot nor cold, fit only to be spewed out by Christ Himself.

Therefore, finally, a warning is not out of place. There is obviously a certain complacency among us today. Our parents are not interested in society activities as they should be. The church papers are not being read. In fact, very little interest is shown in doctrinal subjects, and there is very little desire to know and understand sound doctrine. Our children do not know our history. Nor are they founded in sound doctrine as they should be, mainly because there is very little desire to be instructed. Family devotions and family fellowship are being sacrificed for the rush and tumble of our daily existence. Family rooms are but a name. Our homes are more like hotels, with tenants coming and going. Parents and children are not alert to the errors and evils that threaten us. Nor is there a great zeal for the things of God's kingdom which have virtually become secondary in our lives. We are too preoccupied with entertainments and pleasures of all sorts. Well may we be watchful in prayer, striving to hold that which we have and to pass it on to the generations to come, that no man take our crown. Ultimately, our own families, our own churches, our own personal faith, and our own blessedness are at stake. The Lord calls each of us to be faithful even unto death, for in that way alone do we attain the crown of life.

News From Our Churches

No reports have been received as yet on the proceedings of the meetings of Classis East and Classis West held last October. Perhaps they will arrive in time to present in the Christmas issue of the magazine.

A picture postcard was received from Rev. John Heys who is now in far-off New Zealand. The card arrived in seven days. That's not too bad for traveling half way around the world. Rev. Heys wrote to ask that *Standard Bearer* readers be advised of his address: 449 Halswell Rd., Christchurch 3, New Zealand. Rev. and Mrs. Heys welcome mail. Rev. Heys advises that airmail takes 10-14 days and surface mail a month or more. Rev. and Mrs. Heys have been very busy — and very well received by the Christchurch congregation. Rev. Heys is serving for about seven to nine months as "minister on loan" from our churches to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Christchurch. Judging from the postcard, Christchurch appears to be located in a valley with snow-capped mountain peaks in the background. A beautiful scene.

Another of our ministers who would appreciate hearing from you is Rev. Robert Harbach. Rev. Harbach is serving as home missionary of our churches in Victoria. Rev. and Mrs. Harbach's address is: 325 - 55 Bay Street, Victoria, B.C., Canada V9A 6X9.

Rev. Harbach writes that the Victoria group is now blessed with an open door to radio work. A fifteen-minute program called "Bible Truth Meditations," produced by Rev. Harbach and sponsored by our Mission Committee, is broadcast from KARI, Blaine, Washington, every Saturday morning at 10:45. The very first broadcast was enthusiastically received by three persons in Nanaimo, some 80 miles "up island." (That's Vancouver Island, y'know!)

The Victoria group had been singing the doxology, "May the Grace . . .," at the close of the Sunday afternoon services. But the group decided this would be more appropriate at other meetings, those not distinctively worship services. So it was replaced with the old doxology of Psalter #197, "Now Blessed Be Jehovah God." This was done out of the conviction that as much as possible, if not exclusively, Psalms should be sung in formal worship services.

There is more news concerning denominational mission activities. From the Edmonton bulletin we

learn that Rev. Marvin Kamps, pastor of our church in Doon, Iowa, has been asked to go to Singapore for six weeks. Rev. James Slopsema, pastor of our church in Edgerton, Minnesota, spent some time in Singapore earlier this year at the request of a group of young people who are interested in the Reformed truth.

Rev. Mark Hoeksema, pastor of our church in Hull, Iowa, and Rev. Wayne Bekkering planned to leave on November 2 for Birmingham, Alabama. The Mission Committee received a letter from a group of interested families in Birmingham requesting the labors of a missionary from our churches on a permanent basis. The Committee asked Rev. Bekkering and Rev. Hoeksema to investigate this field by means of preaching and teaching, a work for which their respective consistories have sent them.

There were several more special observances of Reformation Day beside those previously reported in Grand Rapids and South Holland. Rev. Harbach lectured in Victoria on Romans 8:29. His title was "The Fountain of Predestination." The Redlands young people sponsored a Reformation Day Singspiration after the evening worship service on October 29. Our church in Loveland, Colorado commemorated the day with a lecture by their pastor, Rev. George Lanting, entitled "Preserving Our Reformation Heritage." The Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Barker (Houston), Texas, sponsored a Reformation Day lecture given by their pastor. Rev. Bekkering spoke on "The Reformation — A Return to Preaching." The young people in Hull, Iowa also sponsored a Reformation Singspiration on Sunday evening, October 29. The evening featured a brief speech by Rev. Slopsema and some special numbers.

The Reformed Witness Committee of Iowa and Minnesota sponsored a lecture in the Sioux Center Community Building on October 11. Rev. Hoeksema spoke on the topic "Our Responsibility Toward Christ's Church."

A Fall Ladies League Meeting was scheduled in Hull on October 26. Rev. Hoeksema was to speak on the topic, "Safety for such as trust in the Lord."

The October 22 Hull bulletin carried this note: "The offering this afternoon is for the Organ Fund. The deacons think that we could use a good collection for our Organ Fund, unless we like singing with the piano." It sounds as if they have a "tired" organ in Hull.

K. G. V.