

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . if the will of man is the ultimate determining factor, then Christ is not a complete Savior. He may be a partial Savior; He may be a Savior Who has made salvation available; He may be a Savior Who gives His salvation only to those who take the initiative by coming to Him to obtain it; but He is not a complete Savior.

See "My Sheep Hear My Voice" — page 223

CONTENTS

Meditation—	
The Fall of Jericho	218
Editor's Notes	221
Editorial—	
Distortions of Fact and History	221
My Sheep Hear My Voice—	
Letter to Timothy	223
New Zealand Newsletter	225
The Lord Gave the Word—	
The Place of the Individual Believer in Mission Work (2)	228
All Around Us—	
Government Control Over Christian Schools . . .	230
Marriage Report	232
Translated Treasures—	
A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church	232
Question Box—	
Christ's Blood of Atonement	234
Guest Article—	
The Church and Her Creeds (1)	236
Book Reviews	238
News From Our Churches	240

THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Rev. Wayne Bekkering, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. Richard Flikkema, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Mr. David Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Rodney Miersma, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Slopesma, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman.

Editorial Office: Prof. H.C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. David Harbach
4930 Ivanrest Ave., Apt. B
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Reprint Policy: Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr. PH: (616) 243-2953
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed Fellowship
B. Van Herk, 66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$10.50 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st or the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

MEDITATION

The Fall of Jericho

Rev. H. Veldman

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

Heb. 11:30

How unique is this thirtieth verse in Hebrews 11. Whereas throughout this chapter we read of the faith of the people of God, of Abel and Noah and Abraham etc., here we simply read that "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down." However, by implication the faith of God's people is surely stated here. Do we not read here "by faith"? This is surely the faith of God's people. Besides, we also read: "after they were compassed about seven days."

They were compassed about by Israel: this was surely an act of faith.

"By faith," we read. Now faith itself has no power. Faith has no power in itself, did not itself cause the walls of Jericho to crumble and fall down. Faith, here in Hebrews 11, is the gift of God, God's means peculiarly adapted unto God's revelation to His people of His salvation. Faith is never a substi-

tute for atonement, which the Lord, then, would graciously accept from us instead of atonement. Neither is faith a means whereby we do good works — good works which God accepts as a ground for our salvation, as Roman Catholicism teaches. And neither is faith ever a condition which limits God, so that God will act provided that we first believe.

Faith is God's means. God, of course, caused the walls of Jericho to crumble and collapse. And faith, as God's gift, is here the way in which this occurs, the means peculiarly adapted as that means of God which He bestows upon us and works in us. Faith always clings to God, in Christ Jesus, looks away from self and seeks all its salvation and help in and from the Lord. How true this is also in this passage in Hebrews 11.

WONDERFUL

Jericho, some five to six miles from the Jordan, a rather small city (Israel marched around it seven times in one day), was a fortress, encircled by a very strong wall, a wall so wide that houses were built upon it. And it appears from Joshua 6:1 that the people of Jericho were determined to defend it.

Joshua is instructed by the Captain of the host of the Lord. Notice what we read in Joshua 5:13-15. And this continues into chapter 6. Joshua was standing near Jericho, undoubtedly beyond the reach of any flying arrow, considering how to attack the city. The Lord, however, does not permit him to be in doubt very long. Soon he beholds a man standing over against him and with a sword in his hand.

Who is this warrior? Upon the inquiry of Joshua He replies that He is the Captain of the host of the Lord. He is undoubtedly the same as the Angel of the Covenant, and He Who visited Abraham at Mamre with two angels. He is personally the Christ, the Son of God, and the revelation in the Old Dispensation of the Triune Jehovah, as the God of His covenant, the God of our salvation. In Bethlehem He becomes Immanuel. He calls Himself the Captain of the Lord's host. This explains why He appears as a warrior. As the Captain of the Lord's host, He now gives Joshua His battle instructions. He leads the army of the Lord; He presently causes the walls of Jericho to collapse and crumble. So Christ is here, at the battle of Jericho!

We read of these instructions in Joshua 6:2 and also in verses 3-5 and in verse 10. First, He informs Joshua that He has given Jericho into Joshua's hand. How vital this is! And then follow the battle instructions. We might be inclined to say: what a ridiculous scheme of battle! The people of Jericho, watching Israel from the walls, must have thought them a crowd of fools!

The fall of Jericho is a wonder. As one may suspect, many and various interpretations have been given of this incident. Why discuss them at this time? Some, seeking to rationalize the incident, say that God caused an earthquake to destroy these walls. This may very well have happened. However, is it not wonderful that an earthquake would occur only underneath the walls and not the city (not a home was destroyed), and that that part of the walls was not affected where Rahab's house stood? Indeed, the fall of Jericho is a wonder. I need not rationalize it. All I need know, and this is quite enough, is that it was God Who caused these walls to crumble.

The fall of Jericho is a wonder, a divine wonder of grace.

What is a wonder? A wonder, in Scripture, belongs to the sphere of divine grace. A wonder is always divine grace in operation. *The wonder in Scripture is the grace of God.* God's grace is that marvelous work of God whereby He translates man, and all creation as man is its king and head, out of the power of sin and guilt and corruption and death and lifts it up into everlasting life and glory. Whenever we see a miracle in the Bible, we see a sign or symbol, a picture of this wonder-grace of the living God. The Word of God is full of miracles. That is also what we have here at Jericho. What causes these walls to collapse is the power of God, the power of His grace; what we have here is a mighty symbol of this grace of God.

Centrally the wonder of God's grace is Christ Jesus, in the way of His incarnation, suffering and death, resurrection and glorification. It is through Christ and because of Him that the people of God and all things are translated out of sin and death into everlasting life and glory. Of this mighty grace of God all miracles are signs and pictures. Whenever we see a miracle in Scripture we see a picture of this grace. When the dead are raised to life, the blind see, the deaf hear, etc., we see a picture, in natural life, of what the grace of God accomplishes spiritually. And when the walls of Jericho fall down, it is the grace of God that does it; it is a wonder of grace, a symbol of God's grace as it destroys the power and kingdom of the world, and establishes His own kingdom, symbolically at Jericho, and centrally and finally in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

PROPER

Proper is, first of all, the destruction of Jericho as such. We must understand the meaning of Jericho and Canaan. Jericho was the key to the entire land of Canaan. A mighty fortress, it was the kingdom of darkness and of this world, and the nations of

Canaan, too, were this kingdom of darkness. They had heard of the exploits of Israel's mighty God but were determined to resist and destroy the cause of Israel's God, Jehovah. Besides, their measure of iniquity was full. Sin's manifestation had reached its climax, in as far as that was possible for these nations in the Old Dispensation.

Canaan was the land of the promise. In that land the Lord would establish His kingdom. To be sure, it was all a type and shadow of the kingdom of God as it would be established by the Lord in Christ Jesus. Yet, although a type, it was nevertheless also very real. There Israel enjoyed the forgiveness of sin through the blood of the Old Dispensation. There God would reveal to Israel His statutes, and Israel would love and serve Him as His people. There Israel would be the Lord's distinctive people; the Lord would rule over them by His grace and Spirit.

This explains why Jericho's fall is proper. Fact is, the kingdom of God in Christ and the kingdom of darkness cannot exist side by side. There is simply no room for both. And this applies throughout the ages. Sin and grace, God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, etc., can never exist together; it is always either-or. Sin is always completely devoted to sin; and the grace of God, too, is absolute. This applies to us now only in principle. And in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ the kingdom of this world will be completely destroyed, and God will be all in all.

Proper, secondly, is the manner of Jericho's fall. On the one hand, Israel is led by the ark. The ark is the outward symbol of the presence of Jehovah. In all heathen temples an idol was in their holy of holies. But in the temple of the Lord was the ark. In that ark from which extended two golden seraphim, giving it the appearance of a throne, were the pot of manna, the rod of Aaron that budded, and the ten commandments. The symbolism is plain. It is a beautiful picture of God's rule over His people as He rules over them, through the mercy seat, the blood of Christ, and by writing His law into their hearts. This ark, now, leads the way as it did in all of Israel's wilderness journeyings. The meaning is that Jehovah, or the Captain of the Lord's host, or Jehovah as in Christ, the God of our salvation, is always leading us, also here at Jericho.

On the other hand, we must note the number seven. Seven is the symbolic number in Scripture for God's covenant. As such it can be either a combination of 3 plus 4 or 6 plus 1. As 3 plus 4, seven is the number of God's covenant as the communion of the Triune God with man, with His people in Christ Jesus. As 6 plus 1, seven is the number that symbolizes the rest of God's covenant; it is the week with the sabbath, labor with the rest; 6 is the

number of man, the week without the sabbath, labor without rest, the hopeless folly and futility of the natural man. How beautifully this is symbolized here! Seven priests must carry the ark, and these are preceded by seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns. Seven days they must march around the city of Jericho, and upon the seventh day, undoubtedly the sabbath day, they march around the city seven times. So, the entire incident is characterized by the number seven, the number of God's covenant, symbolizing Israel's entering the rest of God. It symbolizes God's victory over all Israel's enemies. It symbolizes their being led by the Captain of the Lord's host, Jehovah as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

BY FAITH

Applying this to Jericho, apparently what a folly we have here! How foolish the entire maneuver must have appeared to the inhabitants of Jericho! Nothing happens to the city during all this marching. Finally the loud blast upon the trumpets, the shout of victory of the people, and, mind you, there is no victory in sight. And then the walls of the city crumble and collapse.

By faith Israel got the victory. Indeed, the Lord had given Jericho into the hands of Joshua. But Israel must march. The Lord is surely testing and trying the faith of His people. After thirteen circuits there was still no sign of collapse. Utterly foolish this marching appears. But Israel must believe, must continue to believe against hopeless odds; their eye must be fixed upon the Lord, the Captain of the Lord's host and the number seven; they must believe the Word of God in Joshua 6:3-5. And they got the victory. Not because of their faith, but in the way of their faith the Lord gives His people the victory.

How true this is throughout the ages! Do we recall the incident of Naaman? How foolish it seemed what he was commanded to do! But Naaman believes. And he is cleansed. We, too, must believe in the Captain of our salvation and His blood of Calvary. We must believe in a cross, and surely that cross appears to be utter folly! Is death the way of life? Does shame lead to glory? We must trust wholly in God, always, also when such faith appears to lead us into ruin. Yet, believe in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we shall never be put to shame. In the way of faith the Lord will save us. Even over against hopeless odds. Salvation must be and is wholly of the Lord.

Read and Study
The Standard Bearer

Editor's Notes

Be sure to take note of the New Zealand Newsletter from the pen of brother Arie van Echten, of Palmerston North. This will give you an opportunity to become acquainted with the brothers and sisters among whom and in behalf of whom the Rev. John A. Heys has been laboring. If you have a map of New Zealand available, it will be helpful to consult that map, to understand the North Island area in which the Rev. Heys is laboring. Places like Wellington, Otaki, and Palmerston North are all in the southern part of North Island.

* * * * *

Since I last mentioned this, we have received a couple more good-sized gifts toward the publication of the R.F.P.A.'s Bible story book. We are still far from the goal of sufficient funds to proceed, however; and more gifts, your gifts, are very, very welcome. Write to: RFPA Publications Committee, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

If some of our readers are wondering why some departments seldom appear on our magazine, the answer is that your editor cannot very well publish what he does not receive. Some of our department editors are very faithful about fulfilling their obligation to write and are even ahead of schedule; others fail to live up to their pledge to write even after repeated urgings from the editor. Sometimes an editor feels like publishing blank pages with the notation, "This space should have been filled by Rev. N." But that would be a waste of space and very un-edifying.

* * * * *

After the first of these notes was written, today's mail brought from the Rev. J. Heys a photo of the brethren of the New Zealand Prot. Ref. Fellowship. Now you can meet the brethren in picture as well as in words.

EDITORIAL

Distortions of Fact and History

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Two successive issues of *Clarion*, *The Canadian Reformed Magazine* (Jan. 14 and Jan. 28, 1983) have carried a transcript of an address by the Rev. D. DeJong to a Christian Reformed Elders Conference in Lethbridge, Alberta. The address is entitled "A Canadian Reformed View of the Christian Reformed Church." As the title suggests, the Rev. De Jong is a Canadian Reformed (Liberated) minister. According to his own testimony in the course of the address, he came to Canada and to the so-called Liberated Churches there in 1963. The occasion of his address to the afore-mentioned Elders Conference was the 125th anniversary of the Christian Reformed denomination.

It was rather natural, I think, that simply in general I would be curious as to a Canadian Reformed view of the Christian Reformed Church. But more specifically I was inquisitive as to what he might say about the history which led to the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches. I figured — and proved to be correct in this — that

sooner or later the speaker would have to say something about 1924 and its events and decisions, seeing that the latter certainly played a significant part in the 125-year history of the Christian Reformed denomination. And sure enough, eventually the speaker arrived at the point of making a parenthetical reference to 1924. Let me give a little background. In the preceding section of his address the Rev. De Jong, speaking of the Canadian Reformed and the Christian Reformed, states: "And yet, how much could we have done together and profited from each other's history and experiences and talents, if living together in the unity of the true faith as Church of Jesus Christ in the same country and on the same continent would have been preferred...over stubbornly clinging to the wrong course taken in the beginning" (when the Christian Reformed Church repudiated the Liberated and cast their lot with the Synodicals of the Netherlands, HCH). Then, after pointing out in what respects the Canadian Reformed might have profited, the Rev. De Jong goes on to state:

But the same things apply to you even more. It is remarkable that those among you who strive for a redemptive-historical approach in preaching find most of their inspiration in the writings of those professors and ministers who played a role in and after the Liberation of the Churches in Holland in 1944. How much, and how much earlier, could the whole of the Christian Reformed Church have profited from this, also by learning to recognize and to avoid the dangers of conservatism on the one hand and liberalism on the other hand, just as in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands the two even went hand in hand when it came to a monster alliance against those who went back to the Scriptures and to a better understanding of the Reformed Confessions in the light of the Scriptures.

Now it is not my purpose to comment on the above assessment of Liberated preaching and of the history of the Liberation in 1944 and following years, though much could be said about it. I only quoted this paragraph for background. Now follows the paragraph in which reference is made to 1924:

It was the stubborn defence of scholasticism by a conservative wing which imposed upon the churches in The Netherlands a doctrine of a God who gave unconditional promises to the elect (the same doctrine which you find in the Protestant Reformed Church and which was rightly rejected by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924). Unconditional promises to the elect as contents of the preaching easily leads to a boasting of your being elect, or to a growing worldliness in your lifestyle, because it takes away the seriousness from the preaching of God's Covenant promises and threats.

Now, first of all, is it not remarkable that the only reference to 1924 in this entire address is a parenthetical remark? For anyone who knows anything at all about the Christian Reformed history is certainly aware that 1924 and all that stands connected with it was anything but a parenthesis. Not only was 1924 a major crisis in that history, but the decisions and events of 1924 have influenced the Christian Reformed Church ever since. Nevertheless, one could perhaps allow a mistake of this kind on the part of a Canadian Reformed observer to pass on the ground that, not having had any direct experience of the things involved, he was not in a position to evaluate properly their significance. Meanwhile, of course, it remains true that a little study might have gone a long way toward a proper perspective.

But, in the second place — and this is much worse — the statement that is made about 1924 has absolutely no basis in fact. It is a complete distortion of history and fact, so complete that one who investigated the facts and the history even superficially would be amazed at the Rev. De Jong's statement. Consider the fact (and the record will

show all of this to be true) that the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 rejected *nothing*, emphatically nothing, much less "a doctrine of a God who gave unconditional promises to the elect." The Synod of 1924 actually did not even adopt any pronouncement concerning the views of Henry Danhof and Herman Hoeksema. It did not in so many words reject any of their views. It even gave the two men the testimony that they were Reformed in the fundamentals, though with a tendency to onesidedness. It did not even advise that discipline be exercised with respect to them, though it had the opportunity to do so in the form of a proposal from the advisory committee. The Synod of 1924 did not even have before it anything at all concerning "unconditional promises to the elect." And all this the Rev. De Jong might have discovered if he had done his homework — if not in the abundant literature about the period available from Protestant Reformed sources, then at least in the Acts of the Christian Reformed Synod of 1924. But no! The Christian Reformed Church in 1924 "rightly rejected" a doctrine of "a God who gave unconditional promises to the elect." Distortion of fact and history! Were there any knowledgeable men present at that Elders' Conference who perked up their ears at a distortion of that kind?

In the third place, this distortion of fact and history led to a further distortion by way of what it failed to recognize and to mention. For in 1924 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church did indeed adopt and elevate to the status of binding church doctrine the Three Points of Common Grace. And while the Christian Reformed Church did not reject anything in 1924, the Protestant Reformed Churches have ever since that time indeed rejected something. To put it in the language of our Declaration of Principles, they reject the following erroneous teachings of the Three Points: "A. That there is a grace of God to all men, including the reprobate, manifest in the common gifts to all men. B. That the preaching of the gospel is a gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all that externally hear the gospel. C. That the natural man through the influence of common grace can do good in this world." Again, if the Rev. De Jong had had his facts and history straight, he might have had a far better understanding of the history of the Christian Reformed Church and, consequently, a far different address to that Elders' Conference.

In the fourth place, if he had done his homework, the Rev. De Jong would certainly not have distorted the facts by referring to us as "the Protestant Reformed Church." We are not a "Church" but "Churches." This may seem minor and insignificant to some, but it is not. For involved in this seemingly insignificant difference is the very

important difference in church polity to which the Rev. De Jong refers in his next paragraph. Still speaking of "the stubborn defence of scholasticism by a conservative wing" in the Dutch controversy in the mid-1940s, he writes:

Remarkably, it also led to a church polity which demanded unconditional obedience to church assemblies, because it had no understanding for the covenantal character of both God's Word and the Church.

Leaving aside that matter of the alleged lack of understanding for the covenantal character of God's Word and the Church, I would remind the Rev. De Jong that already in 1924-1926, the Christian Reformed Church opted for the hierarchical view of church government according to which it is the prerogative of a broader assembly (in 1924 it was the Classis, with the later stamp of approval of the Synod of 1926) to suspend and depose office-bearers. We went through that battle long before the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands had their beginning. In fact, it was partly our sympathy for the Liberated with respect to church polity which led to our churches' granting of a sympathetic hearing to the late Dr. K. Schilder in 1947. We are a federation of autonomous churches, not a single church with various branches or subdivisions.

Now it seems to me that there are but two possible explanations for distortions of this kind. Either the explanation lies in ignorance, in which case the problem can be readily remedied and correction made. Meanwhile, such ignorance should not break out into print. Or the explanation lies in deliberate distortion, which, of course, is far more serious — especially when such distortion is public and when it concerns matters of the church and of the truth of God's Word. Then one can only admonish and warn that repentance must take place.

Why do I write about this?

I write because in my experience such distortions about the Protestant Reformed Churches have come from the direction of the Liberated rather frequently, especially ever since the rather heated controversy concerning the Declaration of Principles which eventually led to a parting of the ways between the Liberated and us.

Not many months ago a similar distortion appeared in *De Reformatie*. Professor-emeritus L. Doekes made some reference to the Protestant Reformed Churches. In that reference he made the claim that we hold to the doctrine of presupposed regeneration — a claim that has frequently been made by the Liberated over the years.

Now I am well aware that the mere mention of the Declaration of Principles to the Liberated is like waving a red flag before a bull. And in a way, I can understand this — both because of the history and because in the Declaration we repudiate the doctrine of a general, conditional promise. But what no one seems to want to recognize or acknowledge is the fact that the very same Declaration of Principles also repudiates the doctrine of presupposed regeneration. In section "III" of the Declaration we find this statement: "We repudiate: 1. The teaching: ...b. That we may presuppose that all the children that are baptized are regenerated, for we know on the basis of Scripture, as well as in the light of all history and experience, that the contrary is true."

And yet some continue to shove in our boots the doctrine of presupposed regeneration.

This is another distortion of fact and of history.

We reject it!

And it is time for some to pay attention to the facts!

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

Dear Timothy,

February 15, 1983

There are many things which a Christ-centered sermon is *not*.

A Christ-centered sermon is not necessarily a sermon which mentions the name of Christ many times. I do not think it is difficult to imagine how this is possible. A very Modernistic preacher may mention Christ's name fifty times in his sermon,

but do so in such a way that he presents Christ as an *example* Whose life we ought to imitate. No matter how many times the *name* of Christ is mentioned, his sermon is not a Christ-centered one, for the Christ of the Scriptures is not merely an example, but Savior.

I could mention, I suppose, that certainly the Scriptures admonish us to follow Christ as our Example. I am reminded, as an illustration of this,

of what Peter writes to God's people: "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (I Peter 2:20, 21). But this is not Christ the example of the Modernist, in whose eyes Christ is nothing but an example; even here Christ is our Savior, and He is our Example only *because* He is our Savior: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.... Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by Whose stripes ye were healed" (vss. 22, 24).

An Arminian preacher can also mention the name of Christ many times in a sermon, but still not preach a Christ-centered sermon. In fact, it is characteristic of Arminian Fundamentalism that the name of Christ is mentioned repeatedly. And, indeed, this deceives many. But a Christ-centered sermon it is not. It cannot be a Christ-centered sermon because it makes man's will the ultimate determining factor in the work of salvation. And if the will of man is the ultimate determining factor, then Christ is not a complete Savior. He may be a partial Savior; He may be a Savior Who has made salvation available; He may be a Savior Who gives His salvation only to those who take the initiative by coming to Him to obtain it; but He is not a complete Savior.

Our Heidelberg Catechism has a very strong question and answer about this. I refer to Q & A 30: "Do such then believe in Jesus the only Savior, who seek their salvation and welfare of saints, of themselves, or anywhere else? They do not; for though they boast of Him in words, yet in deeds they deny Jesus the only deliverer and Savior; for one of these two things must be true, that either Jesus is not a complete Savior; or that they, who by a true faith receive this Savior, must find all things in Him necessary to their salvation." There you have it — in very strong language. If one denies that Jesus is a complete Savior, one may boast of Him in words, but one nevertheless denies Him — does not believe in Him. That is strong language, but very true.

So, you see, the mere mention of Jesus' name is no guarantee that a sermon is Christ-centered. A minister must not fool himself into thinking that he has prepared a Christ-centered sermon if he has mentioned our Lord's names a few times; nor must a congregation be so insensitive to biblical truth and sound preaching that it thinks it has Christ-centered preaching when it hears Jesus' name mentioned.

I recall an incident from my grade school days

which illustrates this, I think. It was back in 7th or 8th grade in a Christian school in the Chicago area. We had a missionary speak for the school. I do not remember any details about the speaker or the speech. But I do remember that, when I arrived home, my father asked me what I thought of the speech. I told him that I did not care very much for it. He, of course, asked the reason for this. I was hard-put to give an answer, but finally blurted out: "She kept mentioning the name of Christ all the time." No more than I had said it, and I was somewhat ashamed. And my father was taken aback by this and responded: "Isn't it good to mention Christ's name in a speech?" I had to confess that indeed it was. But more than that I could not say. Looking back over the years, I became persuaded that the difficulty was that the repeated mention of the name of Christ was a kind of a blasphemy because Christ was presented in a very Arminian way.

There is another kind of sermon which is not Christ-centered. There are times when a sermon is preached and Christ is made the "third point," so to speak. If the minister, in good Reformed tradition, has a sermon of three points, then in the third point he speaks of the cross of Christ, of the need of divine grace, and of the fact that Christ, through His cross, is our Savior. This is not a Christ-centered sermon either. It may be a Christ-ended sermon; but it cannot be more than that. It is very well possible, and, in fact, often done, that such a third point really contradicts the whole tenor of a sermon and is little more than an attempt at the end to patch up what is essentially Christless. A man-centered sermon which ends with strong emphasis on Christ and His sovereign grace — no matter how loudly shouted or emphatically preached — has not become Christ-centered.

It is reminiscent of the remark of a rather astute man who years ago characterized the preaching which he heard with the words: "*De genade komt achteraan als 'n hinkende paard*"; i.e., "Grace trots on behind like a limping horse."

No amount of references here and there in a sermon to Christ and to the need of grace can make a sermon Christ-centered which is not Christ-centered in its whole theme, approach, emphasis, and direction.

What then is a Christ-centered sermon?

There are a number of things I want to say to you about this; and I am sure that I will not be able to say them all in this letter. But in the space I have left in this one, there are especially two points which I want to make.

A Christ-centered sermon is, quite obviously, a sermon which speaks always and only of Christ.

But what precisely does that mean? Well, it means in the first place, that the sermon tells of Who Christ is and what He has done. It is a sermon which speaks of Christ as the eternal Son of God Who came into our flesh and became like us in all things, except our sin. It tells of Christ's whole work beginning with His birth in Bethlehem, going on through His earthly ministry and suffering, concentrating upon His death on the cross, and climaxing in His resurrection from the dead, His ascension and exaltation into heaven and His return upon the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead and to make all things new.

Now, quite obviously, it is impossible that every sermon speak of all this. It is also impossible that even one part of this be fully and detailedly treated in any given sermon. But the point is that the sermon must *proceed* from this truth. A sermon must have this truth as its central theme — no matter what may be the specific subject under discussion. A sermon must have this current running through it like the electric current carried by a wire. A sermon must develop this fundamental truth no matter what aspect of Scripture is being treated. I want to give you some specific illustrations of this in a future letter; but let this be sufficient for the present: all the truth concerning Who Christ is and all the truth concerning His glorious work centers in the cross. For it is on the cross that our Savior accomplished full and complete salvation as the eternal Son of God Who came into our flesh. And every sermon has to have its starting point there.

In the second place, every sermon which is Christ-centered is also *God-centered*.

It is possible to be Christ-centered in a wrong way. In fact, this is precisely what is wrong with so

many hymns and what is so very, very right about our *Psalters*. What is true in songs can also be true in sermons.

However, a truly Christ-centered sermon is in the nature of the case also a God-centered sermon. What I am talking about is not two distinct and separate characteristics which stand unrelated to each other. It is not incorrect to say that a sermon which is not God-centered is also improperly Christ-centered. (That was a somewhat complicated way to say it.) A sermon which is Christ-centered in the right way is also God-centered; and a sermon which is truly God-centered is also Christ-centered.

This should be obvious from a few considerations. Surely all Scripture, so completely Christ-centered, is nevertheless the revelation of God to Whom belongs all praise and honor and glory, for of Him and through Him and to Him are all things (See Romans 11:36).

And a truly Christ-centered sermon is a sermon which sets forth Christ as truly God Himself. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. God, in the person of His own Son, came into our flesh, for Christ is Immanuel, God with us. God lived among us; and in our human nature, which the Second Person of the holy trinity united with His own divine nature, God died on the cross to accomplish the redemption we could never accomplish. God is our Redeemer and Savior, our Help here in life, and our Hope for all time.

Every sermon which is truly Christ-centered, therefore, is a sermon which begins and ends with God. Only then is it truly Christ-centered and Christ-filled.

Fraternally,
H. Hanko

New Zealand Newsletter

TO THE BRETHREN AND SISTERS OF THE
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

Dear Brethren and Sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,
Greetings from the Wellington and Palmerston-North Protestant Reformed Fellowships in New Zealand!

At our combined meeting at Otaki, somewhere half-way Wellington and Palmerston-North, the brethren honoured me with the assignment of "writing something for the Standard Bearer." I

must admit to some initial degree of apprehension and that for two reasons: 1. We happen to have an author and ex-journalist in our midst, and 2. Those who read the Standard Bearer must, of necessity, be a discerning audience. An encouraging nod from our brother-author however, seemed to have settled the matter. As far as the members of the Standard Bearer family are concerned, we welcome correspondence, even criticism.



Left to right: Rev. J.A. Heys, J.P. de Klerk, A. van Echten, B. van Herk, K. Inskeep, R. Kane, A. Vooyo

Ever since the cooperation of the Holland, Michigan consistory, the Mission Committee's recommendation, Synod's final approval, and last but not least the willingness of brother and sister Heys to serve, the desire to "do something" has been with us. For well-nigh half a century many of us have known and confessed that "with God nothing shall be impossible", yet to actually experience this truth in such an amazing fashion is a humbling exercise. Just think of it, six (6) families of (Protestant) Reformed persuasion dared ask for a minister . . . and got one! It becomes more remarkable still when viewed against the background of some of us.

It is the purpose of this newsletter to inform you that there are members of the body of Christ "down under" without whom you can't function properly, neither could we without you. This, of course, has already been recognized through the labours of our beloved pastor, the Rev. John A. Heys, who took up residence in the hills of Maungaraki near Lower Hutt (Wellington area) good three months ago. The work of our brother is mainly confined to the Wellington area where four families have resolved to defend and propagate the faith once delivered to the Saints. The names of these families are as follows: Inskeep, Kane, van Herk and Vooyo. The other two families reside near Palmerston-North where Mr. Heys preaches every second Sunday of the month. The names of these families are: de Klerk and van Echten (A.).

The Lord's surprising provision in the form of a pastor now labouring in our midst was a humbling experience; yet something else needs to be said. Brother and sister Heys (who need no introduc-

tion!) are now in New Zealand for the second time. Four years ago they laboured among the members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Christchurch, a town situated on the South Island. This time they work among the members of the Protestant Reformed Fellowships on the North Island. It is now about five years ago since our brother had to submit to open-heart surgery, yet in spite of this serious operation and in spite of being well into his seventies and, ironically, further in spite of his being retired, you find him tending part of the Lord's vineyard somewhere on one of the corners of the earth! Such teaching by way of example ought also to be a humbling experience to us all. God grant us the ability, the health and the desire to "labour for the Master, from the dawn till setting sun." Mr. D. Engelsma, in his capacity of secretary of the Mission Committee, wrote to us on the 14th of April last year, "it was the committee's recommendation to Synod that Rev. Heys labour in your area for an 'approximate' six months' stay." Of course we ought not to say a thing like that but rumours have it that we 'exploit' the elasticity of that statement to best advantage. . . .

One of our families, Mr. and Mrs. K. Inskeep, reside in Otaki. This township is approximately 49 miles to the north of Wellington and 44 miles south of Palmerston-North. Geographically therefore, combined meetings at their place are extraordinarily convenient. Not everybody has the ready cash to make the change over from petrol to LPG or CNG, and money is hard to come by nowadays. Kevin runs a small fruit farm, has a degree in horticulture and is the youngest member of the fellowships.

Whether his neatly trimmed beard stems from a desire to conceal his real age or perhaps serves as a memento of his puritan background, we cannot tell. We do know that Kevin is a New Zealander by birth and of Presbyterian background. He was also a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Christchurch for some time. His hunger for Reformation truth led him to build up an extensive library which would cause the mouth of any Reformed minister to water. In his spare time Kevin looks after the "Protestant Reformed Tape Library." This means our outreach is still in the process of being built up. Those who subscribe to this library are confronted with the one theme: God's sovereignty displayed in the salvation of sinners. Yes, Kevin has developed a delicate taste for things Reformed.

Kevin and Ann have a 5 year-old girl and are eagerly anticipating the arrival of number 2 in about four weeks' time.

Besides counting New Zealanders by birth, our fellowships have a number of New Zealanders by choice. I refer of course, to those who immigrated since 1950 into this fair land where "the hills rejoice; the pastures teeming with flocks that skip and spring, the golden grain, in valleys gleaming—all sing to God the King." (Psalter 419:5b). What a Church we would have if only God's rational creatures would do the same thing! I guess the thoughts of all God's people wander off occasionally to the vision of the Redeemed, the great multitude which no man can number. . . but then, back to the reality of the endtime, we know that faith will be at a premium.

Most of us, naturalized New Zealanders, have been in this country for some period of time; three of our families often reminisce and reflect on the days when the Reformed Churches of New Zealand were established 30 years ago, and that not quite without feelings of nostalgia. The youthful enthusiasm, the excitement of taking a stand for God in the midst of an apostate Presbyterianism, the challenge of the unknown, the building of a new future in a foreign land. . . .

Besides immigrants from Dutch extraction however, we count among our members a lady from Scotland, Mrs. E. van Herk, and a Mr. Bob Kane from Northern Ireland. Mrs. Kane is New Zealand born and of Anglican background.

Bob, who is our Wellington secretary, was first introduced to the Protestant Reformed Churches and their teaching at the time of Professor H.C. Hoeksema's visit to Wellington in 1975.

His story of the Lord's leading in his life is a very interesting one and remarkable in many ways. It shows the wisdom of God to use the "foolishness"

of preaching to save them that believe. Irrespective of cultural backgrounds, the preaching's content is always the truth, and "he that doeth truth cometh to the light."

Bob was baptized and confirmed in the Church of Ireland. He became engaged to a Roman Catholic girl and for about a year he joined the Roman Catholic Church. At the age of 27 he was converted as a result of a tract distributed by the Brethren. He then became part of the Brethren Movement for a period of ten years. During this period he experienced a growing conviction of the Scriptural-ness of Calvinism. The reading and study of books published by the "Banner Of Truth", especially A.W. Pink's *The Sovereignty of God*, greatly influenced his spiritual development. An increased spirit of discernment made him see the unpalatability of many aspects of Brethren teaching. Finally, in 1977, he joined the Wellington Fellowship.

Bob and his wife, Glenys, have two children. Their boys are diligent in attending the Rev. Hey's catechism classes.

New Zealand is a wonderful country. To live in this country is a tremendous privilege; it's so easy to fall prey to self-indulgence in this environment. Constantly we need to be reminded that Abraham, the father of all believers, "sojourned in the land of promise AS IN A STRANGE COUNTRY." The folks of our fellowships realize this fact and confess that they are strangers and pilgrims who desire "a better country." A glimpse at our newspapers tells it all.

In our next newsletter, the Lord willing, we hope to focus more on the Dutch element of our fellowships, or should I say the Dutch heritage? Dutch, New Zealand, English, Scotch, Irish. . . God has made of one blood all nations of men and commanded them to repent. Someone said, "true gratitude is exercised in the depth of unworthiness and the consciousness of guilt." True words. May the Lord fill our hearts with the fear of His Name, cause us to break with sin, and to return to the God of our fathers.

A. van Echten

The Standard Bearer
makes a thoughtful
gift for the
sick or shut-in.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

The Place of the Individual Believer in Mission Work (2)

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

In our first article on this subject we considered what is the primary responsibility of the individual believer. Three introductory observations were made. First, every true believer is concerned with and desirous for and prays for the growth of the church of Jesus Christ. From this perspective it is easy to see that this is true of the believer in the established congregation as well as in the mission field. The second introductory observation is that, apart from an increased consciousness of the desire for the organization of a congregation for the believer on the mission field, the activity and role of the individual believer in an established congregation is no different from that of the believer on the mission field. Thirdly, the true believer is very conscious that it is by the sovereign power of the Lord Jesus Christ that the church grows. Not only does He know who "should be saved," but also His is the right and power to add to the church, which is His Body.

The primary responsibility of the individual believer is to support the pure preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and exalted. It is that gospel which is able to make men wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. The Lord adds to the church by saving men, and He brings men to the consciousness of salvation through the preaching of the Word of God (Romans 10:13-17). Zealously receiving the Word with all readiness of mind the true believer has not as his primary responsibility a special method of witnessing but the wholehearted support of the preaching of the Gospel. It is through that Gospel that Jesus saves and thus adds to the church.

This support of the pure preaching of the Gospel is in perfect harmony with the subjective experience of the redeemed saint. That Gospel-preaching is the food which sustains his soul. Not only does his lively interest in the Word of God manifest itself in an eager and expectant gathering on the Lord's Day, but also throughout the week he reads the Word, speaks of it, and meditates upon it. His whole life is lived within the sphere of that preached Word, which life is characterized chiefly

by gratitude. This is heartfelt gratitude for so great a deliverance, for so great a Savior and salvation, and for so great a hope. This sense of gratitude thrives as the believer lives within the sphere of the preached Word. Therefore the believer's chief responsibility, whether on the mission field or in an established congregation, is to support the pure preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

From this delightful and eager support of the pure preaching flows most naturally the responsibility to give witness to this truth. Out of this heartfelt gratitude for so great a salvation the true believer will not be able to keep his mouth shut. He will eagerly fulfill his role as prophet—bubbling over. He delights greatly in the great salvation God has wrought and which he experiences personally. Out of the inner delights comes the ability to speak of what God has done for them. They are excited about it. Of this activity of witness we speak in this article. First some introductory remarks are necessary to put this activity of witness in its proper perspective. Secondly, we will give the substantiation of Scripture for this activity. And then let us note some characteristics of witnessing.

The proper place of witnessing is under the heading of sovereign, divine salvation. The salvation of the sinner is solely by God's power and grace. Although this is a work of God alone, yet God is pleased ordinarily to use means. Therefore we have the preaching of the Gospel, through which God imparts and strengthens faith. This Gospel is preached and proclaimed by the church; the church has an active role in this preaching. However, the lively preaching *per se* is limited to the extent of the voice of the preacher. Those a mile away are without that lively preaching because they cannot hear it. Therefore, God ordinarily uses means also to bring people under the sound of the preaching. That means consists of believers who gratefully and enthusiastically receive that Word. They are the biblically appointed way. Usually this is called witnessing; sometimes it is termed "preaching in the broader sense," on the basis of

Acts 8:4.

The confession that salvation is solely by God's sovereign, irresistible grace does not deny His use of the preaching of the Word as the ordinary and usual means to impart faith. Nor does it deny His use of the believer's witness to bring elect souls under the preaching of the Gospel.

What is the Scriptural substantiation for the believing activity of witnessing?

Psalms 51:13, "Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." In showing his gratitude to God for forgiving his sins, David says he will exert himself to effect the conversion of others. Delivered from sin and death David will teach transgressors God's gracious ways. So overwhelmed with his own experience of so wonderful a forgiveness, David cannot be quiet about it. "Those who have been mercifully recovered from their falls will feel inflamed by the common law of charity to extend a helping hand to brethren; and in general, such as are partakers of the grace of God are constrained by religious principle and regard for the divine glory, to desire that others should be brought into the participation of it." So writes John Calvin on this verse. Notice too how confident David is about expecting the conversion of others. "We are too apt to conclude that our attempts at reclaiming the ungodly are vain and ineffectual. We forget that God is able to crown our attempts with success." Again, John Calvin.

Consider Proverbs 11:30, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." The whole life of the righteous is as a tree of life. What the tree of life was in Paradise and will be in glory (Rev. 2:7; Prov. 10:11, 31, 32), so the righteous are. By their life (prayers, deeds, example, influence) they nourish (Rev. 2:7; Prov. 10:11) and comfort and heal (Prov. 12:18; 15:4). In I Corinthians 9:19-22 Paul does not deny God's sovereign work in salvation, but he knew God used means. Paul also knew that such a use of means did not ascribe any power to himself or take away from God's grace. The unbelieving husband is said to be won by the godly life of his believing wife (I Peter 3:1). James 5:19, 20 says the believer converts his sinful neighbor. These verses must be understood in the light of Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." One of the reasons why believers must do good works is that "by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ" (Heidelberg Catechism Q. 86).

Similar to Proverbs 11:30 is Daniel 12:3, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteous-

ness as the stars for ever and ever." According to John Calvin in his commentary on this passage, this passage is first directed to teachers, but it also embraces all pious worshippers of God. "No one of God's children ought to confine their attention privately to themselves, but as far as possible, every one ought to interest himself in the welfare of his brethren. God has deposited the teaching of his salvation with us, not for the purpose of our privately keeping it to ourselves, but of our pointing out the way of salvation to all mankind. This, therefore, is the common duty of the children of God,—to promote the salvation of their brethren."

Thus we see it to be the teaching of Scripture that you and I and every believer give vent to the consciousness of the salvation God has given to him. The sense and certainty of his own election and salvation causes the believer to render "grateful returns of ardent love to Him, Who first manifested so great love towards them" (Canons of Dordt, I-13).

It is not a question of whether a person witnesses, but of how he gives witness. We always show others who and what we are. Therefore, to complete a speech on the responsibility of the believer in mission work, we will consider some of the elements of giving witness to the truth.

First of all, and as Rev. Houck pointed out so well in his speech, be honest. That means that you are yourself, not putting on a special image. It means that you live your faith and do not hide it under a bushel. SO let your light shine, that in giving thanks to God for salvation you manifest His wondrous work in your whole life. With God as a natural, integrated part of the believer's whole life, it is not hard to be spiritual and to speak of Him. God is not compartmentalized, but is in the whole of the believer's life. Non-Christians easily detect the reality of a genuine God-like, heartfelt knowledge and experience of the grace of God.

Secondly, learn to listen. Do not leap in to resolve every question immediately, but ask some questions. Read through John 4 and consider how Jesus bore witness of the truth to the Samaritan woman. Rev. Herman Hoeksema, in a sermon on Luke 24:25-27 which was delivered on May 2, 1954, said the following:

"And the Lord said, 'What thing?' The Lord wanted to draw them out.

"You know, that is one of the most fundamental principles of education. The most fundamental principle of education is that, if you approach a man that has a problem, you must let him talk, let him talk. You do that too when you talk to others.

"Take my advice in that respect. When you talk to others about our Reformed truth or about Reformed doctrine, others that do not know the Reformed truth or that do not want it even, let them talk; let them present their own problem."

In the normal situations at work or play, initiate and develop relationships in which you can realistically, relevantly, and lovingly convey to them the gospel of Jesus Christ. In your day-to-day contacts establish such a relationship that you can listen. It is most difficult to speak to someone you do not know. One reason the Scriptures give for Jesus speaking in parables is because that is what "they were able to hear" (Mark 4:33). In contrast to the disciples to whom He "expounded all things" (vs. 34), Jesus spoke in parables to the people because that is what they could understand. Having a knowledge of His listeners' ability to grasp, Jesus spoke accordingly.

Another reason for listening is that from a human viewpoint men resent being trapped into a one-way conversation with one who does not bother to listen. It makes us wonder if the speaker really cares or is just giving his talk. The second great commandment is to love our neighbor, which is concern for their highest good, namely, the salvation of their souls. If you listen to them, then you gain their willingness to listen to you.

Thirdly, stimulate; learn to arouse as Jesus did with the Samaritan woman and as Paul did in Athens. As Paul shows in I Corinthians 9:19-22, it was most important to him that the truth of Jesus Christ be proclaimed. That means that the witness is essentially positive. When asked to give expression to your faith, it is best not to say first what you do not believe, but to be positive. This is the

method used by our fathers in the Canons. Learn to express the contents of your faith positively, carefully, and biblically. Thus you stimulate and arouse interest.

These general guidelines for witnessing do not come with guarantees of positive responses. There will be rejection, and the truth will be denied. The gospel is determined to be a savor of life and a savor of death.

But knowing what God has done for you in His sovereign grace makes you delight in that truth as it is preached to you. You immerse yourself in it and live in the sphere of it. Then you cannot help but talk of it with enthusiasm and zeal. Because you are saved from hell and given to taste the righteousness of God in Christ you enthusiastically receive the Word of the truth with all readiness of mind and you joyfully confess His name.

"Now with joyful exaltation,
Let us sing Jehovah's praise.
To the rock of our salvation
Loud hosannas let us raise."

Sing it! Live it! Not only in church, but in all your life.

"Thankful tribute gladly bringing,
Let us come before Him now
And with psalms His praises singing,
Joyful in His presence bow."

May God give us the grace to meditate on the blessed Gospel of our salvation to learn it and live it.

Text of an address given at the Mission Emphasis Day at the Kalamazoo (Michigan) Protestant Reformed Church last May.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

Government Control Over Christian Schools

Many in the state of Michigan are rejoicing over a court ruling which appears to loosen a bit the grasp of "big brother" from parochial and private Christian schools. The increasingly oppressive regulations of the state threaten the very existence of the Christian schools. In the *Grand Rapids' Press*, James Kilpatrick, a syndicated writer, stated.

The First Amendment says flatly that Congress shall make "no law" respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. That provision many years ago was extended to state legislature as well as to the Congress.

But the sovereign state of Michigan, in patent indifference to the First Amendment, enacted a law that

provides on its face for "the supervision of denominational and parochial schools." The act demands a certain "course of studies" in such schools. Under the law, all teachers at these schools must obtain state certification.

There is still more to this Michigan law. Section 4 of the act authorizes the state superintendent of public instruction to close non-complying schools and to force their students to attend public schools. One of the purposes of the act, not so explicitly stated, is to recover for the public schools the \$2,000 in state aid that is lost whenever a pupil goes to a private school.

Time magazine, January 10, 1983, presented a lengthy report on this same decision. Some of its comments were:

The independence of that ministry was resoundingly upheld last week. In a strong, unambiguous decision, a Michigan judge reaffirmed the First Amendment guarantee of separation of church and state by exempting private Christian schools from state supervision of their curriculum and teachers. Ministers, teachers and parents of the Bridgeport Baptist Academy and the Sheridan Road Christian School, both near Saginaw, had charged that attempts by the state's board of education to supervise curriculum and teacher qualifications violated their religious freedom. Judge Ray Hotchkiss agreed, ruling that the board, by imposing its secular standards of education on religious schooling, "interfered with plaintiffs' constitutional right to freely exercise their religion." Said Hotchkiss: "This court fails to see a compelling state interest in requiring nonpublic schools to be of the 'same standard' as public schools in the same district. Such a scheme does not ensure even a minimum degree of quality of education." Hotchkiss, however, did uphold the state's right to impose on the Christian schools health and safety requirements, to which they had never objected....

In the Michigan trial, the issue of teacher certification turned out to be more of an embarrassment to state officials than to the Christian schools. Education experts could not agree on which standards the Christian teachers needed to follow, nor could they prove any link between certified teachers and good education. Noted Judge Hotchkiss, a former public school teacher: "The overwhelming evidence shows that teacher certification does not ensure teacher competency and may even inhibit it."... He called state regulation of private schools "an incredible conflict of interest."

...Michigan officials intend to appeal Judge Hotchkiss's verdict. Says Assistant Attorney General Richard Gartner: "The state now has no process to approve non-public schools."...

It remains to be seen what develops from this court decision. It has surely attracted nation-wide attention. It can provide some relief for the Christian schools. Though our schools also do have the required certified teachers and meet other state re-

quirements, this has surely in itself been no guarantee for quality Christian education. The fact remains that, Scripturally, the state has no authority over the education of my children; that is a God-given parental responsibility. We must carry it out then, however sacrificially, to the best of our ability. Nor ought we to succumb to the temptations of asking the state for some kind of financial assistance to carry out our duties. Another warning about that temptation is found in *The Christian News*, Nov. 29, 1982:

The American Council of Christian Churches...is opposed to tuition tax-credits for private schools.

Government support, direct or indirect, can so easily become government influence in the program and instruction of a school. Almost forgotten is the application of the double imperative in the Scriptural mandate: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's."

The tax credits are based on the superficially attractive notion that government should foster competition between tax supported and privately funded schools by making it more feasible for parents to choose among them. For the Bible-believer, tithes and offerings—not taxes under any guise—are God's methods of financing Christian education.

Therefore be it resolved that the American Council of Christian Churches advises its constituent members and Bible-believers everywhere to look above and beyond the emotional and economic expediencies to the Scriptural principles involved. Rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's is a spiritual mandate for the believer to pay his taxes as a civic duty.

Finally, there is a disturbing letter in *The Christian News*, Jan. 10, 1983, written by the Vice-president of a certain "Missouri Roundtable." It appears to present an authentic warning concerning dangers to Christian schools:

This special letter is coming to you to alert you to the fact that our precious American freedom of religion is in serious jeopardy!

...During the first week of December, Congress by voice vote removed what were known as the Ashbrook-Dornan Amendments from an appropriations bill for the IRS. This stripped away the protection enjoyed by private Christian schools and all private schools for the last 206 years. If the situation is not corrected, schools and ultimately churches and individuals will lose their protection from the dictates of government. Believe me, the first amendment of freedom of religion is now in its first stages of assault!

On August 22, 1978, the IRS had issued regulations that in effect said they had the power to regulate our entire lives because, using their reasoning, every tax deduction or exemption is in fact a subsidy and all subsidies will, of course, be regulated and controlled by the government. This was done under the guise of preventing "discrimination."

What does it mean? It means that the IRS, and indeed all of government, can dictate to us all in the private sector of our lives—schools and churches included. The government can now force private schools and even churches to hire people they normally wouldn't—homosexuals, drug addicts, etc. They can also deny tax exemptions unless a school or church proves itself innocent of vague and nebulous guidelines. Why? "Tax deductions are tax subsidies and therefore belong to the government." This is the reasoning of the IRS and many of our liberal law makers.

Action is needed immediately! Contact your Congressmen and Senators and ask them to support what is known as the Ashbrook-Dornan Amendment to the

appropriations bill for the IRS. Your Senators and Congressmen can be reached by asking for them through the Capitol switchboard (1-202-224-3121), or by writing to them in care of House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515; or U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510. Please don't delay.

The above letter appears to be an authentic warning. A few years ago, the Congress placed restrictions on the IRS when they began playing loose and free with the "tax deductions are government subsidies" idea. Now if this restriction is taken away, the Christian schools would be hearing from the government again—and perhaps lose their right to continue to operate. But all of this, one can expect in these last days.

Marriage Report

The GKN in the Netherlands has adopted a "Marriage Report" according to the *R.E.S. News Exchange*. In its issue of December 7, 1982, it reports:

"Faithful in love" is the title of a report on marriage and other personal relationships adopted by the general synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN). The synod rejected the criticism of its advisory committee that the report fails to incorporate an exegetical study. One delegate, Rev. G.H. Homans, articulated the view of many synodical delegates when he said that there was no need for

such a study. A delegate from the "Youth Synod" noted that in youth circles the report had been received with 'great enthusiasm.' He said, "We do not wish to abolish marriage, but other forms of relationships are not unbiblical."

But anyone with a simple understanding of Scripture, and professing its infallibility, knows what the Bible teaches concerning homosexuality and fornication. The above "Marriage Report" can not alter plain Scriptural teachings in the eyes of God.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

(In the last article Kuyper began a discussion concerning reformation by means of separation from the denomination. He suggested, in this connection, two possibilities: one possibility is that the consistory of a local congregation is in conflict with the church federation; the other is that an individual is in conflict with the church federation. Kuyper now proposes to discuss these two possibilities separately.)

An individual who comes into conflict with the church federation can be either a common member of the church or a person who is in a certain office or in a certain ministry connected to the church.

Common members can come into conflict with the church federation in two ways: because they act contrary to a certain rule laid upon the churches by the church federation, or because they are wronged by the church federation in an appeal to a broader gathering.

If you take the first instance and if such a member is branded as an "opposer of ecclesiastical ordinances," then the church federation can either look through its fingers and let the irregularity take

its course, or it can demand that the opponent cease from his unlawful action. If the opponent gives in to this, then the matter is ended. But if he, out of obedience to the Word of God, considers it impossible to give in and carries on his case, then the church federation will discipline him and will try to make him submit. The means which the church federation will use to do this are: 1) denial of eligibility for ecclesiastical offices and positions; 2) denial of the use of sacraments; 3) suspension from membership; 4) finally, excommunication.

The one who "resists," convinced that he may concede nothing, continues to press his case even though discipline after discipline comes upon him. And when the sacraments are denied him, e.g., he continues to go to the sacraments.¹

This places the consistory before the question whether it will help to punish the one who resists or, shrinking back from this, will refuse to execute the punishment laid upon him. If the last happens, then the conflict passes over from the individual person to the consistory and we will discuss this possibility later. But if the consistory does the first and assists in punishing the one who resists ecclesiastical regulations by withholding the means of grace, then the conflict climaxes against the individual who is unrighteously condemned and the conflict is between the individual and the ecclesiastical federation which desires to force him to do its will.

In such a case, it would be irresponsible for such a person to submit. This would be a departure from his former faithfulness. And nothing would remain for him but to come to the sacraments and, if these are denied him by force, to institute with likeminded people their own administration of the means of grace. Or, if there are no likeminded people, he must seek in another church what his own withholds from him.

If this leads to his excommunication, then he need not consider himself as excommunicated from the church. But the obligation does rest upon him to proceed with a new organization in his church and, without outward show or desire for scandal, in the fear of God, to labor for it because he longs for the pure administration of the means of grace for himself, his own, and those who stand with him.

The second possible case is when he comes into conflict with the church federation by the decision of a broader gathering. This can happen when either he himself appeals against a decision of his consistory, or when his consistory agrees with him, but then another person appeals against this decision of the consistory. Actually, however, it comes down to the same things, and the progress of the conflict will coincide with the progress we men-

tioned above. Either he will submit himself to the sentence and then no conflict exists any more; or, if he cannot submit, then the church federation might drop the case; or if it comes at last to excommunication, then he is under the same obligation as we described above, i.e., he must take independent action.

Actually, conflict between common members and the church federation brings up the question of a break with the church as such, the reason why we postpone further discussion of this sort of conflict to the following paragraph.

In the meantime, it remains for us, before we come to the question of the conflict of consistory and church federation, to discuss the unusual conflict which arises not from the common members, but from persons in ecclesiastical offices.

This kind of conflict is of a more serious kind. Discipline of common members is less damaging, and common members are subject to less discipline. Excommunication of common members almost never occurs. A certain shame joined with an awareness of helplessness usually prevents ecclesiastical men from persecuting anyone with spiritual punishments or from punishing them with banishment when nothing else is to be charged to them than that they are zealous for the honor of God. But the matter is quite different if the opponent is an office bearer or some ecclesiastical person. Then there is much more of his influence to fear and the church federation has in its power much more powerful means to punish him. He who is in office can be suspended from that office or set out of that office. The same holds for non-official positions in the church. A supervisor who wants no part of ungodliness can give much trouble to the church federation, but the church federation can also take away from that supervisor his membership. A janitor, a precentor, an organist, who will not slavishly go along with the church, can be punished with regard to his daily bread. This can also be done to religious teachers who are considered trouble-makers. And, with respect to offices, what is easier than to remove on high authority a deacon or elder who dares to test the ecclesiastical ordinances with God's Word? But what ought to stand on the foreground is the seriousness of a conflict between a church federation and a minister. All other conflicts reach their apex in this. This is true on the one hand because of the powerful influence which a minister exercises and because of the public nature of his actions. But this is also true on the other hand because the church federation can attack him directly and set him outside his office and work, yes, out of his house and goods and money.

It is from this kind of conflict that almost all

thoroughgoing reformations are born, and the reason is clear why right here the highest moral power becomes manifest.

A common member of the congregation can allow himself to be cut off without really having wrestled with his God, perhaps even in an insolent way. And, having been cut off, he remains what he always was. Especially today the accompanying suffering amounts to almost nothing.

For a supervisor or janitor, for an elder or deacon, to be deposed is most disagreeable, although in the end he is not ruined. A supervisor loses a certain monetary influence. A janitor loses a very small part of his earnings. And an elder or deacon returns to ordinary life without having lost what the world considers desirable.

But this is entirely different for the preacher. For a minister of the Word excommunication is nothing less than being cut off from his life's position, a taking away of his sphere of work, a deprivation of the whole of his existence, and that with the goad behind it either to be unfaithfully silent, or to continue teaching. But then he will have to continue the conflict in a new way of suffering. Think of Kohlbrugge, what that way of suffering cost him.

On that basis we say that there is a much higher grace demanded from the minister of the Word to remain faithful in such a conflict than from a common member or elder. The moral triumph over flesh and sin must be so much stronger in the minister. His readiness to serve his Lord so much more invincible, his desire for obedience so much stronger his willingness to make sacrifices must shine so much more brightly.

Common members and also elders who are so ready to complain about the unfaithfulness of our ministers must also ask themselves once if they would be found as faithful if their whole life's position, yes, the bread of their wives and children were at stake.

But, on the other hand, one must then also be zealous in prayers whether God might be pleased to

pour out this overflowing grace in the heart of many ministers of the Word, to break in them the temptation of false reasoning with which they justify themselves, and thus to give to the church of Christ those natural leaders for its reformation without whose leadership and cooperation the reformation of a church rarely succeed. And if the prayer is heard, then also the extraordinary measure of moral courage and faith which develops in the ministers shall give to their words such a fervor and to their appearance such a power that the opposition in the church federation succumbs of itself.

Only through the spiritual awakening of the ministers of the Word can a church be saved; but also only by the passivity of ministers a hostile church federation remains strong.

The consequence of a conflict between ministers and a church federation is always very serious.

It is serious in a tragic sense when a minister of the Word, after a moment of zeal, again lays his head in the bosom, gives in, and thus the work of God which he undertook is abandoned.

It is serious in its direct consequences. This is true because a minister who is suspended must in such a case continue to preach in the church. Or if this cannot be, then he must preach outside the church. And if he is excommunicated, then he must gather the faithful to himself and preach the Word, if necessary, in a stable or barn, from a shipdeck or in an open field.

Having come to this point, this conflict can also very easily lead to a break with the church itself, even as the consequences of the conflict between common members and the church federation spoken of in the following paragraph.

¹In the following paragraph Kuyper says that in this way the matter is brought before the consistory and the consistory is in this way forced to deal with the question. It is probably more in keeping with Reformed church polity, however, for the individual to submit rather than to force the issue by going to the sacraments even when they are denied him. He can bring the matter to the consistory by way of protest and appeal.

QUESTION BOX

Christ's Blood of Atonement

Rev. C. Hanko

A reader asks:

"I have a question on Christ's suffering and death for our sins. Our sins require satisfaction, so that God's wrath against our sins can be satisfied.

Only Christ as God's Son can do this. Therefore He must assume our human nature, to suffer and die on the cross, and bear away God's wrath and curse against us.

"Jesus bore God's wrath against sin in perfect, willing obedience and love to God. In this way He satisfied God's justice and atonement was made. When He died and voluntarily gave His life, His blood was shed. Was the atonement only in the fact that he willingly and obediently bore God's wrath for our sins, or was there also satisfaction and atonement in the shedding of His blood? Was Jesus' blood special and precious, and did it have saving power? In other words, did He have to shed His blood to pay for our sins, or was that the *giving up* of His life?"

It is refreshing to receive correspondence from someone who so thoroughly understands the doctrine of atonement, especially in our day when this doctrine is misrepresented and openly denied.

If I understand correctly, the question is this: What is the particular significance of the fact that Christ shed His blood as an atonement for our sins?

Throughout the Scriptures there is a strong emphasis on the shedding of Christ's blood as an essential part of the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

We find this repeated reference already in the Old Testament. The fig leaves with which our first parents covered themselves were altogether useless in covering their sin before the face of God. God supplied the skins of animals, thereby teaching them that only by the shedding of blood—what a fearful sight that must have been for our first parents—could satisfaction be made for our sins. In faith Abel brought a lamb for a sacrifice. Throughout the entire old dispensation sacrifices were brought, blood was shed, either on a lone altar, or in the tabernacle, or later in the temple. What a stream of blood flowed throughout that dispensation of shadows! What a countless number of animals were sacrificed before the Lord! Yet Hebrews teaches us that all the blood of steers and bullocks could not atone for a single sin, but was a type and shadow of the substitutionary suffering of Christ on the cross. Hebrews 9:12 tells us, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." In the old dispensation the shedding of blood spoke of the necessity of the substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord on the cross and was a promise of God's great gift of grace for our salvation.

The shedding of Christ's blood on the cross certainly speaks to us of His willing and obedient surrender to God for those given to Him of the Father (John 10:11, 15, 18). He laid down His life for His sheep, thereby carrying out His Father's will (John 4:34, 6:38, 17:4, 19:30). It can be said that there was no other way whereby we could be reconciled to God and made worthy of eternal life. Already in Gethsemane Jesus sweat great drops of blood (Luke

22:44). He was beaten until the blood flowed from His many wounds. On the cross, nails were driven through His hands and feet. He suffered a slow, painful death in complete self-surrender to the Father, giving, as it were, His precious blood drop by drop for our sins. When His side was pierced, blood and water flowed forth as a testimony of His completed sacrifice by the shameful, accursed death of the cross. Jesus gave His all, His very life, to save us from our sins. Greater sacrifice can no man make than that!

This blood also speaks of our intimate union with Christ. Already during His public ministry we read, "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." And again in verses 55, 56, "For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him."

It is only through that intimate union with Christ that we become partakers of Him and of all His benefits. The Spirit of Christ lays a bond of faith between us and our risen, exalted Lord. By faith we appropriate Christ's flesh and Christ's blood. Therefore our Lord teaches us that we eat and drink His flesh and blood, both through the preaching of the Word and through the administration of the Lord's Supper. (See the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 29, question 79, and the Netherlands Confession, article 35.) In this last mentioned article reference is made to eating and drinking "the proper and natural body and the proper blood of Christ." From time to time this has raised a few eyebrows. But when we continue reading we realize that also here a spiritual eating and drinking by faith is meant. "This feast is a spiritual table, at which Christ communicates Himself with all His benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both Himself, and the merits of His sufferings and death, nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls by eating His flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of His blood."

Among the benefits of salvation that we receive through Christ's death Scripture specifically mentions our *redemption*. God has purchased His church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). "We are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). Paul also assures us, in Ephesians 1:7, that we have redemption through the blood of God's beloved Son, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. (See also Col. 1:14; Rom. 3:25). We are saved from eternal wrath, for we are justified through Christ's blood (Rom. 5:9).

Another benefit that Scripture often mentions is

our *sanctification* through the blood. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1:7; Rev. 1:5). Peter addresses the believing strangers and pilgrims scattered throughout the world as "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the *sanctification* of the Spirit, unto *obedience* and *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*." This blood of our Savior purges our conscience from dead works (Heb. 9:14). It gives us boldness to enter into the holiest, that is, into intimate fellowship with our God (Heb. 10:19). Therefore this blood is also referred to as "the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20; Eph. 2:13).

The final outstanding blessing that Scripture mentions is our *glorification*. The saints in heaven have overcome the power of Satan "by the blood of

the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:10, 11). In Revelation 7:13, 14, John sees a great multitude that no man can number arrayed in white robes before the throne. The angel informs John that "these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Christ's blood has its peculiar significance, first of all, in the fact that it speaks of His willing and obedient sacrifice unto death, the giving of His very life to atone for our sins. And secondly, it speaks of the fact that He became like unto us as partaker of our flesh and blood that we may be partakers of Him and of His benefits in intimate communion of covenant fellowship with our God forever.

GUEST ARTICLE

The Church and Her Creeds (1)¹

Rev. Ronald Hanko

There is an essay by a well-known British author of this century entitled "Creed or Chaos?"² In the essay the author defends the use of creeds in the church, and the title of the essay very aptly describes the urgency of maintaining and defending our creeds. The only alternative is ecclesiastical chaos. History has proved that, especially in the last century. The church has moved off her creedal foundation, has separated herself from the church of the past and from the Word of God, and is no longer protected from the chaos that the floods and winds of doctrinal change, spiritual ignorance, and worldliness bring.

Many actively oppose the use of creeds and the doctrines taught in the creeds; but an even greater problem is that of neglect of the creeds. Whether this neglect is the fault of the leaders or of the laymen is really a moot question—the fact is that the creeds are neglected by both pulpit and pew. The creeds have become dusty archives because the church is silent concerning them. And where silence rules, ignorance follows. Also among those who still subscribe to the great creeds of the Reformation, the prevailing attitude is one of embarrassment when the creeds are mentioned, perhaps because they have heard too often that the creeds are not "relevant." But such an attitude is very wrong.

We must defend our creeds unashamedly as the living Confession of the church of Jesus Christ con-

cerning the Word of God. Now it is not my purpose in this article to defend the Scriptural basis for creeds or to fight for our creeds, but rather to encourage the faithful use of our creeds. This is important because the creeds are not just dead documents but the LIVING confession of the church of Christ. Those Scripture passages which are used to defend the creeds make it very clear that the creeds are indeed this living and believing response of the church to the revelation that God has given in His Word (Psalm 116:10, Matthew 10:32, 12:34, Romans 10:9, 10, II Timothy 2:12, I Peter 3:15).

Listen once to what the Reformer John Knox says in the preface to his "Confession":

For we are most certainly persuaded that whoever denies Jesus Christ, or is ashamed of Him, in the presence of men, shall be denied before the Father, and before His holy angels. And therefore, by the assistance of the mighty Spirit of our Lord Jesus, we firmly promise to abide to the end in the Confession of this our Faith.³

Remember that this is Knox's justification for writing a creed. He makes it very clear that this creed is not just a doctrinal statement on paper but a confession of faith. And because it is a confession of faith in the Saviour Himself, Knox speaks of "abiding" in that confession and refers to Matthew 10:32 as his biblical warrant.

We too must "abide" in our Confession and must do that not only by keeping our creeds, but also by making faithful use of them. There are many different ways in which our creeds can and must be used. In the remainder of these articles it is my intention to distinguish and discuss seven different usages of our creeds: constitutional, juridical, apologetic, liturgical, homiletical, pastoral, and devotional.⁴ We certainly do not claim that these are the only ways in which our creeds can be used, but they are nevertheless basic both in the life of the church and the members of the church.

We shall see too that some creeds are used more in one way than in another—that is, in fact, the reason why we have creeds in the plural and not just one creed. Some of these different uses also overlap, but the point is that in these and other ways we must make a conscious and deliberate effort to retain our creeds as our living and abiding confession of faith concerning the Word of God.

The first and most basic use of our creeds is the constitutional use. By this we mean that the creeds are the basis for the organization of the church. This is not apart from the Word but in connection with it, for the creeds are the confession of the church concerning God's Word. A key Scripture reference in this connection is Matthew 16:16-18, where Jesus Himself tells Peter that on the rock of Peter's confession concerning the living Word of God, Jesus will build His church. By such a confession the church separates herself from all those who do not confess the same faith, whether in heathendom or in apostate Christianity, for how "can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). At the same time this Confession of the church concerning the Word of God becomes a basis of unity with all those who are agreed in faith and hope. Through her creeds the church declares her purpose to unite in fellowship with all who make the same confession, in order the better to realize her calling to be a light in the world.

Our own three major creeds, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort are even called sometimes, in this connection, "The Three Forms of Unity." Also our "minor" creeds, however, are "forms of unity." By our minor creeds I mean such things as our Forms for the Sacraments and for the ordination of Pastors, Elders, and Deacons. These creeds also are "confessions" concerning important practices and principles of Christianity, and thus a basis for unity and fellowship with those of like faith. This constitutional use is the basis for all the other uses of creeds. Only if the church is constituted and built upon a specific confession concerning the Word of God will the creeds be part of her life and practice.

The second use of the creeds follows from this first use, then, and that is the juridical use of the creeds. This means that in connection with the Word of God the creeds have a place in settling disputes and guiding the affairs of the church. The creeds are not the final arbiter of truth and practice. The final arbiter is the Word of God. The creeds themselves must always be tested by Scripture and submitted to authoritative inspection of Scripture. Nonetheless, through use of the creeds the church has the guidance of the past history of the church and of the Spirit who certainly worked in the church of the past. It would be both foolish and very wrong to ignore that guidance as though the church of ages past was not Spirit-filled and Spirit-led.

We must remember that in all disputes, whether of doctrine or practice, the church's calling is not to run after every new thing, but to "stand . . . in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and (to) walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16). Thus the members of the church find rest for their souls.

Again, it is not only the Three Forms of Unity which have juridical significance, but also our minor creeds stand as the testimony of the church of the past concerning the doctrines of the sacraments and of the offices in the church. It is here also that we must be admonished and encouraged to make full use of our creeds in our Consistories and other ecclesiastical assemblies. We must not be ashamed to use our creeds in relation to the problems and difficulties which arise out of the life of the church.

Very closely connected with this legal or juridical use of the creeds is the apologetic use. Here we refer to the calling of the church to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints (Jude, 3). An apology is what Peter speaks of in I Peter 3:15: "an answer concerning the hope that is within us." We are commanded to be ready always to give such an answer, and it is in obedience to that command that many of our creeds were written. The old ecumenical creeds of Nicea and of Athanasius, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and other creeds such as the Westminster have this as their primary purpose. The Belgic Confession even quoted I Peter 3:15 on its original title page as an explanation of its existence.

That apology or answer which is demanded of the church and her members has both a positive and a negative side. The positive side is the calling to give a positive witness to the truth of God's Word, and the negative side is the calling to do this over against all error of doctrine and life. The creeds mentioned above do both. None of them is

completely or even especially negative, though they do witness fearlessly against the errors of Romanism, Arminianism, and Anabaptism. Nor have they in their defense of the faith become outdated. These three errors are still those that "trouble Israel" today, and our creeds stand as a mighty bulwark against the errors of Rome and of reformed apostasy. The world has not changed, but still lies in darkness, and the lie also works by its power in the world as it did from the very beginning. We may not, therefore, turn our backs on the church's witness from the past, but be encouraged by it to a love of God's Word and courage for the battle.

These first three uses of the creeds have to do especially with the church's official life. The remaining four are more closely connected with the worship of Christ's church and the spiritual life and walk of the child of God. To these we turn in a further article. In the meantime may we remember

that "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him" (Hebrews 2:1-3).

¹Much of this article is taken from a speech given on this subject in May, 1982 in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey.

²Dorothy Sayers in *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World*, pages 31-45 (Eerdmans, 1969).

³Twentieth Century Edition of Knox's *History and Confession*, page 342 (Revell, 1905).

⁴The credit for these distinctions must be given to Rev. Peter De Jong who used most of them in a speech given in Northwest Iowa several years ago.

Book Reviews

FOUR TROJAN HORSES OF HUMANISM, by Harry Conn; Mott Media, 1982; 143 pp., \$5.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

While the book, in an interesting way, exposes the errors of humanism in our society, its apologetic value is limited because of the author's defense of the doctrine of free will which leads him also to wrong conclusions about God's providence in this world. It is worth reading if one is interested in knowing more of how humanism has a stranglehold on our culture, but it is of little value in helping one develop a biblical defense against this devilish heresy.

LEARNING TO LIVE WITH EVIL, by Theodore Plantinga; Eerdmans Publishing, 1982; 163 pp., \$5.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The problem of evil in the world has long attracted the attention of theologians and philosophers. Plantinga adds his bit to the discussion in a very interesting and worthwhile book which is written from the perspective of historic Calvinism.

After Plantinga discusses the three main kinds of evil in the world (natural, moral, and demonic) he gives an historical survey of the four major answers to the problem of evil as proposed by philosophers and theologians: evil as ultimate, evil as necessity, evil as non-being, and evil as alienation from God. In the latter part of the book Plantinga discusses

various practical problems which arise in connection with the presence of evil in this world and exposes in this connection the shallow view which is held by modern "liberalism." His conclusion to the whole discussion is that the believer's only answer to evil is that ultimately God will triumph over it and gain the complete victory.

The book ought to be read by many, for Plantinga's approach is always an effort to be biblical. It is, however, not all that easy to read since there are in it many philosophical discussions concerning the philosophical aspects of evil. It is not necessary, though, for one to be trained in philosophy to read and appreciate this book.

There is one serious flaw in the theology which Plantinga presents, a flaw which is not unexpected. It is a flaw of such a serious nature that, from a certain point of view, it seriously erodes the value of the book and places it outside true Reformed thinking. I refer to the fact that Plantinga does not hold firmly to the idea of God's sovereignty also over the devils and sin. He discusses this question, but it is less than satisfactory. This deficiency is even evident from his solution to the problem which he finds in the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of God and the final overthrow of the forces of evil.

It is true that supralapsarians and infralapsarians have a different conception of God's sovereignty over sin; but the fact remains that even a Reformed

infralapsarian would not deny this crucial point. It is also true that we face here a great mystery of God's providence; but mystery or not, we cannot deny the clear teaching of Scripture in this respect. If one denies the sovereignty of God over sin, one must, in some way, make sin a power in God's world outside God's control. This is unacceptable dualism which is not only contrary to Scripture, but which also robs the believer of his comfort.

It is at this crucial point that we demur from Plantinga's writings.

WHO AM I AND WHAT AM I DOING HERE???, by Mark W. Lee; Mott Media, 1982; 144 pp., \$9.95, \$5.95 in paper. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

Writing about the doubts Christians have relating to self identification, acceptance, and the direction and quality of life, Dr. Lee gives a mixture of current psychology and religion to help the Christian understand himself. A book of more Scripture and less psychology would be of more enduring value.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Ladies Aid Society of First Protestant Reformed Church were saddened in the loss of one of their members, MRS. TILLIE MEULENBERG. We express our sympathy to her family. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).

Mrs. N. Phillips, Pres.
Mrs. H. Baar, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Priscilla Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church (Grand Rapids, MI) expresses their sincere sympathy to their fellow member, Mrs. Gerrit Bol, in the death of her mother, MRS. HENRY MEULENBERG, whom the Lord took unto Himself on January 10, 1983.

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

Mrs. C. Kregel, Pres.
Miss R. Sietstra, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the adult Bible Society of Doon, (Iowa), Protestant Reformed Church wish to express their sympathy with the love of Christ to two of their fellow-members, Mr. and Mrs. James Hoogendoorn in the death of their father-in-law and father, MR. JOHN MANTEL.

Our prayer is that God will be their comfort in their sorrow.

Rev. M. Kamps, Pres.
Barb Hunter, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of South East Protestant Reformed Church extends its sincere sympathy to two of their members, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Feenstra, in the passing of Mrs. Feenstra's sister, MRS. GERALD DE VRIES.

May they find comfort in the words of I Cor. 15:22. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Rev. Carl Haak, Pres.
Mrs. Harlow W. Kuiper, Sec'y.

THE DRAMA OF CHRISTIANITY, An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation, by S. L. Morris; Baker Book House, 1982; 147 pp., \$4.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

As anyone who has even a passing acquaintance with the book of Revelation will know, it is impossible to treat adequately this important and difficult book of the Bible in a book of fewer than 150 pages. This is undoubtedly the weakness of this reprint. However, the explanation which this book gives of Revelation is basically sound. One may disagree with the interpretation of some of the details, but the overall explanation of the book is correct. For this reason the book has a certain value. It is a good, concise survey of Revelation and will assist the reader in grasping the whole of the book and the general outline of it. It can very well serve as an introduction to a more detailed study. It is recommended for that purpose.

Especially interesting is the author's explanation of Revelation 20 which is, on the whole, correct. In it he also refutes the position of the pre-millennialists, but fails to point to their basic error: a denial of the kingship of Christ over His church.

The book could serve admirably for a study guide in societies which are making this book the object of their discussions.

FULL-TIME TEACHER NEEDED!

Covenant Christian High School is accepting applications for one full-time teacher for the 1983-1984 academic year. Areas for which applicants can apply are Bible, Business, Church History, Contemporary Religions, German, and History. Send letter of application to Mr. David Ondersma, Chairman of Education Committee, 6761 Brookwood Dr., Grandville, MI. 49418.

NOTICE

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet on Wednesday, March 2, 1983, at 8:30 A.M., in South Holland, Illinois, the Lord willing. Delegates in need of lodging should inform the Clerk of the South Holland Council.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk
Classis West

OFFICE-BEARER CONFERENCE

Subject: The Work of the Elders with the Alcoholic

Time: Tuesday, March 1, 1983 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Place: South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, South Holland, Ill.

Papers given by:

- 1) Prof. Robert Decker, professor in our Theological School, "An Introduction to the Problem Among Us"
- 2) Mr. Paul Van Koeveering, member of our Holland, Michigan congregation, "Alcoholics Anonymous—A Critical Analysis"
- 3) Pastor Ron Van Overloop, missionary in Birmingham Alabama, "The Use of 'Wine' in the Scripture"

Anyone who is interested in this subject is welcome to attend the Conference. For more information and suggested reading on this subject contact your pastor.

News From Our Churches

Now that the second semester at our seminary has begun, Ken Hanko and Barry Gritters are looking forward to their graduation this coming spring. Their graduation this spring will end many recent years of intense training and academic instruction. I know that both seminarians are earnestly awaiting the confirmation of their calling to be a minister in one of our churches or our mission fields. May God graciously provide them a place of labor in His vineyard.

In the last issue I commented about the Activities Committee of Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church sponsoring an all day conference on the subject, "Bringing Up Children in an Increasingly Evil World." This weekend many of us received a letter from the Committee stating the same information but also asking for a response to two questions. "What do you see as the greatest need in bringing up children today?" "What would you like discussed about it?" The "it" no doubt refers to the "greatest need in bringing up children today." Several people from the Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo area will participate on panels, Friday, April 8. If you desire to respond to the above questions and/or plan to attend this worthwhile conference send your information to 427 North Fletcher, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 49007, by February 24th. The Activities Committee will greatly appreciate your response. By the way, the parsonage telephone number of Rev. Woudenberg has been changed to 1-616-345-4556.

The consistory of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California has been busy with interested people in Ripon. Ripon is approximately 350 miles northwest of Redlands by air and approximately 70 miles east of San Francisco by air. The Reformed Witness Hour broadcasts over station KLOC in Modesto, which is 12 miles southeast of Ripon. Rev. Koole and Mr. J. Jabaay flew up to Ripon the week of the 9th of January. "They led a very good discussion dealing with the Theory of Common Grace. Some new contacts were made as well which seem promising." "The group is requesting a missionary and the Consistory would like to reach the point where (they) can commit a full time missionary to the area in good conscience." May God add abundant fruit upon their

labors.

The council of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland was also busy during January. They sent "a committee of Elder M. Smits and former Elder A. Lenting to our Birmingham mission field...as part of (their) oversight of the field." Perhaps Rev. Van Overloop will send me some information concerning his labor in that part of God's kingdom.

The Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church is also busy sponsoring "The Protestant Reformed Chapel" at Bradenton, Florida. The winter chapel services are held at Bradenton Christian School. Rev. C. Hanko will preach there through February, and Rev. G. Lubbers will preach there into mid-April.

First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids has requested that Rev. Flikkema, with the consent of the Council of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, labor in Jamaica from February 27 through March 20. Actually, three ministers are planning on going to Jamaica so that their stays there will overlap by one week. Rev. Joostens will be going first. All three ministers will go for three weeks' time. The third member has not been confirmed as yet.

First Protestant Reformed Church is also planning on a special congregational meeting February 14th. "The purpose of this meeting is to gain congregational approval for the following consistorial recommendation: 'That we extend the closing date for the sale of our property from February 1 to July 1, 1983.' " The prospective buyer requested this extension so that adequate funds can be provided and so that a bond issue can be approved by the state of Michigan.

I gleaned this from Covenant Protestant Reformed Church's bulletin: "Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, CA is still looking for loans from our people to finish its building project. They need a total of \$40,000 to complete the project. They are offering Treasury Bill rates with a minimum of 10% interest, payments to be made annually. There is no minimum on the loans. For information contact Mr. Dennis Van Uffelen, 1-714-794-4467."

DH