

The **STANDARD BEARER**

— A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE —

Hie you to Bethlehem! For the sake of
your soul, for the sake of heavenly joy such
as the first Paradise did not know

Bethlehem still has its unspeakable
charms!

Focal point of the brilliancy of Divine
Light!

It is the smiling Face of the Triune God!

Rev. Gerrit Vos

Standard Bearer, December 15, 1948

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MEDITATION

The Bright and Morning Star

Rev. C. Hanks

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.

Matthew 2:1,2

His Star!

We came a bit too late to accompany the shepherds on their visit to the Babe Jesus in the cattle stall. But we did arrive exactly on time according to God's plan, for the fulness of time had come when God's promise would be realized that Japheth should dwell in the tents of Shem.

We, children of Japheth, were represented by wisemen from the east who had come to Jerusalem to inquire about the new heir to the throne of David, for they had seen His Star in the east.

They called it *the* Star. They were confident that there could be only one. And they were also confident that the Star they had seen in the east, or, in its

rising, was indeed His Star. Among all the countless stars of the heavens there arose one Star, larger, different, more impressive in scintillating brightness than any other star. For many centuries, since the dawn of creation the stars in the heavens had sung the praises of their Maker. For the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Night unto night shows wisdom. To Abraham as the father of all believers, and therefore to us God gave the numberless stars as a sign of His covenant seed, the church, which becomes a multitude that no man can number in the new creation. Even now the night may be ever so dark, storms may rage under threatening skies, the earth may rock and shake on its foundation, and nations may be engaged in bloody conflict, but the stars in the heavens remain serenely undisturbed as they await the renewal of all things in the new creation.

In the fulness of time Christ's Star arose among the myriads of stars. Scientists have tried to find a natural explanation for this strange phenomenon. Some consider it a conjunction of three planets in the eastern sky. Others think it might have been a large comet or a nova. But the fact remains that there is no scientific explanation for this Star, which itself is a wonder of God, a miraculous sign of the great Wonder of wonders who has come into our lives as the Bright and Morning Star.

This Star was in its rising, even as the King of the Jews was born in Bethlehem. True, He was born in poverty and weakness, His life would be a path of suffering which reached its climax on the cross. For He was the great Servant of Jehovah who came to challenge Satan and all the forces of darkness, meeting them in mortal combat and entering into the very citadel of Satan in hell to crush him and break his power over the elect, and to march triumphantly through death and the grave to take His divinely appointed place at the Father's right hand in the heavens. The Star arose to its zenith amid the stars of heaven. All power was given to Him in heaven and on earth. From His throne He rules the nations with a rod of iron, carrying out the counsel of God for the salvation of His people. He is, indeed, the Bright and Morning Star who sends His rays of eternal light and life into our hearts to lead us ever onward to the eternal Day. His very presence among us assures us that He is hastening toward the hour when He will appear with the clouds to take us unto Himself in the new creation, where we will shine as stars of the universe to the glory of the Father, world without end!

As wonderful as the Star itself, so wonderful is the amazing fact that this Star should appear to us in our representatives, of whom we actually know so very little. Whether only the wisemen saw the Star, and no one else, we do not know. We do not

even know the names of these wisemen, whom Matthew calls magi. We sing "We three kings of Orient are," but we do not know whether there were three. The only basis for thinking that there were three is the three gifts they brought to Jesus. Although the prophets spoke of kings coming "to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:3, see also Ps. 68:31, 72:10), Matthew speaks of wisemen, or magi, who may have been learned men, possibly astronomers or astrologers. Nor is there any evidence that they came from the East, that is, from the Orient. They may have come from Babylon where there were still Jews remaining after the Babylonian captivity. From them the magi may have heard of the prophecy of Balaam, that "there shall come a Star out of Jacob and a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel" (Num. 24:17). Indeed, we know so very little about these wisemen, yet God has revealed that which is important for us: They are the gentiles who come from afar, for they had seen His Star in the east.

Where is He that is born King of the Jews?

We marvel at the confidence of our representatives as they take up their long journey to find the King. Was it mere curiosity that spurred them on their way? That hardly explains their confidence, their eagerness and determination. Was it pagan superstition that God used to bring them to the Savior? That also fails to explain their desire to find and worship the King of the Jews. No, here we see a second wonder: God not only displayed to them the wonder of the Star, but also added the wonder of faith wrought in the hearts of these gentiles.

With the power of grace spurring them on, these magi travel toward Jerusalem. It is not true, as we sometimes sing of the Star, "Westward leading, still proceeding," for these men did not see the Star on their way to Jerusalem. They were on their own, and actually they were off the right course. God purposely left them with the assumption that the newly born King of the Jews would be born in the capital city, Jerusalem. God did this as much for their sakes, trying their faith, as for Jerusalem's condemnation. What a disappointment met these magi as they arrived in Jerusalem and failed to find any evidence of celebration, any flags or banners honoring the royal Babe. A worse shock awaited them as they stood in the palace of wicked Herod, who obviously could not hide his consternation when he heard the mission of these magi. Herod was troubled, we read. He trembled in fear of God's judgment as his throne seemed to totter under him. And all Jerusalem was deeply disturbed with him. Foreigners from a pagan country are inquiring about their promised King. They speak of a sign from heaven, a Star. Balaam's prophecy comes to the minds of these scribes, doctors of theology.

There is a recollection of recent rumors of a Babe born in Bethlehem, of shepherds, of a visit of angels. And all this in David's city, of which Micah had prophesied! All this was so contrary to their idea of how the promised Messiah should come to them. Why, if He were indeed the Christ, was He not born of royalty, in pomp and splendor, in Jerusalem. Their pride was hurt that they had not been the first to be informed, the first to greet Him. And now, as if to add insult to injury, foreigners from heathen lands came to worship Him who was supposed to be *their* King! Since Herod insisted, they got out their scrolls and soon pointed out that Micah had spoken of Bethlehem Judah as the birthplace of one who was to rule Israel, whose goings out have been of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2). To their own condemnation they read, informed the king, and then rolled up their scroll in unbelief. Let the wisemen continue their search, these learned men will not bother to investigate. They want no part of this Christ, the only and eternal Lord. Jerusalem heard the Word and hardened itself against it, already rejecting Him who was born King of the Jews.

Would that not be enough to cause the magi to turn back to their country in total disgust? Unwittingly they had served to harden the inhabitants of Jerusalem with another witness of the birth of the Savior. They had served their purpose and could now continue on their way.

Yet the scribes had helped them in their search by pointing their learned finger to the prophecy of Micah that spoke of Bethlehem as the birthplace of the great King. In spite of their cold reception in the palace and the total indifference of the teachers in Israel they proceed toward David's city. It is the power of God's grace that refuses to be hindered by obstacles and even spurs them on to seek the newborn King. Much to their amazement, help comes from Jehovah when they need it most. Amazed, yet filled with relief, they see the Star appearing once more before them and leading them to Bethlehem. We read that they rejoiced with exceeding great joy as they followed the Star. Any attempt to explain this appearance from natural causes must fail again. With renewed confidence they commit themselves unto the guidance of Almighty God, Who causes the Star to rest above the house where Mary and Joseph have sought refuge for themselves and their Baby. Confidently these strangers enter, yet they are filled with awe and reverence as they approach the object of their search, the King of the Jews lying in the arms of a common, ordinary woman.

Worshiping in Faith.

How else can we possibly explain this worship of

these gentiles except as the work of Almighty God by His Spirit in their hearts? How else can we explain these costly gifts, fit only for royalty, laid down at the feet of the Babe already rejected by His own people. How else can we explain this interest in the King of the Jews if it were not that He meant so much to these gentiles? God had made them realize that their idols were but wood and stone, while Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the only true and living God. God gave them a deep awareness that their pagan superstitions and all their attempts to appease their gods could never give them the peace they sought. Against Jehovah they had sinned, and He alone could forgive and deliver them from their sins, and that only through the promised King. They believed that the marvelous Star that appeared before them, rising in the eastern sky, announced the birth of that King. It was that deep spiritual need for the Savior that virtually drove them to Jerusalem, and from hard-hearted Jerusalem to Bethlehem to find Him who alone can save. Nothing could deter them until they found Him whom their soul sought, before whom they could bow in worship and present their gifts of praise and thanks.

These were the firstfruits from heathendom, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Noah that Japheth would dwell in the tents of Shem. They were our representatives, harbingers of Pentecost, when the Spirit of Christ was poured out and began to gather the church from every nation, and tribe, and tongue, even to the ends of the earth and the islands of the sea.

Heathen lands and hostile peoples

Soon shall come the Lord to know;

Nations born again in Zion

Shall the Lord's salvation show;

God Almighty shall on Zion strength bestow.

O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

*The Standard Bearer
makes a thoughtful
gift for the sick
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EDITORIALS

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Congratulations to a New Sister

We have a new sister in the family of our Protestant Reformed Churches. Our baby sister's name is Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church. She was born on October 20, 1983; and as far as size is concerned, appears to be a healthy baby: 24 families, with 72 children, and 1 individual were the charter members of the congregation.

Congratulations, sister! We wish you a long and prosperous life and healthy growth, and we pray that you may be a faithful and undaunted witness of our Protestant Reformed heritage in your community.

For many of our readers the name Byron Center is undoubtedly a strange one, although this is not the first time that there has been a Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center. If your memory goes back as far as this, you will recall that the late Rev. G.M. Ophoff was for many years pastor of a little flock there — until the congregation was dissolved in mid-1944, at which time the Rev. Ophoff became full-time instructor in our seminary, with the status of minister emeritus of First Church.

And now we have a congregation there once more.

For those who are unacquainted with the geography of this region, Byron Center is a little village in what might be termed the far southwestern region of the greater Grand Rapids area. The location of the town is at 84th Street and Byron Center Rd., approximately 10 miles to the southeast of our Hudsonville church and some 13 miles to the southwest of First Church. The temporary meeting-place of the congregation is the Byron Center Christian Junior High School, located a couple blocks

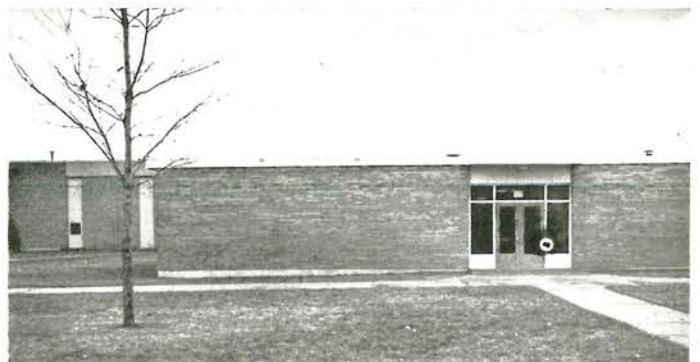
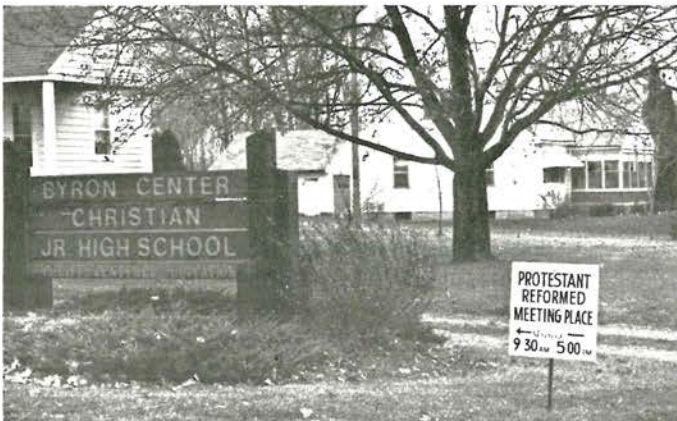
south of the main intersection on Byron Center Ave.

From one of the elders I received a summary of the history leading to the formation of the new congregation, from which I have gleaned the following items (accompanied by photos of the congregation and their temporary meetingplace):

******During the summer of 1981 the church extension committee of Hudsonville church, with consistorial approval, began a class (at the Byron Center Library) for the study of the Canons of Dordt. The purpose was to extend our witness to the truth in this area, and the eventual goal was the formation of a new congregation. This class met during the 1981-82 and 1982-83 seasons under the leadership of Prof. H.C. Hoeksema.

******With the encouragement of members of our various churches, the committee was expanded during the summer of 1982 to include interested members. During the fall of 1982, after permission was received from each of the consistories involved, various potentially interested families were contacted with a view to determining whether there was adequate support for a new church in the area. Eighteen to twenty families expressed an interest. After two informational meetings were held, it was decided to petition Classis East for approval to institute a new congregation. A request was filed at that time with eighteen signatures attached. Although we were somewhat disappointed at the classical decision to postpone action until September, our desire and prayer persisted that we could once again establish a Protestant Reformed witness in this area.

******In July of 1983, at the request of several members of Hudsonville church, the Consistory of Hud-





sonville decided to begin conducting worship services in Byron Center as church extension work and with a view to the establishment of a congregation. On August 7 the first services were held; at that time a Sunday School, with 35 children present, was also begun.

**At the September session of Classis East approval was granted to organize the new congregation. And the organizational service was held on October 20, 1983, with Prof. Hoeksema preaching the sermon on Isaiah 66:11 ("Nourished By Breasts of Consolation and Glory"), and Rev. G. Van Baren leading the congregational meeting and installing the newly elected elders and deacons. As stated above, at this

occasion 24 families (with 72 children) and 1 individual presented their membership attests and were declared to be charter members of the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church. Three elders and two deacons were chosen (by free election) and were duly installed in office.

**We thank our heavenly Father for this joyous occasion and for the opportunity to labor in the cause of His kingdom and in our Protestant Reformed outreach and witness in this community.

Postscript. At its annual congregational meeting the Hudsonville congregation voted to give the new congregation a gift of \$50,000.00 — you might call it a birthday present.

Has the Leopard (WCC) Changed Its Spots?

A month ago we called attention to the fact that there was a considerable number of "evangelicals" — among them the Secretary General of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod — who claimed to see a change for the better in the World Council of Churches at its recent Vancouver Assembly, even sufficient change to warrant working together in such a World Council. At that time we looked at the matter especially from the point of view of possible consequences for the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, which will again face the issue of dual membership at Chicago in 1984. Especially since some member churches have already flatly rejected such dual membership as that presently held by the GKN, there is the possibility of a serious clash at RES Chicago.

But we may also face the question whether the leopard has changed his spots, whether there has indeed been any significant and far-reaching change on the part of the WCC, such a change as would enable "evangelicals," let alone Reformed churches, to participate.

Our answer to this question is No.

First of all, anyone who followed the reports of the secular press concerning the Sixth Assembly has to be aware of the fact that the WCC continues to be deeply involved in social and political action, especially with respect to so-called Third World countries. We do not believe that this is the business of the church or of a council of churches. Many so-called evangelicals do not as such object to

this. But the striking thing about the Sixth Assembly, as in the past, was that it came down hard on the social and political injustices of which the United States was supposedly guilty, while it trod lightly, ever so lightly, when it came to the injustices of communist countries and those with pro-Marxist philosophies. But remember: to be communist and Marxist is to be antichristian!

In the second place, the WCC is guilty of what is called syncretism. What is that? The dictionary defines it as "the reconciliation or union of conflicting beliefs, especially religious beliefs, or a movement or effort intending such." In other words, syncretism is really a euphemism for *idolatry* and for *polytheism*. There was a glaring instance of this at the opening worship service of the Sixth Assembly, a grand affair with 15,000 people in attendance, a choir of some 600 persons, a host of dignitaries, and an Indian tribal band from British Columbia. The Rev. Charles T. Fennema refers to this in an article in *Calvinist Contact* (Aug. 19, p. 8):

Two events in the liturgy I found rather distasteful and unbecoming for a Christian worship service. There was first of all the Indian tribal band. It's great to see the indigenous people of our land at a Christian worship service. After the creation story of Genesis 1 was read and an appropriate hymn was sung the Indian band had its performance.

First there was an Indian dance. Very interesting. But then one of the Indian chiefs gave an Indian account of the beginnings of mankind. Again very interesting but really a pagan account of the birth of men into this world. I could not — and still cannot — see what this story had to do with the Christian confession that God created the heavens and the earth.

If this event was added to appease the indigenous people of Canada it was in very poor taste. If it had been added as part of the worship service to show delegates our Canadian folklore it was a farce and degrading for the Indian tribal band. If it was a part of the worship because also our Indian culture might contribute to a broad-minded, all-inclusive "witness" about man's origin, it was plain syncretism — an accommodation which is evil in the sight of a jealous God who alone is the Creator of heaven and earth.

The latter is exactly what it was. In other reports I read that this Indian tribal service was complete with totem pole and that the totem pole was to be shipped to Geneva, Switzerland to have a place on the grounds of the WCC headquarters.

Only, it should be called by its right name: idolatry!

How, I ask, can evangelicals, let alone Reformed men, defend such a WCC?

Does such worship arise as a sweet smelling savour to the Holy One? Or did this idolatry not rather make the entire grand worship service a

stinking abomination to the Lord of heaven and earth?

Nor was this an isolated instance of such syncretism.

In the statement issued by a minority of dissident evangelicals headed by Dr. Peter Beyerhaus we find the following in paragraph 7:

Non-Christian religions are presented as ways through which Christ Himself gives life to their followers and also speaks to us as Christians. The fear of many that the WCC could move into an increasing syncretism is confirmed by the inclusion of Indian mythology in the worship program, by the invitations to leaders of other religions to address the Assembly, even on its central theme ("Jesus Christ The Life of the World" HCH), and by the explicit statement of a leading WCC official, Professor Dr. D.C. Mulder, that an evangelistic revival endangers our dialogue with other religions.

Space does not permit the quotation of the complete statement of the Beyerhaus-led evangelicals, from which one receives an entirely different impression from that left by the so-called "radical evangelicals." Nor does the Beyerhaus statement furnish mere opinions; it cites concrete facts and events. Let me conclude by quoting three more paragraphs from this statement:

3) The very words of the Bible, although used more lavishly than at previous conferences, often seemed to assume another meaning. We sensed a general trend to mis-use the Christian heritage as a forum and language for social-political ideologies. Under the guise of a biblical and trinitarian terminology, supported by dramatic illustrations of a threatening nuclear holocaust and by communicating fascinating human dreams of peace in speeches, worship services and audio-visual presentations, a pseudo-Christian view of salvation which equates God with the driving forces within the process of history, is developed.

4) Only this ambiguity can explain the seeming inconsistency of speakers who represented traditional Christian doctrines featuring side by side with others who expounded radical beliefs incompatible with orthodox biblical convictions. One outstanding example was Dr. Dorothy Soelle. She denounced the biblical concept of God and His Lordship, speaking of a "god-movement," and even encouraged her listeners to write "new bibles."

5) Other speakers encouraged women to make their female experience the starting point of developing a profoundly new theology in which the reverence for the biblically revealed God as our Father is changed into the cult of god mother.

These quotations from the Beyerhaus statement are quoted from *Christian News*, October 17, 1983.

Obviously, the leopard has not changed his spots.

CORRESPONDENCE AND REPLY

A Reply Relative to "Untalented Singers"

Rev. R.C. Harbach

The *Standard Bearer* article, "God's Holiness" (Nov. 1, 1983, Vol. LX, No. 3), meets with a fine, positive response from a young Protestant Reformed college student who principally agrees with the content and thrust of the article but takes exception to the word "untalented" (see front cover and p. 61) as not applicable to today's popular "singers," adding that it should be recognized as modern "music theorists tell us . . . these 'singers' are very talented," only they have debased their God-given gifts to the service of sin. Further, it was urged that we do not take God's gifts for granted. For this good counsel we are grateful.

We appreciate this Reformed line of positive criticism. This brings to mind that music and musical instruments originally came from the non-covenant line of the godless Lamech (Gen. 4:21). God had given them the ability to invent these instruments and, as Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary defines the word *talent*, He gave them the "natural gift" or "natural endowment of eminent ability" to produce classical music. But they proceeded to prostitute these talents to the service of the devil. The *talented*, says the dictionary, possess skill, genius, have marked mental ability and uncommon aptitude. A great Christian philologist well said, "men may choose to forget the ends for which their *talents* were given them . . . they may practically deny that they were given at all; yet in this word . . . abides a continual memento that they were so given . . . and that each man shall have to render an account of their use." (Trench, *On the Study of Words*, lect. iii, p. 93, 1883, F. & W. Dic.). The very word *talented*, used negatively in the article referred to, had been "denounced by Coleridge as 'that vile and barbarous vocable,' " yet is "nevertheless correctly formed according to analogy of such words as booted, cloistered, horned, ivied, sceptred, slippered, venomd, and numerous others."

Therefore, instead of saying "they are an untalented screaming mob," it might better have been written, "are a mis-talented (mis = wrong) mob" or "they are a screaming mob belching out talentless trash, not worth three minutes of audition time." Then it would not be saying that *they* have no talent but that their trashy *productions* evidence a notable

absence of talent (Romans 1:18 shows why). As the psalmist (Ps. 59:6-7a) put it, "at evening they make a *noise* like a dog . . . they belch out" of their mouth such senseless and "barbarous vocables" as "bow-wow-wow-wow!"

These purveyors of "Rock" filth, we agree, practice for many hours prior to their performances. This recalls the old saying, "Practice makes perfect," not a very scientific statement, for all too often we keep practicing our mistakes, over and over. Then practice becomes a continual rehearsal of imperfection. Still, one wonders how much practice it takes to produce a silly "bow-wow!" Naughty children do this sort of thing all the time, without thinking and with no practice whatever.

God indeed has naturally endowed men with certain natural skills and aptitudes, with brains, and a certain ability to use them. So that they not only have knowledge but a certain kind of wisdom, yet withal not a shred of grace. But the natural man rejects the idea that these good gifts are God-given and refuses to use them to God's glory, using them in the service of the devil, so that their "wisdom" is not from above, but is this-worldly (I Cor. 3:18), natural (2:14), hostile (Rom. 8:7) and demonic (Acts 13:10). Cp. Jas. 3:15. They also have a talent for getting wealthy. Their performances do no public service, but *project* and advocate *destruction*. Yet in their own private lives they make sure that they *protect* their own financial *security*! They get rich making boobs of their devotees. To this mis-use of their talents to their own condemnation will be added the final judgment where they will not be able to forget Who gave them their gifts, nor the end for which they were given — the glory of God! And that final accounting day for them is near. Finally, who would disagree with ex-Rock king Little Richard, for saying, "Some music will keep you out of God's kingdom!" But again, we give thanks to God for Reformed young people who "*think* Reformed!" — RCH.

*Read and Study
The Standard Bearer*

QUESTION BOX

Covenant Breakers

Rev. C. Hanko

A reader from New Zealand, after expressing his appreciation for the *Standard Bearer*, writes:

"I was puzzled about a sentence in your article (S.B., p. 447) where you and the Prot. Ref. Churches object to the saying, 'God promises to every one of you, that if you believe you shall be saved.' You state that this militates against the plain teachings of Scripture. Rom. 10:9, however, does say the same thing. In essence I see no difference in the meaning of these two statements. . . . Peter ends Acts 2:39 ' . . . as many as the Lord our God shall call.' But we do not know who are called. . . . Is it wrong to speak of covenant breakers? Was not Adam a covenant breaker?"

This writer included in his letter copies of articles written by H.J. Jager of Kampen written in the periodical *Opbouw*. This writer is a member of the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk, an offshoot of the Gereformeerde Kerken onderhoudende article 31, DKO (the Liberated Churches). He does not include these articles to express agreement with them, but rather to show how this branch of the Liberated Churches has become thoroughly Arminian. The writer refers to John 3:16 as expressing God's love for and desire to save all men, for, as he says, anybody can put his name there instead of the term "the world." He speaks of losing one's faith and falling from grace. This is exactly the error that is so strongly opposed and condemned in our Canons.

The question in the mind of the reader centers about the 'if' clause in the statement "God promises to every one of you, if you believe you shall be saved," and the 'if' clause in Romans 10:8, 9, "But what saith it [the Scripture]? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

If we place the two statements next to each other the difference becomes obvious:

- 1) God promises to every one of you, that if you believe
- 2) If you shall confess . . . and shall believe

In the first statement there is a *general* promise proclaimed to "every one of you," that is, to all who hear the preaching of the Word. This general promise depends on man for its fulfillment: "if you believe." You must believe to make God's promise a reality. That denies the fundamental truth that God's promises are always "yea" and "amen" in Him. That also makes our salvation dependent on us.

The second statement is addressed to believers. Verse 8 says, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." To them God gives the *particular* promise, "if (in the sense of when) you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in Him in your heart, you shall be saved." This is a general proclamation of God's promise, which is always particular, addressed to the elect. In this case, nothing depends on man, it is all God's gift (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

This same thing holds for Acts 2:39. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." In this passage Peter refers to the promise of Genesis 17:7, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." He declares this to those who repented during his sermon on the day of Pentecost, assuring them that the promise to Abraham also applied to them *as seed of Abraham*. What is especially significant in this passage is the fact that Peter realizes, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that God's covenant continues in the line of generations of believers also in the new dispensation as well as in the old. This covenant, however, does not include all the natural children in the line of generations, but the spiritual seed. In Genesis 17:7 God makes distinction between Abraham's seed and their generations. The *seed* is taken into the covenant in the line of generations. Peter makes this same distinction when he says, "unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even as many as the Lord our God shall call*. Those that are afar off are the nations even to the ends of the earth. Out of those nations God will call His own. Paul never speaks in his

epistles of the calling of God from the external aspect of the preaching of the Word. Paul speaks of the calling of God as the almighty, efficacious calling, whereby God draws His own out of darkness into His marvelous light. That is also the case here. The promise of God is to the elect. It is always particular, to the believers and their spiritual seed, even as God establishes His covenant with believers and their spiritual seed.

This was true already in the old dispensation. Distinction is always made between the carnal seed of Abraham and the true spiritual seed, between those who were merely externally in the covenant and those who were actually internally, spiritually in the covenant. In Romans 2:28, 29 the apostle Paul writes, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." In Romans 4:11, Abraham is referred to as the father of *believers*, both in the old and new dispensation. See verses 16, 17. In Romans 9:6-8 we are told that "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: *but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*" It is exactly for that reason that Paul tells the Galatians, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (3:16). From which the apostle concludes in verse 29, "And if ye are *Christ's*, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

It is exactly from this point of view that the apostles in their epistles could address the various churches as "Called saints" (Rom. 1:7). "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints" (I Cor. 1:2); "the church of God which is in Corinth, with all the saints, which are in Achaia" (II Cor. 1:1, and so forth). Peter addresses the churches as "The strangers scattered abroad, . . . elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (I Pet. 1:1, 2). Or, "them which have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:1).

Scripture always speaks of the church as an organism, that is, it addresses the elect, the saints which are in Christ Jesus. To them is the promise of the gospel, not as something that they can accept or reject by their personal choice, but which is assured them by the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. True, there is a general proclamation of this particular promise to all who hear the Word, so that the carnal element of the church also hears this promise, despises and rejects it in unbelief. Of them Scripture says that they have known the way, but have not walked in it. They prove to be the tares in

distinction from the wheat, both of which grow up in the same field.

This same truth applies to the sacrament of Baptism. There are many who receive the outward sign of baptism, but do not have the seal of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Like carnal Israel they are outwardly in the covenant, that is, they abide for a time in the sphere of the covenant. Although they are regarded as part of the church for a time, they are not actually members of the true church of Christ. This compares with what Paul says in I Corinthians 10:1-5, "Moreover, brethren, I would not have you ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." This cannot possibly mean that for a time God was well pleased with them, but that when it became evident that they were not elect, not sanctified in Christ by the Holy Spirit, did not walk in faith, God was no longer pleased with them. God knows the heart. Salvation is of the Lord. He never changes. He who has begun a good work in us will surely finish it. That is our comfort in the preservation of the saints.

This also explains what Scripture means by covenant breakers. A covenant breaker is one who violates, transgresses the covenant. Even a true believer violates God's covenant when he sins. True, spiritual Israel transgressed God's covenant when they went along with the carnal element in serving idols, and is therefore accused of committing spiritual adultery. But there are also those who violate the covenant by despising all that is holy. Just as they break God's law, even all the commandments, without being true members of the church, so also they can transgress God's covenant, become covenant breakers without being in the covenant. We can speak of Adam as a covenant breaker. But Scripture is much more emphatic about those in the old testament who deliberately profaned God's covenant by knowing what God required of them and yet refused to obey Him. They are cast out and beaten with double stripes, for they despise all that is holy, even as Esau did.

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STRENGTH OF YOUTH

The Christian and Dancing (2)

Rev. Ron Cammenga

In our last article, we took note of the changed attitude toward the dance by the churches today. Whereas in the past the church has always squarely opposed the practice of dancing, now the churches are beginning to tolerate and even promote dancing. The members, and especially the young people, are encouraged to redeem the dance.

Apparently there is Scriptural support for this approval of dancing. For the Scriptures themselves speak of dancing, dancing on the part of children of God, dancing which was approved of by God. Those who are busy promoting dancing in the churches today appeal to these Scriptural passages as proof for their contention that dancing is permissible for the Christian.

Exodus 15:20 records the dancing of Miriam, Moses' sister, along with other women of Israel at the time of God's deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea and His drowning of Pharaoh's host: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances." I Samuel 18:6 records the dancing of the women of Israel in celebration of David's slaughter of Goliath and the subsequent defeat of the army of the Philistines. II Samuel 6:14 describes David's dancing at the time of the bringing up of the ark of God: "And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod."

Mention is made in several places in the book of Psalms of the dancing of the people of God. In Psalm 30:11 we read, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness." In Psalm 149:3 the psalmist enjoins God's people, "Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp." In Psalm 150:4 he exhorts, "Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs." The prophet Jeremiah describes the response of the people of God to God's redemption of them like this, "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow."

It might seem, at first glance, that the Scriptures

do indeed give their approval to social dancing. Initially it might seem that not only do the Scriptures not condemn social dancing, but they actually encourage dancing on the part of the people of God.

A closer look at these passages, however, will show that this is not the case. A careful study of these Bible texts which speak of dancing will show that there is a sharp difference between the dancing of the Bible and social dancing.

First of all, the dancing spoken of in the Old Testament was a part of the religious worship of the people of God. Their dancing was usually in grateful celebration of some wonderful deliverance which Jehovah had wrought for His people. They danced in spontaneous praise for the special tokens of God's favor. Their dancing was an expression of their joy in salvation. Their dancing was not simply a hobby. It was not a form of relaxation. It was not for the physical exercise, or for entertainment. It was emphatically an aspect of their worship of God. The children of Israel didn't hold parties which featured popular music to which the guests might dance. No such thing. They danced to the Lord.

Although dancing did have a place in the Old Testament worship of God, it no longer does today. The fact of the matter is that the New Testament nowhere mentions dancing in connection with the worship of the New Testament church. All the important aspects of the church's worship are mentioned in the New Testament: the preaching, prayers, singing, giving of our offerings. Nowhere is dancing included as a part of the worship of the New Testament church. The reality to which the dancing of the saints in the Old Testament pointed is the joy in the Holy Spirit, Who has now been poured out into the New Testament church.

Secondly, the outstanding difference between social dancing and the dancing spoken of in the Scriptures is that in the case of the latter the people of God danced *singly*. The men of Israel did not dance with the women of Israel. But they danced individually and separately. There was no fond embrace, no intimate contact, no sensual movements of the body. And there was none of that because their dancing was not the mixed dancing which

characterizes the social dance of today. Miriam and the women of Israel danced in celebration of God's deliverance of Israel. The women danced in joy over David's defeat of the Philistines. David danced at the bringing up of the ark. They danced individually.

This same point is made in McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia.

It remains to notice further that the Jewish dance was performed by the sexes separately. There is no evidence from sacred history that the diversion was promiscuously enjoyed, except it might be at the erection of the deified calf . . . In the sacred dances, although both sexes seem to have frequently borne a part in the procession or chorus, they remained in distinct and separate companies.

The social dance, the dancing with partners of the opposite sex, is promiscuous. It is a violation of the seventh commandment of God's law. It is sexual uncleanness. Our fathers were right when they described dancing as "the mother of fornication." It necessarily arouses in those who participate sexually impure thoughts and desires. It promotes and often leads to the act of fornication itself. Young men and young women are not permitted the intimate contact with each other which they have in the dance. Because our nature is what it is, the dance cannot be practiced without a breaking of the seventh commandment of the law of God.

The explanation of the seventh commandment by the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 41 makes very plain this condemnation of the dance. In that Lord's Day we are taught that the seventh commandment not only forbids the overt act of fornication, but that God also forbids in the seventh commandment ". . . all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires . . ." And not only does God forbid all of these things, and account these things as fornication, but God also forbids ". . . whatever can entice men thereto." Positively, the seventh commandment calls us to ". . . live chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock, or in single life." Really, there can be no doubt that dancing is forbidden the child of God. No child of God who knows himself, and no child of God who

recognizes his calling to live a chaste and holy life, can in good conscience participate in the dance.

It's worth noting that the dance isn't always spoken of in Scripture with approval. There is another kind of dancing mentioned which is far different from that which was sanctioned by God in the Old Testament. There is the naked, lascivious dancing of the children of Israel about the golden calf described in Exodus 32. On account of that dancing God punished Israel severely. There is also the mention in Job 21:11 of the dancing of the children of the ungodly rich, children who are obsessed with the pursuit of pleasure. I Samuel 30:16 records the eating and drinking and dancing of the ungodly Amalekites, a dancing and celebration in which they were engaged at the very moment in which God destroyed them utterly through His servant David. Let those who seek to introduce the dance today beware of the same impending judgment of God.

This is our judgment of dancing. Dancing and the Christian life are incompatible. The child of God is called to separation from this form of worldly entertainment. His refusing to dance is simply part of his calling from God to live the antithesis. His not dancing is obedience to God's call to him in II Corinthians 6:14, 17: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." The Christian young person takes seriously the Word of God in Ephesians 5:3, 11: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

Yes, this may very well not be a popular course to take. If you refuse to dance you might lose some friends. You might even be mocked. But then, this has always been the life of the people of God in the world. You are in good company! And most of all, painful and self-denying though this way may be, it is the way of the favor of God. And that, in the end, is all that matters.

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BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Hebrews — Christ, the Author of a Better Covenant (concluded)

Rev. J. Kortering

In writing to the Hebrew Christians, the author holds forth the new covenant as "better" than that of the old. He uses the word better some thirteen times. To illustrate the comparative superiority of the new covenant in Christ, he speaks of a better revelation (Heb. 1:1-4); a better hope (Heb. 7:19); a better priesthood (Heb. 7:20-28); a better covenant (Heb. 8:6); a better promise (Heb. 8:6); a better sacrifice (Heb. 9:23); better possessions (Heb. 10:34); a better country (Heb. 11:16); and a better resurrection (Heb. 11:35).

All of this is centralized in Jesus Christ Who is the author of this better covenant. Hence, he writes of Christ: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds, Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name, than they" (Heb. 1:1-4).

BRIEF OUTLINE

1. Christ is superior in His revelation over that of the prophets (1:1-3). He personally is the brightness of God's glory and is seated at the right hand of God (vs. 3).

2. Christ is exalted over the angels (1:4-2:18). He has a better name (1:4). The Heavenly Father acknowledged Him as His only begotten Son (1:5). The angels are to worship Him (1:6). Angels are ministering spirits. But Christ is exalted at God's right hand to reign over all things forever (1:7-14). Compared to the messages of angels, which were true and had to be obeyed, how much more Christ's message must be obeyed, for it is attested to by the Holy Spirit and miracles (2:1-4). Christ was made a little lower than the angels to become God's servant in order that He might become crowned with glory and honor (2:5-13). The nature He assumed was not of angels, but of fallen man, for only in that way could Christ become a merciful

high priest to make reconciliation for the sinner (2:14-18).

3. Christ is superior to Moses and Aaron (3:1-4:13). We are exhorted to consider Christ Jesus as our faithful high priest (3:1, 2). He is exalted over Moses in that Moses was a servant in God's house (3:3-5), but Christ is a Son over His own house, the church (3:6). A word of warning is given that we should not harden our hearts as Israel did and died in the wilderness over a period of 40 years, but rather we are to hearken to and believe in Christ and be partakers of His glory (3:7-19). The rest in Christ is compared to the rest of the Old Testament Israel (Jesus of 4:8 is Joshua). God had promised it to them, but they failed to obtain it because of unbelief. Christ's rest is sure, for the gospel declares it and we enter into this rest by faith. The surety of our rest lies in the power of the gospel (4:1-13).

4. Christ is the better high priest (4:14-7:28). We may come boldly to Him in time of need, for He understands (4:14-16). The Old Testament priest (Aaron) was taken from among men and had human infirmities common to man (5:1, 2); he had to offer sacrifices for himself as well as for the people (5:13); he could function only because he was called of God (5:4). Christ was also called by God, but was of a higher order. He was after that of Melchisedec. He was appointed of God (5:5, 6). He is the author of salvation (5:8-10). At this point the author of Hebrews interjects a warning against spiritual immaturity and emphasizes the need to grow spiritually, from drinking spiritual milk to digesting spiritual meat. He also warns those who are in the church, who behold the works of the Holy Spirit and come in the sphere of His power, that if they should fall away from the church, that it is impossible to bring them to repentance. He encourages us to continue in our labor of love and to be diligent to attain the full assurance of faith and hope (5:11-6:12). He once again returns to the theme of Christ's priesthood and refers to Abraham as an example of God's faithfulness to His promise. He emphasizes that Christ is the forerunner Who has entered into heaven for us (6:13-20). Melchisedec is identified and it is explained how Christ is priest after his order: he had great riches and honor and

was without known origin (eternal order) — (7:1-10). Christ, like Melchisedec, belongs to an eternal order and was confirmed by God's oath (7:11-22). Christ makes continual intercession as God's high priest (7:23-25). He was also personally sinless, hence He was able to offer Himself for others, once for all, as a sacrifice for sin (7:26-28).

5. Christ's priesthood is exercised under a new covenant (8:1-13). He is at the right hand of God in the heavenly sanctuary (8:1-5). In contrast to the old covenant which was enforced by the demands of the law, the new covenant is realized by the law being written in the heart, which accomplishes victory over sin (8:6-13).

6. In this new covenant, Christ as high priest accomplishes His work effectually (9:1-19). The ancient sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Testament were types (9:1-10). Christ came as the fulfillment of these types and His blood actually cleanses from sin, and He accomplishes redemption (9:11-15). In the old covenant all purging of the earthly temple was done by the shedding of blood, now Christ purged the heavenly tabernacle with His own blood (9:16-28). All the sacrifices of the law could not make a sinner perfect. They pointed to the coming of Christ. Hence, the act of sacrifice itself did not remove sin, it required repentance and faith in Christ (10:1-18).

7. The remaining part of the letter deals with practical matters of the Christian life which results from faith in Christ as high priest (10:19-13:25). Through Christ we enter into the holy of holies where God dwells (10:19-21). This requires holiness on our part. We need sprinkled hearts and washed bodies (10:22). It requires diligence in worship and mutual love for each other as God's people (10:23-25). We are warned against willful sin, or counting the blood of Christ unholy. For such sin there is only judgment (10:26-31). We must be steadfast and willing to suffer for Christ (10:32-39). He now describes the nature of faith. Our belief in creation is an example (11:1-3). The lives of the Old Testament saints testify to the power of faith. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice (11:4); Enoch was translated so he didn't see death (11:5, 6); Noah built the ark (11:7); Abraham went to a strange country and sojourned there (11:8, 9) and also offered Isaac (11:17-19). Sarah brought forth Isaac in her old age as an act of faith (11:11, 12). These all were pilgrims looking for heaven (11:13-16). Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau (11:20); Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph (11:21); Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones (11:22); the parents of Moses hid him (11:23); Moses chose to be identified with Israel; he forsook Egypt and kept the Passover (11:24-28); Israel passed through the Red Sea (11:29); the walls of Jericho fell down (11:30);

Rahab hid the spies (11:31). He lists many other examples and refers to the great deeds which display a good report and great victory (11:32-40). As children of God, we are like a runner in a race, we are surrounded by witnesses, we are to look to Jesus as our captain. Even hardships must not deter us, for chastisement is profitable (12:1-13). We are to be at peace with God and avoid bitterness and evil influence, which destroyed Esau (12:14-17). A contrast is drawn between Mt. Sinai with its judgment and Mt. Sion where God, the consuming fire, brings peace to us (12:26-29). He deals with brotherly love and hospitality, slavery, marriage, contentment (13:1-6), and requests that they remember those who preach (13:7) and those who rule over them (13:17). He exhorts them to be doctrinally sound in the Lord Jesus (13:8, 9), to live as Christians in purity as they follow Christ (13:10-16), and to pray for all God's servants in their work (13:18, 19).

8. Concluding benediction (13:20-25). He prays that the God of peace Who brought Christ from the dead make them perfect (13:20, 21). He asks them to pay attention to this letter (13:20). He expresses hope to see them, with Timothy (13:23). And he asks them to bring his greetings to the other saints as those of Italy extend greetings (13:24, 25).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why is this letter called the Hebrews? For whom was this letter written?

2. Give briefly the arguments for and against Pauline authorship.

3. Why was it necessary for this letter to be written?

4. Show why Hebrews 1:1-4 sets forth the grand theme of the entire letter.

5. Look up the texts that describe the nine ways in which the new covenant is better than the old, and explain how that is true in each instance.

6. What was the relationship between the old covenant and the new one regarding the offering of blood? See chapter 9.

7. What is the relationship between the doctrinal part of this letter (Heb. 1:1-10:19) and the practical application (Heb. 10:20-13:25)? Illustrate your answer.

8. Explain Hebrews 6:4-8. How do we account for the falling away of one "who has tasted the good word of God and the power of the world to come"? See also Hebrews 10:26, 27.

9. Who was Melchisedec, and how is it that Christ was priest after his order and not that of Aaron? See chapter 7.

10. Why is chastisement the proof of sonship, Hebrews 12:7?

11. In chapters 5 and 6 we read of warnings against apostasy, the falling away from the faith.

Why was that warning necessary then, and in what way is it necessary now?

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Our Calling and Election (3)

Rev. H. Veldman

We concluded our second article on this subject with the observation that the apostle's exhortation to make our election sure surely repudiates the objection that this making sure of our election is really vain and impossible. The Lord would not exhort us to make our election sure if this were vain and impossible. The Lord does not exhort His people unto that which is not attainable for them.

In this connection, we would make one more remark. Shall we make our election sure through a secret and mysterious revelation? Shall we wait, for example, until an angel whispers into our ear that we are elected of God? Shall we wait until the Lord reveals this unto us, let us say, in a dream or vision? Or, if this does not occur, shall we separate ourselves from the world to seclude ourselves in a monastery, and there, subjecting ourselves to a crucifying of the flesh, press behind the curtain of this time and penetrate into the hidden thoughts of the Lord to receive an answer to the question: am I an elect of God? How wrong this conception is! First of all, there is the word of Scripture that the hidden things are for the Lord our God (Deut. 29:29). And, secondly, this is not God's way of salvation and of revealing to His people His counsel of their election. The reason for this is plain. Could this not become an occasion for spiritual laxity? If we could penetrate into God's book of life to ascertain whether our name is recorded there, whether we have been foreordained to be conformed to the image of God's Son, then we surely could lead a careless and profane life, inasmuch as having been elected unto eternal life we would never be able to perish, regardless of how we conduct ourselves in the midst of the world.

The making sure for ourselves of our election is possible only in the way of making sure our calling. We have already called attention to the fact, as recorded in Romans 8, that, scripturally, election and calling are inseparably connected. The calling here, we understand, is God's almighty, efficacious, irresistible calling. The apostle here does not refer to what we call the external calling through the preaching of the gospel. This would not make

sense. Must we make sure for ourselves that the Lord calls men unto repentance and faith? Of course He does. We need not confirm this. How could this confirm us in the consciousness of our election? The Arminian, we know, speaks of the general, well-meaning offer of salvation through the preaching of the gospel. But this simply means that God loves everybody, also those who perish, and this can never give me the assurance that this general love of God establishes my salvation, inasmuch as He also loves those who perish. Here is meant, of course, the particular, saving, almighty calling of God whereby the Lord, through the preaching of the gospel, efficaciously calls me unto salvation. Even as the Lord speaks at creation's dawn, calling the things into existence that were not, so the Lord, by His almighty, creative word, calls His people out of darkness into His marvelous light, out of death into life. He opens our eyes that we may see, our ears that we may hear, and leads us to the cross of Calvary to see the wondrous beauty of the Man of Sorrows; He convicts us of sin and evil and prostrates us into the dust before the living God; He calls us, consciously, out of the darkness of sin and evil into the light of His everlasting covenant. This is the calling whereof the apostle speaks here, God's almighty calling of His own by the power of His irresistible grace and Spirit.

It is only when we make sure our calling that we make sure our election. Election and calling — this is the order as far as God's counsel and His work of salvation are concerned. Our election, of course, is first. God did not elect us because of our translation into His light; we are called because He elected us. This is clearly set forth by the apostle Paul in Romans 8:30, where we read that "whom He did predestinate, them He also called." However, as far as our knowledge and conscious experience are concerned, this is the order: calling and election. This is simply the divinely ordained way God calls those whom He has foreordained to be made conformable to the image of His Son. Hence, the one called is therefore an elect, and therefore we must

make our calling sure to make sure of our election. To be assured of our election we must stand in the fruit of that election, our calling. Make this calling sure. If we know this constantly, if this will stand firmly in our consciousness, namely our calling, then we must walk worthy of the calling where-with we have been called. Indeed, give diligence, put forth all diligence, exert yourself to the utmost to stand in this calling in order that we may rejoice in the knowledge of our election. Does the doctrine of election lead to carelessness and indifference? How absurd and ridiculous!

How urgently necessary is the diligence whereof Peter speaks in this scripture! We read: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence." "Wherefore," we read, and this refers to the immediate context. Hence, give diligence rather, or if you will, exert yourself to the utmost, with all that is in you, to do what? To make your election sure, for yourself, in the making sure of your calling. We must not be barren (verse 8), or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, according to verse 9, he that lacketh these things is blind, cannot see afar off, has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Indeed, this can occur in the consciousness of the people of God, to whom Peter addresses these words.

We must not build our hope and assurance upon the fact that God *has called* us out of darkness into His marvelous light, that He has converted us in the past. There are people of God who incline to this view. They can tell you vividly how they walked in sin and how, dramatically, the Lord converted them. However, we must not build our hope and assurance upon this. Indeed, this conversion may have been real. And if it occurred very recently we are able to recall it. It stands vividly in our consciousness. But as the moment of our conversion recedes more and more into the background, our memory of it may become hazy and blurred. Besides, the devil will attack us, ask us if we are sure that our conversion was true and real, especially in the light of the fact that we continue to sin every day and all the day. And if our assurance be based solely upon the past, that we were once converted, then we may finally question its realness and we may forget that our old sins have been purged. The fundamental question is not whether we *have been* converted, but whether we *are* converted. God's work of conversion is not merely a matter of the past, but of the continuous present; it is a work that, once begun, never stops, always continues.

That it is so urgently necessary for us to put forth all diligence, exert every effort to make our calling sure, is simply because we can make sure our calling only in the way of sanctification. You were

converted? Well and good. However, a conversion without a continuous walk in sanctification is an impossibility. Whoever has been called by God out of darkness into His light has died to sin, forever. Of course, this is always true only in principle throughout our earthly pilgrimage. If we have little desire for the divine worship services, for a walk in sanctification, we may well question whether we have been called out of darkness into light. Always we must put forth every diligence to stand consciously in our calling, because this work of God, once begun, never stops. If we walk in sin, and in Scripture we have the examples of Noah, Abraham (who lied twice in connection with Sarah), and of David. We cannot possibly glory in our election. The two, election and calling, are inseparably connected. Of course they are! Election is the source of our calling, our calling is the fruit of our election, and they can therefore never be separated. Election is not merely a sovereign decree of God to translate a people into glory, but this decree also includes the way to that glory — hence, a cold, dead election is an absurdity. In the measure that we seek the things that are below, we do not seek the things that are above. And if we seek not the things that are above, how can we be interested in the doctrine of election, God's sovereign decree to lead His own into that eternal and heavenly glory? Besides, there is so much that would divert our eye from the making sure of our calling and election. How many and great are the forces of evil all around us and especially within us! There is the power of the world and of Satan which always surrounds us. And then there is the power of sin within us and which is always ready to lead us astray. All things would lead us to err.

Wherefore, the rather, let us make our calling and election sure. Put forth every effort unto this end, that the fact of our calling may ever be for us firm and immovable, and this in the way of sanctification. How sad it is when a child of God goes along with the world and does not rejoice in the glory of his election! Or, how sad it is when a child of God becomes involved in sin, comes to the consciousness of his sin, and doubts then assail him with respect to his election and he doubts whether his former faith and conversion may have been in vain! And this happens! Hence, exert yourself to the utmost, with all that is in you, for this is the meaning of the expression: give diligence the rather. Strive to walk in the way of holiness, continually. Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity of love. Struggle in the faith, pray fervently, confess your sin, be spiritually pure. Know that you are the

called of God, live in it by walking in it, as having been called by God, irresistibly and efficaciously, out of darkness into God's marvelous light, out of sin and death into the life of God's everlasting covenant. This is our calling as set forth by the apostle Peter and throughout the infallible scriptures.

And the fruit of all this? Doing these things, we shall never fall or stumble. Doing these things, that is, all the things to make our calling and election sure, we shall never stumble. Literally we read: we shall never, never stumble; or, we shall no, never stumble — the expression serves to emphasize the thought that we shall never stumble. To fall or stumble does not mean that we can ever lose the blessedness of our salvation. This is impossible. But it does mean that we proceed stumblingly, uncer-

tainly to the everlasting glory. Hence, do these things: walk worthy of the calling wherewith the Lord has called you, be it always in principle. And you will never stumble, never doubt, but stand firmly in the certainty of your election, to walk with head uplifted to the City that has foundations.

Is this doctrine of election a cold doctrine? Is it a doctrine with which we should not concern ourselves, either upon the mission field, or in our own personal lives? Is it a doctrine which tends to make men careless, indifferent and profane? Is it a doctrine which we should ignore? The apostle exhorts us to make it sure for ourselves, to live out of it. Indeed, it is the anchor of our hope and salvation, the rock upon which we are safe, now and forevermore.

IN HIS FEAR

God is One

Rev. Ronald Hanko

In our previous study we saw that God's commandments are not arbitrary regulations but God's own revelation of Himself, according to which He requires that we be holy as He Himself is holy. That self-revelation of God is the truth and substance of the law, and thus it is that the law has abiding significance, so that its use cannot be abolished among Christians.

This, as we saw, is not to deny that the ceremonies and types of the law have ceased, so that their use is no longer an obligation to believers. These ceremonies and shadows were used by God to teach the church of the Old Testament the truth and substance of the law, until the coming of Christ. Now Christ is the great Teacher of the church through His Spirit, and these things are no longer needed.

We were also able to see that the child of God, the believer, receives this revelation of God in the law through Christ, the Saviour. Without Christ, God's revelation of Himself in the law can only reveal our darkness unto condemnation and everlasting death. In Christ the law is restored to the man of God as a gift of God's grace and is profitable to him for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness (II Tim. 3:16, 17), and works together with all things for his salvation.

Thus it is that from the beginning the law was "ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator"

(Gal. 3:19). That Mediator was Moses first of all, but he only as a foreshadowing of the great Law-giver Who shall never depart from Judah (Gen. 49:10). It is from the law, then, that the Christian in Christ knows his sin in all its horror as sin against the living God and is able to confess, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight" (Ps. 51:4); and thus the law brings him to Christ. And having known sin and found peace and deliverance from sin in Christ, he returns to Sinai and to God's revelation there in order that his whole life may be organized by that revelation of God in thanksgiving and gratitude. Thus the law becomes also a lamp for his feet and a light upon his pathway (Ps. 119:105) as he offers himself a living sacrifice of gratitude to God.

It is our duty, therefore, as redeemed and delivered sinners, to search out this revelation of God, to know Him as He makes Himself known there, and to make confession of His great and glorious holiness according to that revelation, not only with our lips but also with our life as we live in obedience to His commandments. But because the Ten Commandments are but a summary of God's demands, we must search the Scriptures to find out specifically what God tells us about Himself in each commandment, that thus we may know clearly how we are to be holy in relation to Him.

The revelation which God gives of Himself in the

First Commandment is fundamental. Christ's summary of the whole law in Matthew 22:37-40 is essentially the demand of this First Commandment, that we have no other God beside Him, but worship and love Him alone with our whole being and strength. And since this fundamental demand of the whole law is expressed in the First Commandment, we should not be surprised to find that the truth concerning God which is revealed as the basis of the First Commandment is the most basic truth of the Christian faith, that God is one. Nor is it difficult to see that this truth is indeed the great principle of the First Commandment.

This truth is taught in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord:" and from it follows the demand, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (vs. 5). This demand is more clearly set forth in verses 12-14 where it also becomes evident that this is indeed the demand of the First Commandment: "Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him, and shall swear by His name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you."

Both the principle and its application remain for the New Testament church, as is evident from Paul's words in I Corinthians 8:5, 6: "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many), but to us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him."

It ought also to be evident from these passages and from our discussion thus far that there is also a positive requirement in each commandment, even though the Ten Commandments themselves are for the most part negative. This cannot be forgotten. It is not enough simply to refrain from what is forbidden; we must also do that which is required lest we fall short of the glory of God. This is true also of the First Commandment. It forbids that we have any other gods beside Jehovah, but it also requires that we "have" Him to be our God, by worshipping and serving Him always.

There are, therefore, in respect to the First Commandment only two possibilities, either that one be a true worshipper of the God of heaven and earth, or that he be an idolater and worship other gods beside Jehovah. We might imagine that there are three possibilities, that beside the heathen who worship their idols, and the church which worships God, there are also the vast majority of modern men who serve no god, who are either by confession or in practice atheists. This is impossible be-

cause of the law's positive requirement. Anything less than wholehearted worship of Jehovah is only idolatry. An atheist is not a man without a god but a man who is attempting to get rid of the one true God, and though he can never succeed; since God does not leave Himself without a witness, nevertheless, in turning from Jehovah he always becomes an idolater, changing the truth of God into a lie and worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever (Rom. 1:25).

It matters not whether he worships gods of wood and stone or the gods of this modern world: pleasure, wealth, or power. Nor does it matter whether he worships his gods in temples made with men's hands, or in the temple of his heart and mind when he trusts in and loves the strength and wisdom and works of men. Always and everywhere he reveals himself as an idolater.

This is not so difficult to understand when we remember that man was created in the image of God. Thus it was that his whole nature was adapted to God and he himself called in harmony with his nature to live in relation to God. Through sin he lost the image and glory of God, but his nature was not changed. He still needs a god, and his nature is still that of a servant, so that when he turns away from Jehovah, he always seeks another master whom he may serve and upon whom he may rely and in whom he may trust for all his needs.

We might note, too, in this connection that all idolatry is really self-worship. When men worship idols of wood and stone they are really worshipping the work of their own hands, just as they do in these last times when they worship their own pleasures and sensual philosophies. Even when they worship the host of heaven they are not coming nearer to the one true God, but still only serving an image and idol which their own minds have conceived.

This too is not so strange, for man's first sin was that he desired to be like God. Now, having fallen into darkness, he imagines in his foolishness that he is God and worships himself and his own words. This self-worship, which lies at the root of all idolatry, culminates finally in the worship of the Beast in the kingdom of the Antichrist. Then the man of sin is revealed, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (II Thess. 2:4). When all the world wonders after him and worships him (Rev. 13:3, 4), then the cup of idolatry shall be full and the Lord Christ will return in judgment and cast the beast and his worshippers into everlasting fire.

In all this the foolishness of the sin of idolatry

and of all sin is fully revealed. Isaiah in the 44th chapter of his prophecy lays bare this folly. Very graphically he describes the man who grows weary and faint, whose strength fails even as he forms the god to which he will bow down. Again he describes the man who cuts down a tree and burns it in the fire to warm himself and to cook his food. When he finishes he uses the rest to make for himself a god and, falling down to it and worshipping it and praying to it, he says, "Deliver me for thou art my god." God Himself decries this folly when He says through the prophet Jeremiah, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

Surely, as Psalm 115 reminds us, "They that make them are like unto them" (vs. 8). Those who worship idols are spiritually deaf and dumb, senseless and unseeing, like the gods they serve. They

feed on ashes and are utterly deceived so that they cannot deliver their souls or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Is. 44:20). Nor is the idolatry of modern civilized man any more attractive than that of those who bow down to the stock of a tree. To the end of the world sinners will worship in one way or another the work of their own hands, less even than themselves in strength or wisdom. So they feed on the same ashes as the heathen.

But we also are children of Adam and idolators. Even now we are always inclined to serve our own lusts, to trust in the arm of flesh and in our own strength for safety, for help, and for satisfaction. We too are always tempted to glorify the things that the world glorifies and to make them our gods. Only by grace are we delivered from the service of these vanities and turned to the living and the true God. By grace alone we seek Him with undivided heart and confess in word and deed that He is the One Lord Who is worthy of all praise and worship.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

Writing the "non-sexist" Bible

Several readers kindly sent additional materials on the subject of addressing God as "Mother" — of which we commented in an earlier article. The articles dealt not so much with our address to God, as with translations of the Bible which used this same kind of terminology. The National Council of Churches in this country has been working on a translation of the Bible which will remove all of its "sexist" language. Part of its work has been published — and reviewed by different churches and writers. An article from the *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1983, presents some of the comments on, and reaction to, this new "translation":

A new translation of Bible readings designed to eliminate references to God as solely male was released yesterday by the National Council of Churches.

The Bible readings are for voluntary, experimental use in services by some of the country's leading Protestant churches. The changes include references to God as both the mother and father of humankind, and one of the best-known verses of the New Testament reads: "For God so loved the world that God gave God's only Child, that whoever believes in that Child should not perish, but have eternal life."

... Though many recent editions of the Bible have tried to put the Scriptures into more familiar language,

this lectionary is the first designed to meet such a specific concern as that over what is seen as sexism in the Bible.

When Scriptures are read in services, said Dr. Susan B. Thistlethwaite, a professor who teaches theology at seminaries in Chicago and Boston, "one of the purposes is to create the Christian community." If the language of the Scriptures is exclusively masculine, women feel left out, she said.

Echoing her sentiments, a growing number of ministers say women in their congregations feel excluded when religious language uses masculine words at places where all of humankind is meant. To remedy this, many churches have tried to use more inclusive language in their worship services. As a consequence, informal editings of the Scriptures are becoming increasingly common.

"People have already done what we are doing," said Dr. Thomas Hoyt, Jr., a professor of Old Testament at the Hartford (Conn.) Seminary Foundation and a member of the committee. "We want to help them do it responsibly."

... Dr. Gold, a professor at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, said the committee and its advisers believed the lectionary was "consistent with the original languages of Scripture" even if it was not a literal translation.

For instance, the committee explained, the word used in the Genesis story about the creation of the first human being is the Hebrew "ha-adam." The translators say the word lacks a particular gender, though it has often been translated "man." In the same way, the Greek word "anthropos," is also translated "man" in the Revised Standard Version but can mean an individual man or humankind, the form preferred in the new lectionary.

Changes include the substitution of the words "Sovereign" or "God the Sovereign One" for "Lord" or "King" and the addition of women's names to the text in such verses as the one in the Gospel of Matthew that reads, "We have Abraham as our father." To that verse, the phrase "and Sarah and Hagar as our mothers" has been added to include the wife and servant of the Old Testament patriarch.

... The most striking of these metaphors is the phrase "God, Father and Mother," which is used often.

... But editors of the new lectionary contend that using "father" as a metaphor for God ascribes to God a sexual identity not supported by close study of the Scriptures. They also say it fosters a male-oriented theology.

Not all agree to these radical changes — which are not translations at all. The above article quotes, for instance, Dr. Bruce Metzger, a Princeton Theological Seminary professor who is chairman of the committee planning future editions of the Revised Standard Version, also under the National Council of Churches:

"It is necessary to tell people that God is not an old man," Dr. Metzger said, "but to explain that God transcends differences of gender is the work of the religious educator, not the Bible translator."

He said the alterations in the language about God in the new lectionary were tantamount to rewriting the Bible," adding, "Such changes are in my view altogether unacceptable."

According to Dr. Metzger, coming editions of the Revised Standard Version would avoid using "man" when "humanity" or "humankind" might be appropriate. "But to remove the patriarchal setting is to change the Bible," he said in a telephone interview.

Another interesting comment is made in the *Grand Rapids Press* in the syndicated column written by James Kilpatrick. He also objects to the new translation — though not on theological grounds. He states:

It is probably a waste of time, energy and indignation to denounce the latest effort to castrate the Holy Bible, but vandalism of this magnitude ought not to go unremarked. The National Council of Churches is out to take the sex out of Scripture

... The rewriting urged by the National Council of Churches is indefensible. One example will suffice. In Matthew's account of the Last Supper, Jesus announces that He is about to be betrayed, and the apostles ask, Lord, is it I? The King James version continues: "And He answered and said, 'He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that may by whom the Son of man is betrayed!'"

The NCC's new lectionary would put it this way: "Jesus answered, 'The one who has dipped a hand in the dish with me, will betray me. The Human One goes as it is written, but woe to that person by whom the Human One is betrayed!'"

The first trouble with that abominable revision may be stated simply: Matthew never wrote it that way. The Gospels were written in Greek. I will not be drawn into an argument about divine inspiration and the word of God; theology is off my beat. But I know something of the art of translation and of the respect that is owed to an original author.

It is patent dishonesty — it is an act of corruption in the most literal sense — to put into the mouth of Matthew words that Matthew did not say

The council's recasting is not only dishonest; it is the product of an essentially mistaken notion that "man" is invariably a sexist noun. This is nonsense. Only the most wildly militant feminists believe that "Man does not live by bread alone" applies to males only. Who is so blockheaded as to argue that "man-kind" excludes women? The NCC revisers evidently are that blockheaded

Perhaps it seems unnecessary to comment even on the nonsense which proceeds out of the NCC. Still, this sort of nonsense gains a wide acceptance among men (or ought I say, "humankind"?). This is in very reality a new "version" of the Bible — man's (humankind's?) idea of what the Word of God ought to say. It is man's correction of God's Word. It is not only that the translator corrupts Matthew's word, it is a corruption of what God has to say. This represents one more attempt to undermine and destroy the truth of the Divine inspiration and infallibility of Scripture. One could almost laugh at it all if it were not so terribly serious.

*Take Time to read and study the
Standard Bearer*

ERA Again?

There is not only the attempt to make the Bible less "sexist," but there is the renewed drive to approve an ERA amendment to the Constitution of the United States. It has been introduced again into the House of Representatives in Congress. Some are convinced that the amendment has less of a chance of passage this time than it had last time — when it fell short of ratification when three states less than the necessary amount approved. What is particularly disturbing are remarks of those favoring this amendment. Not all are agreed as to what it really means. In fact, many insist that ultimately the courts, perhaps the Supreme Court, will have to determine the meaning and application of this amendment. *Christianity Today*, Oct. 21, 1983, states,

... Hatch asked her if single-sex institutions would be effectively eliminated by ERA, and she said yes, except for women's colleges. "That would be the only exception," she said, as long as they were fulfilling their original affirmative action goals. This brought an

incredulous response from pro-ERA Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, who told Shalala, "I am not at all in agreement that it is justifiable for women's schools to discriminate."

Other ERA proponents share Shalala's opinion. Judy Goldsmith, president of the National Organization for Women, said women's schools could continue to operate because they are "advantaging the disadvantaged." She denied that ERA would have any effect on religious institutions, but that is contradicted by NOW's stated opposition to the rights of churches to differentiate. NOW advocates sexual equality in seminaries, denial of tax exemption to churches that do not ordain women, and federal intervention to stop churches from discriminating.

Perhaps the ERA amendment will not pass this second time. Yet what many are trying to do is obvious. The "rights" movement can quickly turn into an attempt to silence the church and drive it from existence — unless it submits to the decrees of "humankind" and renounces certain of Scripture's teachings. But God will preserve His church!

Book Reviews

REDEMPTIVE HISTORY AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, The Shorter Writings of Gerhardus Vos; edited by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1980; 559 pp., \$17.50. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book is an important publishing venture on the part of Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, for it makes available a large number of writings of a notable theologian which had previously been difficult to obtain. Gerhardus Vos was born in the Netherlands, but received a considerable amount of his training in the Christian Reformed Church. However, at about the age of 30, Vos accepted an appointment to the newly created chair of Biblical Theology in Princeton Theological Seminary where he served for 39 years until his retirement. Although he is mistakenly called sometimes "The Father of Biblical Theology," his work in this field has greatly influenced theological development in our day.

The book is divided into four parts: major biblical and theological studies; shorter biblical studies;

addresses; book reviews. In addition, it contains also a biography of Vos and a bibliography of his writings. Because of the wide variety of writings found in the book, it is difficult to give a thorough review. Some of the material presented here is undoubtedly far more important than other material. In the first section, the chapter, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline" was particularly interesting. It contains the inaugural address which Vos delivered as Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton. In it Vos develops his conception of Biblical Theology in distinction from Systematic Theology. Perhaps a quote from this chapter would be of interest.

The specific character of Biblical Theology lies in this, that it discusses both the form and contents of revelation from the point of view of the revealing activity of God Himself. In other words, it deals with revelation in the active sense, as an act of God, and tries to understand and trace and describe this act, so far as this is possible to man and does not elude our finite observation. In Biblical Theology both the form and contents of revelation are considered as parts and

products of a divine work. In Systematic Theology these same contents of revelation appear, but not under the aspect of the stages of a divine work; rather as the material for a human work of classifying and systematizing according to logical principles. Biblical Theology applies no other method of grouping and arranging these contents than is given in the divine economy of revelation itself (pp. 6, 7).

Biblical Theology, rightly defined, is nothing else than the exhibition of the organic progress of supernatural revelation in its historic continuity and multiplicity (p. 15).

It is not our purpose to get involved in this review in a discussion of the relative merits of Biblical Theology over against Systematic Theology. The controversy is not new. It was at bottom the controversy which raged in the Netherlands already in the 16th and 17th centuries between the followers of Cocceius and Voetius, the former of whom can more rightly be called the father of Biblical Theology. It is interesting also that, in that controversy, the Cocceian Party repeatedly accused the Voetians of scholastic theology, while the followers of Voetius accused the Cocceian Party of Dispensationalism. And both were often correct in their criticism. And, while the defenders of Systematic Theology really won out in Reformed Theology, more recent years have seen a resurgence of Biblical Theology in both Reformed and Presbyterian circles. The question is interesting and important, and a reading of Vos is essential to understand what Biblical Theology is really all about. Vos not only defines it in the chapter quoted above, but also shows how it works out in subsequent chapters. While both methods of theologizing undoubtedly have their weaknesses (simply because theology has to do with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ) it nevertheless seems to me that the dangers of Biblical Theology are real and all but impossible to overcome; that, therefore, the approach of Systematic Theology is the preferable one.

But this is not intended to leave the impression that there are not other important writings in this book which deal with different questions. Also in the first section there are two very important and thought-provoking articles on the doctrine of the covenant. The first is on, "Hebrews, the Epistle of the Diatheke." The latter word, which may be strange to most readers, is the Greek word for "covenant" — at least it is usually translated this way in the book of Hebrews and throughout the New Testament. But on occasion it is translated, "testament." And this is what the article is all about. It is excellent.

The second chapter will be of interest to many of our readers. It is on, "The Doctrine of the Covenant

in Reformed Theology." While necessarily somewhat brief, it gives the reader a bird's-eye view of the history of this doctrine in continental theology.

There are, of course, many other subjects treated, but these three chapters alone are worth the price of the book. Especially our ministers, but also all those who are interested in theology, ought to purchase the book.

THE CREATOR IN THE COURTROOM
"SCOPES II", The Controversial Arkansas Creation-Evolution Trial, by Norman L. Geisler (in collaboration with A. F. Brooke II and Mark J. Keough; Mott Media, 1982, 242 pp., (paper). (Reviewed by N. Hanko)

The purpose of this book is to give a clear unbiased report of the 1981 Arkansas Creation - Evolution trial. The authors accuse the judge, William Overton, and the news media of being biased in favor of evolution. Because there was no one from the Christian media present at the trial, the secular news reports are the only reports available.

The purpose of the trial was to examine Act 590 of the state of Arkansas to determine if it was in violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution (separation between church and state). Act 590 requires balanced teaching of evolution and creation - science in the public schools.

Those who opposed the Act are typical of the unbeliever: anything to do with creation or anything biblical is forbidden. They do not even want a creator to be hinted at in public school teaching.

The defendants at the trial attempted to prove that Act 590 was not in violation of the First Amendment. Their claim was that creation is a science and evolution a religion.

They also attempted to prove that Scientific Creationism can be separated from religious creationism. When separating creation and the flood from the biblical narrative, they were forced to talk of a creator as a vague and supernatural being who operated according to laws which are no longer in existence today and to speak of a young earth 6,000

10,000 years old. But they were forced to prove creation from scientific data, something which cannot be done, since "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God" (Heb. 11:3).

The decision made by Judge Overton prohibited the enforcement of Act 590 and ruled it unconstitutional. Although Judge Overton was biased in his opinions, this was not the reason for the outcome of the trial. "While the statistical figures may be impressive evidence against the theory of chance combinations as an explanation for origins, it re-

quires a leap of faith to interpret these figures so as to support a complex doctrine which includes a sudden creation from nothing, a world wide flood, separate ancestry for men and apes, and a young earth" (page 179).

The defendants produced an excellent case against evolution, but did not produce much in favor of creation-science. Their basic mistake was trying to separate creation from religion. This cannot be done.

Dr. George Marsden, Professor of History at Calvin College, testified against the Act. At one point in his testimony he referred to Fundamentalists as "militantly anti-modernist" and concerned chiefly with "spreading the faith."

This is a worthwhile book for those who are interested in the continuing battle between the creationists and the evolutionists in the context of public school instruction. It also shows the foolishness of evolution in a very convincing manner, but shows the error of the creation-science position in attempting to maintain creationism apart from Scripture.

THE PROBLEM OF PLEASURE, by John H. Gerstner; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1983; 27 pp., \$1.50 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

I found this book to be a delightful little book written in a delightful manner which I carried with me with growing eagerness to read what Gerstner considered to be the solution to "the problem of pleasure." But the "solution" proved to be a com-

plete let-down.

The argument of the book runs like this. While theologians and philosophers have written again and again about "the problem of pain," this is not really a problem because of sin and the divine need to punish sin if God is truly God. The wicked do not suffer in this life as much as they deserve to suffer, but the righteous do suffer when one would expect that they should not. Yet this is divine chastisement.

We would truly have a problem if there were no pain in the world. Hence the problem is: Why is there any pleasure? Especially if one considers that sin is infinitely heinous and God is infinitely holy, it is difficult to understand why there can be any pleasure at all.

This problem is magnified when we consider that Scripture speaks of the fact that God hates the wicked for their sin—and yet sends blessings upon them. This is the real problem.

There are, says Gerstner, only two possible solutions to that problem. The first is that God is making the wicked fat for slaughter. Gerstner does not completely reject that idea, but finally resolves the whole dilemma by saying that the real reason is that all may be given opportunity to be saved: "Now the problem of pleasure has its answer in full. God has spared you, not that you be damned, but that you be saved from the damnation that otherwise would inevitably have been your destiny. Now Jesus Christ stands at the door of your heart and offers to come in and dwell with you forevermore."

And so a delightful little book is spoiled.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society "Ruth" of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Walker, Michigan), mourns the loss of its member, MRS. JOE KING, whom the Lord took unto Himself on October 24, 1983. We express our Christian Sympathy to her daughter and our fellow-member, Miss Marily King.

"For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psalm 84:11)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and Congregation of the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church extends their deepest sympathy to Mr. Homer Kuiper in the death of his wife, MRS. SUE KUIPER, who went to be with her Lord on October 10, 1983.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and Congregation of the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church extends their deepest sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. John Slager in the death of her mother, MRS. ANTJE KNOT, who went to be with her Lord on September 30, 1983.

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

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On December 28, 1983, the Lord willing, MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM HENRY CLASON of Kalamazoo, Michigan, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren wish the Lord's continued blessing on their marriage and congratulate them.

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies." (Psalm 25:10)

Bill and Julie Clason
Nathan
Monty
Esther
William

Anita and Bill Lenting
Michelle
Rachel
Gregory
Brian
Melissa

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to our fellow office-bearer, Elder Egbert Gritters and his family, in the death of his father-in-law, MR. BERT BRANDS. May our comfort be that "... we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pres.
Bert Van Maanen, Clerk

News From Our Churches

November 14, 1983

Our Grand Rapids area church bulletins have carried many announcements of the transference of membership papers to the new congregation of Byron Center. The Byron Center congregation organized with twenty-four families and two individuals. May our faithful covenant God establish the truth of His Word with this new Protestant Reformed church.

Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands had this information in its October 30 bulletin: "Our missionary, Rev. Houck, informs us that he and the family have adjusted well to the Ripon area. The work goes slowly, the contacts few. The group itself is doing well. This coming Thursday, a Reformation Day Lecture is scheduled there. The missionary asks to be remembered in our prayers." It is a blessing from God to have three missionaries and a candidate proclaiming His truth to those who love the truth.

In addition to the above announcements in the Redlands bulletin there was this information regarding their new church: "More and more the scheduled date of November 20 for using the new church for worship services looks to be realistic. The carpet was laid this past week, the pews arrived last evening and are to be installed tomorrow, D.V. As well the control cabinet and stove hood are built and being installed." Again remember that December 1 & 2 are the dates for the Dedication of the new church and the celebration of their 50th anniversary as a congregation. We hope that the congregation of Redlands is able to worship in their new church by the time this news is printed.

Loveland Protestant Reformed Church was invited to meet with the congregation of Hope Reformed Church in observance of the Reformation. Loveland's October 30 bulletin read, "The congregation is invited to attend the worship service this afternoon at 2 p.m. of the Peace Reformed Church, 1725 10th St. S.W. Rev. Ploeger will conduct the service."

A cassette copy of Rev. Cammenga's speech, "The Reformation: A Battle For The Bible" is available for \$2.00. I would assume that contact should be made through Rev. Cammenga.

The Sunday School of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids gave this report in *Across the Aisle*, November 1983. "...Some 40 years ago the Sunday School of First Protestant Reformed Church began to put in printed, pamphlet form short treatises by Rev. Herman Hoeksema on topics such as *The Antichrist* and *The Christian and Culture*. In the early 70's there were added new titles, among which were *The Infallibility of the Scriptures*, by Prof. Hanko; *The Marks of the True Church*, by Prof. Hoeksema; *Creation . . . or Evolution*, by Rev. Van Baren; *Missions*, by Rev. Hanko. A new pamphlet will appear soon...entitled *As A Father Pitieth His Children*, by Rev. David Engelsma." The response to these pamphlets has come from such places as the Chaplain at Oklahoma State Reformatory; Ministry of Education, Exams Divisions, Benin City, Nigeria; and Uganda, Africa. The report ends with these words, "Our hope is, of course, that the King of the Church universal will be pleased to use our literature to bring His saints in other lands to a more perfect knowledge of the truth."

South Holland Protestant Reformed Church made this announcement in its October 30 bulletin: "The council has put two new books in the church library. They are...*The Life Of David* by Pink and *Bible History of the Old Testament* by Edersheim. These books can be used by the Young People's Society and the Mr. and Mrs. Society....We encourage all members to make use of our church library."

The October 30 bulletin of First Protestant Reformed Church read, "Beginning November 6, the Reformed Witness Hour will be heard over WFUR both 4 P.M. Sunday on AM and at 9:00 A.M. Sunday on FM....This new time costs us an additional \$80 per week....Remember this is your radio witness! Write us a card or letter also; we need your moral as well as financial help. Thank you." In connection with the Reformed Witness Hour, some of you are aware that the printing of the radio sermons has fallen behind schedule. The main reason for this is that there are not sufficient funds in order to print these sermons in booklet form or any other form. In addition, demands for the printed sermons cannot be met.

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