

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . Words fail us to attempt to describe intimate covenant fellowship with God, living in mansions that we have not built, eating of bounties we have not prepared, filled with a blessedness we could never merit! Then we shall understand what it means that in Christ we share the fulness of divine glory. Then, and then only will we begin to fathom the wonder of grace, the realization of the promise: I will be your GOD!

see "Baptism, A Sign of God's Covenant"

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## MEDITATION

# Baptism, A Sign of God's Covenant

Rev. C. Hanks

*Ques. 72. Is then the external baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?*

*Ans. Not at all; for the blood of Jesus Christ only, and the Holy Ghost cleanse us from all sin.*

*Ques. 73. Why then doth the Holy Ghost call baptism "the washing of regeneration," and "the washing away of our sins"?*

*Ans. God speaks thus not without great cause, to wit, not only thereby to teach us, that as the filth of the body is purged away by water, so our sins are removed by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ, but especially that by this divine pledge and sign He may assure us, that we are spiritually cleansed from our sins as really, as we are externally washed with water.*

*Heid. Catechism, Lord's Day 27*

What does your baptism mean to you and mine to me?

Our baptism assures us that our sins are washed away by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Bap-



tism itself cannot wash away sins. The mere fact that we are baptized does not save us. Nothing, absolutely nothing can save us from our sins but the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Our fathers never grow weary in these Lord's Days that deal with baptism to emphasize this most important truth and to engrave it upon our hearts.

How does baptism assure us of the washing away of our sins by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ?

Baptism confirms the promise of the Holy Scriptures, that we have the right to the forgiveness of sins and to eternal life through the sacrifice of our Savior on the cross, so that we are buried with Christ in Baptism and raised again unto newness of life within God's covenant as members of His church.

How *can* baptism assure us of these riches of salvation?

The Holy Spirit, Who never works apart from means, works this grace in us, giving us eyes to see and hearts to realize that we are conceived and born in sin, and therefore subject to all misery, yea, to condemnation itself, yet that God has established an eternal covenant with us, assuring us that He is our God and that we are His people forever. Only those who have the Spirit of Christ in their hearts can have that assurance.

God's Covenant.

One of the richest, most beautiful and basic truths of Scripture is the truth of God's covenant, which permeates the entire revelation of the God of our salvation throughout the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. On every page of Holy Writ our covenant God speaks to us as Jehovah, the Almighty, Unchangeable I AM, Who establishes an eternal relationship of friendship between Himself and His people in Christ Jesus. God's covenant is uniquely *His* covenant in its origin, in its establishment, and in its realization, even as all things are of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, to Whom be the glory, world without end.

Its Origin.

God's covenant originates in God Himself, even in His eternal, glorious Being as God above all, blessed forever. He lives His own covenant life of intimate fellowship as the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father continuously generates the Son in His very likeness, even as the Son continuously draws His life from the Father. The Father breathes forth the Holy Spirit upon the Son, and the Son breathes forth the Holy Spirit upon the Father, so that Father and Son meet in the Spirit, Who proceeds from both. Thus there is an intimate communion of life among the three persons. Each lives

His own life, yet in complete harmony and unity of thinking, willing, speaking, and working. This communion of life is so complete that God needs no one and nothing to add to His blessedness, no more than the sun at noonday needs the light of a candle to add to its brilliance.

Yet in His eternal good pleasure God wills to reveal His covenant life outside of Himself, not only by telling us about it, but privileging us to share in that blessedness. God has chosen the Son, Who is the revelation of all the fulness of the Godhead, to be the Christ, the chief Servant over all God's works and affairs. To Him God gives a people, chosen from before the foundations of the earth, to share in the glorious blessedness of His covenant fellowship, to the praise of the glory of His grace. This people is a harmonious whole, an organic unity, described to us as the Body of Christ, in which all the members have their own place and function in their own capacity. Christ and His people are eternally one, so that Christ cannot exist without His people, nor His people without Him, no more than the head can exist apart from the body or the body apart from the head. When God establishes His covenant with Christ, His people are included as inseparable members of His Body (Gal. 3:16, 29).

The Establishment.

Even as the covenant originates in God, so also the establishment is from beginning to end the work of God. This was evident already in paradise. During the six days of creation God prepared a home for the highest of all the earthly creatures, man, who would dwell, as it were, in God's house in the garden. God made Adam in His own image and likeness, so that He could know God, be devoted to God, and serve God in love. He was lord over all that he surveyed, and head of the human race that would be born from him. What an amazement must have flooded Adam's soul as he opened his eyes and looked round about him in the midst of all God's handiwork! He heard creation's song in the rushing waters, in the whisperings of the wind, in the rustlings of the trees, and in the chorus of the great variety of birds. He saw the broad expanse of the heavens with the brightness of the sun by day and the splendor of the moon and myriads of stars at night. He beheld the majesty of the hills, the beauty of the trees and flowers, and the many kinds of animals, each a distinct creation, grazing or resting in the garden. Well may he have gasped, in awesome wonder: My God, how great Thou art! A single desire filled his soul, and that was to devote himself with all the creatures in loving devotion to his God. His joy knew no bounds when at the close of the day God came to walk and talk with him as his sovereign Friend. Added to all that, God gave to



Adam a wife, Eve, who was flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, united with him in the bond of holy matrimony, in which they experienced the most intimate communion with their God, reflecting His love and His fellowship in their lives.

Yet Adam was fallible and fell into sin. He fell away from God by establishing an alliance with God's adversary, the devil. He was guilty of breach of covenant, transgression of God's command, even unfaithfulness and rebellion. This sin deserved everlasting condemnation in torments of divine wrath, separation from God. Yet God's purpose was not foiled. Paradise was, after all, but an earthly replica of the heavenly Paradise to come. God keeps covenant forever, so that Adam, so to speak, fell into the waiting arms of Christ. While Adam and Eve cowered in fearful trembling, God came, sought them out, and after impressing upon them the horrible guilt of their sin assured them of the riches of His mercy in preparing for them a Savior. This Redeemer would be flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone, yet destined to be exalted higher than the heavens. In fact, God Himself would come in the likeness of sinful flesh, born of a virgin, to deliver them from the powers and dominion of sin to bring them to glory. Jehovah, as Immanuel, God with us, would exalt man to heavenly perfection and glory by the washing away of sins by His blood and Spirit.

This is the promise of the gospel, the glad tidings that were proclaimed to Adam's descendants as they stood by the altar and saw the smoke of the burning sacrifice ascend to heaven before the face of God. Through faith in the promised Seed they had peace with God, intimate communion of life as God's friend-servants, and a foretaste of eternal life. God gathered His own out of the ever increasing human race, so that we can distinctly follow the line from Adam through Abel, Seth, and Noah to Shem and Abraham. Enoch and Noah walked with God. Abraham was called the friend of God. To him was given the peculiar distinction that he was called the father of all believers. God appeared to him in a vision of slain animals (Gen. 15), showing to Abraham that He would die as the sacrifice for sin, in order that Abraham and his spiritual seed might experience an everlasting covenant with their God. He came to His covenant friend in the person of the Angel of Jehovah with two angels to sit with him, to eat with him, to commune with him as He assured Sarah of the birth of the wonder child Isaac (Gen. 18) — all of which was accompanied with the promise, "I will establish 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" (Gen. 17:7). The covenant life plainly continued through Isaac and Jacob, center-

ing in Judah, and thus to David, to end in the virgin Mary and the Christ. When Israel was in the wilderness God led them by the cloudy pillar, fed them with manna, and gave them to drink water from the rock, all of which represented Christ among them. God dwelled among them in the tabernacle that stood in the midst of the camp. When they were settled in the land of Canaan, Solomon was privileged to build God's House, where they had access to God through the bloody sacrifice and through the priest, both of which pointed to the promised Savior.

In the fulness of time God sent His Son into the flesh to share our life with us, yet in perfect holiness. The apostle John could say that they saw Him, our Light and Life, with their very eyes, heard Him with their ears, and touched Him with their hands. He allowed Himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter, laying down His life for those given to Him by the Father. As the lion of Judah's tribe the mighty Conqueror descended into Satan's realm, took captivity captive, and marched triumphantly through death and the grave into the highest heavens, where He was given all power in heaven and on earth. From heaven He sends to us the Spirit of adoption, God in us, giving us the adoption to sons and making us sons in God's House, renewed in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness to devote ourselves to covenant fellowship to our God in intimate love.

#### The Final Realization.

The final realization of God's covenant awaits us in the new creation. How shall one express a life that radiates infinite perfection — holiness, righteousness, truth, grace, love abounding? Words fail us to attempt to describe intimate covenant fellowship with God, living in mansions that we have not built, eating of bounties we have not prepared, filled with a blessedness we could never merit! Then we shall understand what it means that in Christ we share the fulness of divine glory. Then, and then only will we begin to fathom the wonder of grace, the realization of the promise: I will be your GOD!

That will be glory, glory unspeakable, filled with perfect knowledge, complete devotion, everlastingly serving God with our whole being in worship and adoration of His glorious NAME.

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



## EDITORIAL

# The Calling of our Protestant Reformed Churches to be Specific

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Again a few issues have intervened since we last wrote on this subject (cf. Oct. 15, 1983 issue). Permit me, therefore, briefly to establish the connection with what we have previously written.

In connection with our calling to be specific, i.e., our calling to give expression in clear, pointed, unambiguous, exact, and antithetical language to our distinctive Protestant Reformed position, we have been calling attention to the main lines of that distinctive Protestant Reformed position. Historically, our position stands inseparably connected with the origin of our denomination in 1924, that is, it stands connected with the entire common grace controversy. It is in distinction from the errors of the Three Points of 1924 that we maintain and proclaim the truth of sovereign and particular grace. This position we briefly outlined in our previous article.

But we have not stood still since 1924. It is not a static position which we as churches occupy. There has been development during the half century since our churches came into existence.

This is true, first of all, quite in general. Any denomination *develops* as far as its doctrinal and ethical position is concerned; and that development is naturally along the lines of the fundamental position it has taken and the fundamental course it has chosen. No church or group of churches stands still. As long as they continue to hold to their fundamental position — whether that position be doctrinally sound and confessional and Scriptural, or whether that position be the opposite — there will be movement, development. Such is life. It is impossible to stand still. Secondly, this has been true of us as Protestant Reformed Churches. It has also been true of our mother church, the Christian Reformed denomination. When you compare where we stand today, A.D. 1984, as over against where we stood in relation to one another sixty years ago, the difference is appalling. Then, sixty years ago, we both stood at the beginning of our separate ecclesiastical paths; and the differences, while significant and fundamental already at that time, did not appear nearly as wide then as they do today. At that time it would have been possible

realistically to speak of reconciliation and of reunion. In fact, that very idea of reunion was proposed and discussed as late as 1939, at the occasion of the first visit of Dr. Klaas Schilder to this country. Today such reunion, realistically speaking, would be impossible — even if it were sought. The differences and the degree of difference in almost every area of ecclesiastical life have become too great to make such organic union possible; we have grown farther and farther apart. Now this is not merely due to the fact that our mother church has departed farther and farther along the course chosen in 1924. It is also due to the fact that we as Protestant Reformed Churches have developed positively along the lines of the fundamental course set in 1924. We have not changed fundamentally, but we have *developed*. Think of the vast amount of distinctively Protestant Reformed literature which has been produced over the years. Think of the some sixty volumes of the *Standard Bearer*. True, there has in the nature of the case been much polemics. But, in the first place, it is simply a fact that there never is and never has been positive development of the truth without polemics. This is simply due to the fact that no church lives in a vacuum, and due to the fact that the truth is developed *antithetically*. And in the second place, anyone who turns to those volumes of our magazine will discover a gold mine of positive exposition of the truth of Scripture and the Confessions. Think of the fact, too, that especially in more recent years there has been produced in our churches a distinctive Protestant Reformed literature in the form of dozens of books and brochures and pamphlets. Think, too, of the fact that our Protestant Reformed Seminary has over the years developed and is still developing its own instructional materials in virtually every branch of theology. No, we have not stood still — not by any means!

In the third place, I refer specifically to the fact that there has been development on the part of our Protestant Reformed Churches in the whole area of the truth concerning God's covenant with believers and their seed and, in connection with this, in the area of the truth concerning the promise as being absolutely unconditional.



Also this development did not simply drop out of the sky, so to speak; but it stood connected with our history.

Nor, on the other hand, did this history suddenly begin circa 1950-53, at the time of our differences with the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands, differences which became internalized in our own denomination and which led ultimately to the schism of the De Wolf group.

The fact of the matter is that our distinctive position with respect to the covenant as the relation of friendship between God and His elect people in Christ Jesus, our distinctive position with respect to the promise of God being absolutely unconditional, and our distinctive position with respect to the entire organic idea of believers and their seed came to development in close connection with our distinctive position over against the errors of 1924. It had been developed many years before there was such a thing as the Liberated Churches and their theological position.

How did this come about?

The whole idea of a general, conditional promise to all the children of believing parents had been promoted for years and years in the Christian Reformed Church, already prior to 1924, by Prof. W. Heyns, the man who may be termed the father of the First Point of 1924 and its general, well-meant offer. Already in his own student days the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema had been exposed to this teaching — though already at that time he could not agree with it. But the point I am now making is, first, that due to the influence of Prof. Heyns the whole ministry of the Christian Reformed Church for some two decades was infected with this covenant view of Heyns. At the same time we must remember that this idea of Heyns was but an aspect of the broader idea of the general, well-meant offer in the preaching of the gospel to all who hear that preaching. It is the application of that same fundamental idea to the specific area of the covenant and baptism and to the children of believers.

At the same time, it must be remembered that there was another current idea of the covenant and of baptism in Reformed churches, the idea of pre-supposed regeneration, the view promoted by Dr. Abraham Kuyper.

It was in that situation that our Protestant Reformed Churches developed their position. They could accept neither position — precisely because both involved a denial of the particularity of grace and of the promise. It was in that situation that the idea of the covenant as the relation of friendship between God and His elect people in Christ Jesus was developed. It was in that situation that our Protestant Reformed Churches maintained — and

this was stated later in the Declaration of Principles — that the promise is not general, but particular; that it is not an objective bequest to all children of believing parents which is dependent for its realization on its acceptance by those children, but that it is an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith. It was in that situation that our Protestant Reformed Churches maintained from their beginning that all the covenant blessings are for the elect alone; that God's promise is unconditionally for them only; that the promise of God bestows the objective right of salvation not upon all the children that are born under the historical dispensation of the covenant, that is, not upon all that are baptized, but only upon the spiritual seed.

True, this position came under attack when the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands virtually adopted the position of Prof. Heyns and when they sought contact with us and affiliation with us in Canada circa 1950. True, this position began to be denied by some of our own men at that time, by some who wanted to "cater" to the Liberated. True, the controversy came to a head in a certain respect in connection with the statements of De Wolf which were condemned (on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions!) as literally heretical. True, too, our position was articulated in the Declaration of Principles which was adopted as a form for the organization of prospective churches (not as a fourth form of unity, as some alleged).

But this position and this development of the truth took place already long before the controversy of 1953. In 1953 that fundamental position, under the stress of controversy, was brought into clearer focus and was articulated.

And it still belongs — let us never forget it — to our fundamental and distinctive position as Protestant Reformed Churches.

Without that fundamental position as I have briefly outlined it in this and preceding editorials on this subject, we have no right of existence as churches. Without it we are fundamentally like many, many other churches. Some may be more conservative, some less. That is merely a difference of degree, not of fundamental principle.

But remember: with that fundamentally distinctive Protestant Reformed position goes not only the right and the possibility of being *specific*, but the *calling*!

More on this later.

*Read the Standard Bearer.*



## GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

# The Development of Tradition and the Word

*Rev. T. Miersma*

The apostolic fathers, as we have seen, did not have a formal doctrine of the Word of God or of inspiration. Rather they had an intuitive understanding that the Scriptures were the one unified and authoritative revelation of God by the apostles and prophets. We must also remember that for the apostolic fathers, the teaching and preaching of the apostles was a matter of living memory in the church. It is understandable therefore that along with Scripture, the canon of which had not yet been determined, they would place a high value upon that which they had heard directly from the apostles. Polycarp in particular had been taught directly by the apostle John. The result was that in the early church a sharp distinction was not made between the writings and teachings of the apostles. The reminiscences of those who had actually heard the apostles were eagerly sought by the church. Stories concerning them, their labors, and their deaths as martyrs were eagerly listened to. So also news concerning other believers who had suffered and laid down their lives for the faith was news which was eagerly sought in this era of severe persecution.

The result was that a body of tradition and stories began to develop in the church, some in oral and some in written form. A similar attitude prevailed concerning the teachings of Christ. The apostles' reminiscences of the Lord, received by their disciples and hearers, were treasured by the church. One individual in particular, Papias, bishop of a church in Phrygia in the first half of the second century, endeavored to record these reminiscences. He himself may have been a disciple of the apostle John, but he also sought out the elders of other churches who had heard the apostles. The result was five books of which only fragments survive in other writers, in which many of these sayings, reminiscences, and oral traditions were recorded.

While this oral and written tradition was not accorded the status and authority of Scripture by the early church, neither was it clearly distinguished from it, particularly from the New Testament writings of the apostles. This is understandable if we re-

member that the canon of the New Testament, its scope and full authority as Scripture had not yet been determined. The church was still struggling to understand the heritage of the Word which God had given her. Moreover the apostolic stamp given to this tradition made it highly prized by the church, and this became more and more the case as the era of the apostles receded into the past and as those who had personally known the apostles passed away.

At the same time the church did not possess her heritage of the Word in peace and security. Even in the days of the apostles heretics had arisen in the church who sought to undermine its foundation and to corrupt the truth. These attacks continued. In particular, the church was plagued in the centuries following the apostles by those who sought to unite Christianity with paganism and with apostate Judaism. These heretics took various forms. Those who sought to bring the law into the church again, and to reduce Christianity to a form of phariseism, repudiated the apostle Paul altogether as being a false apostle. Those of a more pagan bent tended to disregard the Old Testament and tried to combine pagan ideas and philosophy with the writings of the apostles.

These heretics varied in their sophistication and form, but they are generally called Gnostics because of a common thread which runs through all of them. That thread is the appeal to a special secret knowledge or tradition which they alone taught and through which one could obtain salvation. The church was called to defend itself from these attacks. Moreover the church was called also to defend itself against pure paganism, Greek philosophy, and Oriental mysticism. The Jews also challenged the church's right and claim to the Old Testament as a Christian book. The result was that the church had to battle for the truth on many fronts at once.

Men arose in the church to do battle with these attacks upon the church. They are called apologists because of the polemical character of their writings. They include such men as Irenaeus, a pupil of Polycarp, and Justin Martyr. These men met the



challenges of the Jews and of pagan philosophy head-on, but the attacks of the Gnostics were more difficult to counter as they also in varying degrees appealed to the writings of the apostles or to false writings which were attributed to other apostles or other saints from the Old Testament. These false or apochryphal books included a wide variety of material, from a gospel attributed to the apostle Thomas to abridged versions of various New Testament books.

The Gnostic Marcion may serve as an example here as he is best known. He rejected the Old Testament as the Word of God and recognized as Scripture only the Gospel of Luke, edited and condensed, and the writings of the apostle Paul, also edited to suit his purposes.

Against such men the apologists tended to take a twofold approach. First of all they refuted them on the basis of the Old Testament and on the basis of the writings of the apostles. But secondly, they also began to appeal to the apostolic tradition of the church. This latter appeal was made on the basis that those churches which had been established by the apostles were also the ones who alone could claim to know fully the traditions and true writings of the apostles, while these various sects could make no such claim. Moreover, only such churches could properly lay claim to being the successors of the apostles' teachings and therefore the proper expounders of it. The church, they said, stood as one in its teaching throughout the world, whereas these heretics differed from one another and could not make such a claim.

This defense of the faith by the apologists and the church, and the need for it, yielded certain results. In the first place, it drove the church to search the Word and to develop the truth of the Word of God in its doctrine and teaching. It gave impetus to the development of statements of doctrine such as the Apostles' Creed, and it stimulated the church to a study of the Scriptures.

In the second place, it forced the church to begin to wrestle with the question of what exactly constituted the Scriptures. The church began to confront the question as to which books were inspired Scrip-

ture and which were not, particularly the New Testament books. These books not only had to be discerned but also had to be defended over against false writings and false gospels. This defense was crucial, for these heretics denied the Scriptural character and authority of many of the books of our present Bible and substituted others in their place.

Thirdly, however, in this struggle, the appeal to apostolic teaching and tradition which was made, tended to reinforce the development alongside the Scriptures of a body of written and oral tradition of the apostles and to give it some authority. Thus what began as reminiscences and stories of interest to the church became a significant part of the church's heritage alongside the Scriptures. From these seeds was later to develop, particularly in the Middle Ages, the idea of an apostolic tradition entrusted to the church and standing alongside Scripture, a tradition which was finally elevated in the Middle Ages to a place superior to that of Scripture. To this tradition was added in the process of time the interpretations of Scripture by the church fathers and apologists themselves, as being rooted in the historic teaching of the apostles and arising out of it. This idea did not present itself full grown, but the roots of it manifested themselves already in the early church and in the writings of the apologists. This significant development of a body of tradition in the church and its parallel relation to Scripture as a source of authority was ultimately to undermine the authority of Scripture itself and to place the church and her traditions above the authoritative Word of God. Eventually the church would become so bound by tradition that it, and not Scripture, became the rule of faith and life in the church. The progress of this development was not rapid. It originated in circumstances in which the church was fighting for her existence in the face of persecution and heresy.

Through that struggle, in spite of her weaknesses, the church was led to set forth, define, and defend the extent of the Word of God and under the guidance of the Spirit to begin to gather and form the writings of the apostles into the New Testament Scriptures.

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## ***IN HIS FEAR***

# **God Is One (continued)**

*Rev. Ronald Hanko*

The truth that God is One is the cornerstone of the First Commandment: thus far we have come in

our search for God's revelation of Himself in His law. Remembering this principle, we are also able



to understand that idolatry in any form is an act of gross rebellion against God. Never does the idolatrous practice of the heathen reflect a search for God as the One, True God; rather, as Paul tells us in Romans 1, it is always a refusal to worship God as He reveals Himself in His creation. By this refusal the truth concerning the Only God is changed into a deliberate and malicious lie.

This principle that God is One has several different aspects. It means, first of all, that God is indeed the Only God and the True God. He is not one God among many, but He alone is God and there is no other god beside Him. It is this teaching that has made the Christian faith so offensive among men. The religions of this world may claim priority for their gods, but at the very least they are always willing to recognize the existence of the gods of others. Our own Constitution takes somewhat this same neutral position when it guarantees freedom of religion, thus implicitly recognizing the "equality" of all religions. Over against this, Christianity has insisted that the gods of the heathen without exception are idols and that there is no God but Jehovah, and that therefore the Christian religion is the only true religion and the only way of salvation. This has been, then, one of the reasons why Christianity has been universally despised and persecuted.

Also implied in this truth are the simplicity and sovereignty of God. God's simplicity (cf. the Belgic Confession, Art. I) means that all of God's attributes and works are in perfect harmony with one another and with the perfection of His own being. There is no contradiction or division in Him. His justice and His mercy, for example are never at odds with one another in His work of salvation. He is One in Himself. His sovereignty is the crown of both these other truths. Because He is the Only God, He is also the "blessed and Only Potentate," the only sovereign King and Lord. And because He is perfect and complete in Himself, so that all His attributes, works, and will are in perfect unity and harmony, He is perfect also in dominion and power. This is implied in Deuteronomy 6:4, where God not only teaches His people that He is One, but that He is One *Lord*.

These other aspects of God's Oneness, however, do not stand on the foreground in the First Commandment. They are the principles that lie behind other of the Commandments, notably the Fifth and the Tenth. Here, in the First Commandment, the important truth is that He is the Only, True God.

The connection between the First Commandment and this truth that God is One is made in Deuteronomy 6:4-15. The positive principle of the First Commandment is verse 4: "Hear, O Israel: the

Lord our God is one Lord." From this principle flows forth both the positive and negative requirements of the First Commandment. The positive command comes first: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might . . . Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt serve Him, and shalt swear by His name" (verses 5 and 13). That which is forbidden follows: "Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you" (verse 14).

God taught this truth, that He is the only God, to Israel in many different ways. He taught them not only through His Word as we read it in such passages as Deuteronomy 6, but He gave them one place and one manner of worship all through the Old Testament, that Israel might never forget that her God was the One God. Even today He reveals that to us when He teaches us that there is but one Name given under heaven by which we may be saved and but one way to come to the Father. He is One God.

We ought also to take special note of the positive instruction in Deuteronomy 6. Here we see very clearly that although the First Commandment itself is negative, nevertheless obedience is also positive. It is simply not enough to refrain from idolatry and to have no other gods, but we must have Him as our God with all our heart and soul and strength. We must have Him as our God by loving, fearing, and serving Him.

That this positive requirement is first and foremost is also clear from Deuteronomy 6. The First Commandment is expressed negatively, not because the negative is more important, but because the law's first purpose is to teach us our sin and misery.

In one word, the positive requirement of the First Commandment is "worship." In using that word, however, we immediately face the danger of thinking of worship as something tucked away into some small corner of our life and reserved for Sabbath observance, or for a few hours of private meditations during each day. Deuteronomy 6 makes it clear that this "worshipping" of the One True God is something for all of our life. He requires that we love, fear, and serve Him not only with our heart and soul, but with all our might — in other words, with the strength of our physical life as we exert ourselves in all the duties and responsibilities that God has given. We must worship Him when we sit in our houses, when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we arise. This Commandment concerning God's worship is to be bound to our hands while we work and is to rule all the use of our eyes as "frontlets." It is to be the first thing we



remember when we return to our homes and the last thing of which we are reminded as we leave, just as though it is written in large letters on the door and on the gate.

There is a whole commentary on the First Commandment to be found in chapters 43 through 45 of the prophecy of Isaiah. The principle of the First Commandment, that God is the Only, true God is repeated no fewer than eight times in chapter 43 and the first eight verses of chapter 44 (43:3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 44:6, 8). In verses 9-20 of chapter 44 this fundamental truth is contrasted with the foolishness of idolatry, all summed up in verse 20: "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Then in the last verses of chapter 44 and in chapter 45 this great principle is repeated another seven times to drive it home to the hearts of God's people for their eternal comfort and salvation (44:24, 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22).

This all-important truth about God becomes, then, the basis for all the instructions, admonitions, and warnings that are found in these chapters. Because He alone is the Lord, Israel's God (43:3), Israel is commanded not to be afraid (43:1, 5), but to glorify God (verse 7), to know Him and believe Him (verse 10), to witness concerning Him (verse 12), to praise Him (verse 21), to call upon Him and honor Him (verses 22, 23), and to remember Him (verse 26). Again in chapter 44 Jacob and Israel are commanded to remember and return to the Lord Who formed them (verses 21, 22). In chapter 45 God instructs them concerning the necessity of knowing Him (verse 6), of looking to Him, bowing before Him, and swearing only by His Name (verses 22, 23). They must confess that they have all things from Him (verse 24), and glory in Him forever (verse 25). All of these things come down to the one great requirement of the First Commandment, that we have Jehovah to be our God and that we worship and serve Him alone in every walk and way of life.

To fail in any of these things is as much idolatry as any of the grosser forms of sin against this First Commandment, such as the worship of heathen gods, sorcery, fortune-telling, superstition, prayers to saints or angels. As much as superstition denies that God is the One Lord Who controls all the circumstances of our life, by so much does our failure to seek and expect all good from Him alone do the same. Just as much as sorcery and fortune-telling deny Him by seeking the help of other powers beside Him, by so much does our failure to trust in Him alone and to submit to Him with humility and patience do exactly the same. To forget Him at any time, to fall short of His glory and honor in any ac-

tivity, to forget to praise Him and know Him, to seek or trust in anything else besides Him, though ever so little, is as much idolatry as the worst of the practices of the heathen.

This Commandment, then, serves the purpose for which it was given. By revealing God in all His glory as the only God and Saviour, it uncovers the depth of our depravity and shows that our whole life is full of idolatry. We are no different from Israel who worshipped on every high hill and under every green tree in the promised land. In seeking and loving the things of this world we sacrifice even our children to these idols, as Israel did to Moloch. Possessions, children, families, work and wealth, power and honour, all can and do become our idols whenever we love them, trust in them, or seek them next to or beside the One, True God. This Commandment uncovers our sin in all its filthiness. We are shown to be those who have turned aside to our own ways and gone astray from God, saying in our hearts, as the fool, though we may not dare to say it openly, that there is no God. In all our own works our idolatrous practices reveal our idolatrous hearts and both heart and works are laid bare by this Word of God.

Nevertheless, in teaching God's people their sin — and indeed, they are the only ones who can and will understand what this Commandment teaches — the First Commandment is their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. It does this first of all by teaching them that, as the worst of idolaters, they have no hope apart from God's great grace. Then too the law shows them what Christ has done in bringing that grace. He has born all the wrath of God against those who worship aught but Him, and in so doing has nailed our idolatrous nature to His cross and crucified through His suffering and death its continual enmity against God. Above and beyond that, He has rendered to God on their behalf a new and perfect obedience to the First Commandment. He did that when only 12 years old by putting His Father's business before all other things in His life. When He faced Satan in the wilderness He refused to receive the Kingdoms of the world with all their glory in any way which conflicted with the truth that God alone must be worshipped and served. In His agony in Gethsemane, when the bloody sweat was pressed out of His body, He loved, feared, worshipped and glorified God, when He said, "Thy will be done." And finally when He laid down His life and when the weight of God's wrath pressed upon Him all the torments of Hell, He made it all an act of perfect worship and adoration, for even then it was, "My God, My God . . . ."

He had no other God but Jehovah that we might have no other. He reveals in all His work the One, True God beside Whom there is no God or Saviour,



and through Him our obedience to the First Commandment becomes a daily confession that Jehovah alone is God. It cannot be otherwise, for He has revealed Himself in Christ as the One God, our Saviour. In thankfulness we confess that there is none like Him by renouncing and forsaking our idols and by serving and worshipping Him with all

our heart and soul and mind and strength. The thankful confession of our mouth and of our life is that, "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our Gods: for in Thee Alone the fatherless findeth mercy" (Hos. 14:3). Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord.

## STRENGTH OF YOUTH

### Why Go Twice?

*Rev. Ron Cammenga*

An ominous question! One that parents and elders grieve to hear. But a question, it seems, that is more and more being asked, especially by the young people: "Why do we have to go to church twice? Once is good enough."

Often the asking of this question is not the first indication that all is not well in the life of the young person who asks the question. There have been indications of problems before this. Likely this question has been preceded by another question: "Why do I have to keep going to catechism? I've had all that stuff before."

It hardly needs to be pointed out that more and more the second worship service is being abandoned. Those churches which still have a second Sunday service are often plagued with the problem of "oncercs." This is true even in churches of Reformed persuasion. The preacher dutifully mounts the pulpit to lead a congregation in worship that is half the size of the congregation before whom he stood in the morning. Especially noticeably absent are the younger members of the church.

It must be admitted that the threat to the second worship service is a real threat in our own circles. We ourselves, and especially our young people, are influenced by this trend in the churches today. Perhaps it is the case even that our friends and acquaintances only go to church once. They ask: "Why do you have to go to church twice?" And we begin asking ourselves: "Yes, why DO I have to go to church twice? Where does the Bible say, 'Thou shalt go to church twice on Sunday?'"

Why go to church twice? This question can, of course, be asked in a good way. Then the intent of the question is to understand the reasons that lie behind this practice which we have. It's always good to know why we do what we do, to be able to give reasons for our behavior. There ought to be

good reasons for doing what we do, besides mere habit and tradition.

But this question can also be asked in a bad way. It can be asked in such a way that we are not genuinely interested in the reasons for going to church twice, but are expressing that we see no need for attending both worship services of the church. Then the question really expresses that we've made up our minds that this is unnecessary for us ourselves, and we are serving notice that from now on we do not intend to be present at the second worship service.

I believe that there are good reasons why we ought to go to church twice, reasons which warrant this long-standing practice among us. Even though there is no specific commandment to this effect in the Bible, the teaching of Scripture throughout certainly stands behind this practice.

One obvious reason why we ought to go to church twice on Sunday is that this is what the church itself, through the office of elder, requires of us. We are not on our own in the church, every man doing as he pleases. But there is authority in the church, the authority of the office of elder. And we are called to be in submission to that authority. With regard to the rule of the elders, as is the case wherever we confront authority, we are called to obey unless the obedience that is required of us is plainly contrary to the Word of God. Even if we might not personally agree with or like what is demanded of us, we must submit. This is simply a fundamental principle of the fifth commandment of the law of God. We read in Hebrews 13:17, in connection with the office of elder: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."



Now, obviously, the requirement that we be in church twice on Sunday is not in itself an unbiblical requirement. The elders do not call us to behavior that is expressly contrary to the Word of God. Recognizing their authority over us, therefore, we willingly obey. At the same time, we understand that by our obedience we are really obeying Christ Himself Who is pleased to rule us through the office of elder.

But why do the elders require of us attendance at two worship services on Sunday? What reasons lie behind their insisting on the continuance of this practice in the church? Why does the church itself insist on this?

The church that insists on two worship services a Sunday understands a couple of things. First, she is sensitive to the requirement of the fourth commandment that the *WHOLE* Lord's Day be devoted to God and the things of His kingdom. Let's be honest — what lies behind the movement to get away from two worship services? The desire to use the Sabbath Day for other things than the worship of God, either publicly or privately. It's the mentality of putting my time in at church and then I can be off to the beach, or golf course, or whatever else appeals to me. Young people who are convinced that still today God requires the whole day (it's the Lord's Day, don't forget) are not likely to be asking the question: "Why must I go to church again?"

The church that continues to hold two worship services also understands that at the heart of our observance of the Lord's Day, the main thing is the preaching of the Word of God. The church of Jesus Christ has the highest estimation of the preaching of the Word. Apart from the preaching, in deliberate separation from the preaching, there is no possibility of proper Sabbath observance. Indeed, apart from the preaching there is no possibility of living the Christian life at all. The Scriptures make plain in places like Romans 10:13-17 and I Corinthians 1:17, 18 that the child of God is saved, both initially and continually, by the preaching of the Word of God.

Because she has this estimation of the preaching of the Word, because she understands the vital place of the preaching in the life of God's people, the church holds two preaching services a Lord's Day. The young person who understands this importance of the preaching understands this importance by his own experience, sees to it that he is in attendance when the Word is preached.

There is something radically wrong when we have no interest in going to church. There is something radically wrong when we begin to think that once to church on Sunday is good enough. Just as something is radically wrong when earthly food

does not look good to us, so when the Bread and Water of Life are undesirable to us, something is wrong, terribly wrong, spiritually. This is our salvation! This is the means of grace! This is hearing the Word of Christ the Savior, Whom we ought to love and Whose voice ought to be sweet to us!

It's Christ's Word that is heard in church. We ought to think about that. Christ says to us, "I have something to say to you." Do you dare, do you really dare to say to Christ, "No thanks. What I heard this morning is all I care to hear"? But this is exactly what you do if you absent yourself from the second service.

There are, of course, other good reasons for our faithfully attending the second worship service of the church. An important reason is that by our absence from the worship services we are refusing the fellowship of the saints. By skipping church we not only sin against God, but we sin against our fellow believers. Our attending church is an exercise of the communion of the saints. At church there is the strengthening of the bond between the believers themselves. By staying away we reveal very clearly the value we place on the communion of the saints.

Keeping ourselves from the worship services we are also failing in our obligation to support the causes of God's kingdom. Collections are taken at the worship services. These are not incidental to, but an important aspect of our worship. It is the responsibility, as well as the privilege, of every believer to support financially the causes of God's kingdom. By not being present at the worship services, and thus not contributing in the collections that are taken, we fail in this aspect of our calling as members of God's church. In the Old Testament the children of Israel were guilty of this very thing. God's Word to them is a word of sharp rebuke: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation" (Mal. 3:8, 9).

What about those churches that have abandoned the second worship service? What about those churches where, although a second service is conducted, the building is only half full? Isn't the loss of the second worship service only one more symptom of the great spiritual plague unto death which has pervaded the churches today? Is it not simply one more indication that the churches are not really interested in the worship of God, the Word of God, and the knowledge of the truth of God? Isn't it really only another indication of the apathy and indifference towards spiritual things that abounds today and which Scripture tells us is one of the outstanding signs of the end of the world? Isn't this exactly an aspect of the lack of love for the truth,



which Paul says in II Thessalonians 2:10-12 is the main reason to account for the rise to power of the Antichrist? And isn't it the case that behind the abandoning of the second worship service lurks the devil of worldliness and pleasure-madness?

Already in the early history of the New Testament church there were those who had begun to neglect the worship services. These the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:24, 25). Notice

that: "and so much *the more*, as ye see the day approaching."

Let the word of the prophet Isaiah decide the issue: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Is. 58:13, 14).

## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

# The Nicene Creed

*Rev. James Slopsema*

Article 4: *He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; and suffered and was buried.*

In the previous article of this creed the early church confessed that the Son of God was incarnated for us men and for our salvation. Now in Article 4 the church proceeded to show how the Son incarnate accomplishes this salvation of man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried.

The suffering of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion under Pontius Pilate belong together. For it was especially at the cross that our Lord suffered.

The suffering of Christ on the cross forms the heart of the gospel. This suffering was certainly one of the main themes of the O.T. Scriptures. So much was this the case that on two occasions after His resurrection our Lord demonstrated to His disciples from the O.T. Scriptures that His suffering had been clearly prophesied. This He showed to the two travelers on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:25-27) and to several of His disciples by the sea of Galilee (Luke 24:45, 46). In like manner both Paul and Peter in their preaching to the Jews repeatedly demonstrated from the O.T. Scriptures the sufferings of Christ (cf. Acts 3:18; 17:2, 3). In turn Paul himself acknowledged in his epistles that he preached only one thing: Jesus Christ and Him crucified (cf. I Cor. 1:23, 2:2). The suffering and crucifixion of Christ therefore form the very heart of the gospel. And in harmony with that the early church confessed her faith in the cross of Christ.

We may ask at this point, to what degree did the early church understand the meaning and significance of the cross?

The true meaning of the cross was certainly apprehended by the early church. She certainly understood that at the cross Christ died for our sins and that His death was a sacrifice for sin. The church fathers at this time spoke in terms of redemption, satisfaction for sin, and reconciliation. Perhaps Athanasius, the great defender of the true deity of Christ, had the clearest understanding of the cross. He spoke of death as being the punishment of God upon man's sin. And man is under the condemnation of sin on account of his sin. However, said Athanasius, it is not fitting that God allow the creation to perish. Consequently, the divine Word of God took upon Himself our nature that He might redeem us from sin. This redemption He accomplished on the cross as He bore the punishment of sin. Certainly the early church was not without some understanding of the cross of Christ.

However, it is also true that in many ways the early church had only a vague understanding of these things. A study of the early church fathers will reveal that in many instances they used the terminology of the Bible concerning Christ's suffering and death without fully understanding its implication. In addition to this, the early church fathers sometimes espoused erroneous ideas concerning the atonement of Christ. There were some, for example, who claimed that the blood of martyrs



also atoned for sin in a measure. Then there was the idea held by some that the death of Christ served as a ransom for sin not to God but to Satan. The idea here was that Satan held man under his dominion and would release man from the bonds of sin only if a ransom was paid to him. This Christ did through His suffering and death on the cross. The satisfaction of the cross therefore was not to God but to Satan. However, in spite of these ideas that surfaced in the writings of some in the early church, it is nevertheless true that in the main the early church did sense the true significance of the cross. Even here she had the truth, if only in seed form.

And beyond this it was really impossible for the church at this time to go. Before she could grow in her understanding of the cross it was necessary that she first develop in other areas of the truth. For example, it was necessary to understand Who Christ really is. Is He truly God? Is He merely a man? Is He some combination of this, or some other kind of creature? The answer to these questions certainly has a direct bearing on the nature and purpose of Christ's suffering on the cross. And these questions were answered, by the councils of Nicea and Constantinople, which authored the Nicene creed, as well as by the council of Chalcedon (A.D. 425).

However, this was not enough. To come to understand the cross as a sacrifice for sin the church also had to understand the nature of man's sin and of the fall. What is the relation between the fall and the sinfulness of man today? Just what happened to man at the fall? How sinful is man? What is the nature of sin? These questions were answered by Augustine in the 5th century as he opposed the heretic Pelagius.

Once these questions were settled it was possible to grapple with the true meaning of the cross. And this was done especially by the great theologian Anselm, the archbishop of Canterbury, at the end of the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th century. In his book *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Became Man) Anselm not only showed the need for the incarnation of Christ but also developed very beautifully the doctrine of the atonement. But it was especially the Reformers of the great Protestant Reformation who developed the meaning of the cross. This they did especially as they developed the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone over against the Roman Catholic error of justification by works. This richer and fuller development of the truth of Christ's suffering and crucifixion are embodied in our Reformed creeds (cf. especially Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 15, 16; Belgic Confession, Articles 20, 21; Canons of Dordt, Second Head of Doctrine).

In this connection it is interesting to note that the early church in this 4th article of the Nicene creed makes mention of the fact that Christ was crucified "under Pontius Pilate." The Heidelberg Catechism in Q. 38 makes a special point of this. There the Catechism teaches that to free us from the severe judgment of God it was necessary for Christ to be condemned by a temporal judge. For that reason He suffered "under Pontius Pilate." The early church evidently attached no such significance to this phrase in her early creed. According to Augustine the only significance of the phrase "under Pontius Pilate" was to establish the date of the crucifixion. And this is in harmony with the original Greek in which the Nicene creed was written. The phrase "under Pontius Pilate" has the idea of "in the time of Pontius Pilate" and not "under the jurisdiction of Pontius Pilate" as the Catechism interprets it.

In this 4th article the early church also mentioned Christ's burial.

It is rather difficult to ascertain the significance the church at this time placed on Christ's burial.

According to the church father Rufinus (A.D. 330-410), who wrote a commentary of the Apostles' creed, the burial of Christ implied Christ's descension into hell. The doctrine of Christ's descension into hell is found already in the synodical declarations of Sirmium, Nice, and Constantinople (A.D. 359-360). This expression eventually found its way into the Apostles' Creed. By Christ's descension into hell the early church meant a literal, bodily descent into hell after His death and before His resurrection. By hell the early church meant not the place of torment but the part of Sheol where the souls of the O.T. saints were retained until the coming of Christ. According to this idea, the souls of the O.T. saints could not be glorified at death. This is because Christ had not come as yet and redeemed them from the power of sin and death. Consequently, at death the souls of the O.T. saints departed to a part of Sheol where they knew neither suffering nor glory. And there they waited for the coming of the Christ. Hence, after His death Christ personally descended into this part of Sheol to release the souls of the O.T. saints and bring them to Paradise. This doctrine certainly is not biblical. Nor is it likely that the church had this in mind when she confessed in this 4th article that Christ was buried.

It is more likely that the early church inserted this confession of Christ's burial to bear witness to the death of Christ. Christ not only suffered on the cross; He also died the physical death. And to His death the burial of Christ bears witness. The grave is the place of the dead. Christ was buried because He died.



The death of Christ was really denied by both Arius and Appolinarius. We have already seen some of the heresies of Arius, who denied that Jesus is truly God. On the question of Christ's divinity Appolinarius was orthodox. However, both Arius and Appolinarius denied that Christ possessed a complete human nature. They both maintained that Christ possessed a human body but not a human soul. The Word (Logos) took the place of the human soul. And here Arius and Appolinarius differed. Arius maintained that the Logos is created of the Father and therefore not truly divine. Appolinarius on the other hand acknowledged that the Logos is truly divine, co-equal and eternal with the Father. However, they both made the mistake of denying that Christ has a complete human nature. And this in turn made it impossible for them to maintain the real death of Christ. For death involves the separation of body and soul. But without a human soul, physical death is impossible. Hence, the burial of Christ, which testifies of His death, certainly condemned both the views of Arius and Appolinarius.

And it would appear that this confession on Christ's burial was inserted in the Nicene Creed especially to condemn these two heretics. That is evident from especially two things. First, this con-

fession concerning Christ's burial was not included in the original creed as adopted by the Council of Nicea in 325 but was added by the Council of Constantinople in 381. Secondly, it was at the Council of Constantinople that both Arius and Appolinarius were condemned. You will recall that the views of Arius were condemned by Nicea in 325, but revived. They were not finally condemned until Constantinople in 381. During the interval between these two councils the errors of Appolinarius arose, only to be condemned by Constantinople. It would certainly appear therefore that this confession concerning Christ's burial was added to condemn the error of these two heretics and to assert the death of Christ on the cross.

And this confession is very important. As our Catechism points out in Q. 40 it was necessary for Christ to humble Himself even unto death. This was necessary because satisfaction for sin can be made in no other way than by the death of the Son of God.

We confess therefore with the church of all ages that Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate and was crucified. And to establish that His suffering was complete and perfect, involving even death, we also confess that He was buried (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 41).

## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

### Missionary Methods (21)

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

*(The Views of Henry Venn)*

The missionary methods of Henry Venn, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (Anglican) in the mid-nineteenth century, may be summed as follows: 1) Converts are to be organized into groups called "Christian Companies"; 2) As these companies mature they are to be transformed into churches. This stage is reached when the missionaries determine that the group or company is able to support financially a native pastor; 3) The final phase is reached when groups of these "Native Pastorates" meet together regularly in a District Conference. At this point the native churches should be completely self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending or propagating. When this stage or level is reached the "euthanasia of the mission" has taken place. The missionaries take leave of the native churches to engage in mission work in "regions beyond" as Venn put it.

As we noted in the previous article Venn's views, revolutionary in his times, contain much which is commendable and from which we may learn. His methodology is complete in that it follows the development of the church through from the gathering of the first converts to its final manifestation, a denomination or federation of autonomous churches. The ideas of self-support, self-government, and self-extension are also worthy goals, provided they be understood in the biblical sense. In addition, it should be noted that according to Venn it is the mission and not the native church which decides when each of these three steps are to take place. Finally, advancement from the first stage (Christian Companies) to the second (Native Pastorates) is based on the criterion of self-support.

In spite of his warning against "missionary paternalism" there are weaknesses and problems with



Venn's methods. He saw, for example, self-government as a long-term goal. Before this level of ecclesiastical development can be reached, leaders have to be thoroughly trained and tested. Only after they have proved themselves are they to be ordained. The problem is that during this period of the training and testing of future officebearers the mission is in charge of the companies and native pastorates. Two questions arise: 1) Where is the biblical justification for a mission as an institution to stand over and next to the church? 2) Does not this practice promote the kind of "missionary paternalism" which Venn himself so vigorously opposed?

Answers to these questions do not come easily. With the first question one would be inclined to agree that there is no justification in the Bible for a kind of mission institution which stands over and next to the church. One finds nothing of the kind in the New Testament. On the other hand, the Bible certainly lays great emphasis on the necessity of sound instruction of converts. And, especially must future or potential officebearers be thoroughly instructed in the truth and in godliness. A young preacher of a young church is admonished by the Apostle: "Lay hand suddenly on no man . . ." (I Timothy 5:22). This same preacher is taught that an elder (bishop) is to be "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (I Timothy 3:6, 7). Concerning deacons, among other qualifications Scripture says they must " . . . first be proved . . ." (I Timothy 3:10). The same is required of a teaching elder, the minister of the Word. They must be able to teach others (II Timothy 2:2). They are called to study the Scriptures so as to be able to interpret them correctly (II Timothy 2:15). Still more as spiritual leaders of the church, the ministers must lead exemplary lives (I Timothy 4:13-16; Philippians 3:17-21). Properly to train such leaders takes time. Circumstances on the field would certainly have a bearing on how much time this would take. Are the converts literate and rather civilized or are they illiterate and rather primitive? On one field all this might require a relatively brief period of time while on other fields it might take years. In either case, however, the goal of an indigenous church must not be lost.

With reference to the second question (cf. above), concerning "missionary paternalism," it is our firm conviction that the danger of this kind of relationship developing between the missionaries and the converts is real. The missionaries become the caring fathers and the converts remain indefinitely the dependent children. This is almost a natural consequence on the mission field. The mission-

aries after all are the teachers; the converts are the pupils; the missionaries are the preachers; the converts are the hearers. In addition, other forms of care and assistance (benevolence) come from the church sending the missionaries. The situation is aggravated in those instances where the mission provides a large percentage of the financial support of the developing church or churches. If circumstances such as these continue for any length of time, two serious problems develop: 1) the converts become too dependent upon the mission, and 2) the mission becomes introverted, concerned with itself, so that continued evangelism and growth of the church are stymied. Once more, a solution to this problem is not easily found.

The Rev. Willem Berends, a missionary of the Christian Reformed Church to Nigeria, proposes an interesting answer: "The Biblical answer is that missionaries should take on the initial supervision of the new churches as representatives of these churches, and not as representatives of a mission. They should be members of the churches they serve, representing the church offices by virtue of their recognition and ordination by the sending church. As core members of the new churches they are to gather Christ's people around themselves, admitting new members to the fellowship through baptism upon a confession of faith. They are to preach the Word, both outside and inside the church. They are to administer the Lord's Supper, and to apply discipline where it is needed. They are to supervise the ministry of the church as it is carried out by all its members, both in service and in proclamation.

"In this way the new churches will be fully self-governing from their beginning. The first office bearers may not be indigenous in terms of race and culture, but they will belong to the church. And as the church grows and develops even its leadership will become more and more indigenous as the local people begin to participate. Those, who after training and testing are ordained to office, will become co-workers with the missionaries, equal in rank and standing" (*The Indigenous Principle In Reformed Mission Strategy With Special Reference To The Nigerian Mission Of The Christian Reformed Church*, Thesis for the Master of Theology degree, Westminster Seminary, copy available at the Christian Reformed Board of World Missions, Grand Rapids, pp. 87, 88).

What Berends writes certainly has merit. What he wishes to avoid, viz. missionary paternalism, certainly must be avoided. But some of the problems remain. Is Berends proposing that the missionaries hold some kind of dual church membership: membership in the newly organized mission church while maintaining their ministerial



status in the sending church? To whom then are the missionaries accountable for their preaching, doctrine, and walk of life? There is no indication that the apostle Paul, who was sent by the Holy Spirit through the church at Antioch, became a member of any of the churches he organized. Would not the danger exist that the missionary become an autocrat in the young church? Is there any indication in the New Testament that a group may be instituted as a church without having elders and deacons who meet the requirements for those offices set forth in Scripture? We think not.

It would be better and proper that the missionary preach and teach without hastily organizing a church. When by means of the preaching and teaching suitable candidates for office emerge, these must be instructed in the duties and calling of the office of elder and that of deacon. Assuming that the group has reached an acceptable level of understanding of the Scriptures and the creeds of the church they can be properly organized as an indigenous church. Provision must also be made for the instruction and preparation of native pastors. These native pastors would indeed become co-workers with the missionaries, "equal in rank and standing." At this point, in fact, the missionaries ought to leave the care of the church in the hands of the native pastor and his fellow elders and deacons. Just how long all this might take is a question that can be answered only on the mission field itself.

Once this level has been reached we agree with Berends when he writes: "This Biblical pattern fully recognizes the responsibility of all church members in terms of self-propagation. All members will participate in the ministry of the church. This will not just be a matter of evangelism, but a full ministry of service and proclamation. This ministry will grow as the Spirit equips the church through the gifts bestowed on its members. Bible studies like those proposed by Nevius, would ensure a Spirit-filled and mature congregation, able to minister not only to one another, but also to those outside the church.

"Self-support would also be a natural development. This could mean that the local people would contribute to the support of the missionaries. But as Paul pointed out, this is not essential, and it must not become a burden to the people. What is essential is that they should learn to participate in supporting the total ministry of the church. This may include participating in the building of church buildings and other facilities, contributing to the wages of new church workers, and providing what is necessary for the ministry of mercy" (*The Indigenous Principle . . .*, pp. 88, 89).

We shall continue these studies, D.V., with an examination of the views of Rufus Anderson, an American contemporary of Henry Venn.

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## ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

## Now: 1984

Many have been awaiting 1984 with some degree of trepidation. A novel was written a number of years ago about this date. It was a story of a nation under total domination by government (Big Brother). The story itself reminded one even of the account found in Revelation 13: the two beasts which arose from land and sea to dominate all creatures. There are those today who debate whether this version of 1984 is really here. Some indications of what 1984 brings are pointed out in *Perspectives in Covenant Education*. The editor, Miss Agatha Lubbers, points out that new government laws require church and school to withhold social security taxes from teachers' and ministers' salaries. The church or school are required to withhold 6.7% of the employee's salary, and must in addition, pay 7% of the employee's salary. There are

those who contend, with some degree of justification, that the very people who insist on separation of church and state in many areas, still insist that the church (school) collect the taxes for the state.

The same publication quotes a more disturbing development from the *Religious Liberty Amendment*. I quote part of that quotation:

U.S. District Court Judge George Hart ruled July 8 in Washington, D.C. that the Internal Revenue Service must impose racial rules on Christian Schools. At the present time, his order applies only to the private and religious schools in Mississippi because of a private school racial discrimination case originating there in 1969. Obviously, a U.S. federal court judge cannot establish a federal court ruling that applies to one state only. His decree for Mississippi will, in short order, become the law in every state. Judge Hart has



ordered the IRS to impose stiff affirmative action guidelines on Christian schools that have come into existence or have increased in their student enrollments from the time the public schools began racial desegregation — a time frame that may be different in each area of the country. Judge Hart's affirmative action guidelines would generally not apply to those Christian schools established prior to the mid-fifties which have not increased in enrollment since that time — a rare Christian school indeed. Judge Hart has, in effect, decreed that all Christian schools that have come into existence since public school desegregation are presumed "guilty" of racial discrimination. The "guilty" Christian school may have a clear non-racial discrimination policy but this alone is not adequate. The new affirmative action guidelines will establish a government formula for racially balancing the student body, the faculty, the school board and/or church board. Failure to comply will mean the loss of tax-exemption. Contributions will no longer be tax-deductible. If the school is under corporate auspices of a church (80% of our schools are church sponsored), the entire church will lose its tax-exemption. This is a very serious matter. It is also a serious matter for independent religious schools.

Judge Hart is ignoring the religious liberty implications in his ruling. The *Green vs. Regan* case as it is called, makes no distinction between private schools and religious ministry schools . . .

If the above is strictly applied, it means that we too lose tax exemption for our schools — and likely for our churches as well. To retain tax exemption under this ruling one would have to receive teachers, students, and board members (a certain proportion) who were not of Reformed confession — as long as they were black. One might even have to pay their tuition in order to entice these to come: part of the "stiff affirmative action" demanded. While we have never, to the best of my knowledge, refused students, teachers, or board members on the basis of color, we are emphatically discriminatory with respect to religion — and, after all, what else would one expect of a church or Christian school? To deny one the right to maintain religious convictions in church or school when it comes to a "desegregation" of races, would be a horrible restriction of one's religious freedom in this country.

The above might mean the loss of tax-exemption if one maintains principle. But the attack against Christian schools has come from another angle as well. Perhaps the attack is simply instigated by an overly zealous state bureaucrat (perhaps not), yet it indicates what may well shortly come upon all Christian schools and churches. This is not simply a question of tax-exemption, but of obeying the laws — or being shut down, fined, or imprisoned. The Grand Rapids (Mi.) Baptist Academy recently (Nov. 28, 1983) sent a letter to its supporters in which it stated:

Will you please *pray* for Baptist Academy? I mean earnestly pray!

Currently, the Academy is being challenged by the Michigan Civil Rights Department — initiated by the A.C.L.U., over "illegal" questions on our employment applications.

We have been ordered to remove from our application forms all questions regarding Christian experience and Christian standards.

It is now illegal, they say, for us to use "religion" as a qualification of employment. Technically, we may neither solicit information on an application form, nor may we legally ask those questions in an interview . . .

. . . I am asking every one of our 5,300 friends who will be receiving this letter to join with me in earnest prayer for God's wisdom and direction.

Our board will be prayerfully and carefully charting the course that we believe God would have us take in the near future.

I am sure you will agree with me that when the A.C.L.U. or the Civil Rights Department begins to encroach upon our philosophy, the very reason for our existence is being threatened! . . .

I wrote to the Baptist Academy for further information. They sent a copy of the letter they received from the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. In part, the letter stated:

I have recently reviewed your Employment Application. There are several questions which are unlawful under Michigan Law and must be removed. Specifically, they are all inquiries into a person's marital status: Item II on your application entitled "Christian Experience" as well as "Employee-Board Standard of Excellence for Grand Rapids Baptist Academy."

Further you need to eliminate inquiry into an applicant's military service record and ask if a person has had experience in the Armed Forces of the United States or in a State Militia or whether they have served a particular branch of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, etc.

Please submit a revised copy of your application to me by July 25, 1983 . . .

In a personal letter which accompanied the information, the writer stated:

Finally, I would like to add that at this time we are not crusading for a letter writing campaign to our legislators. We are simply asking God to intervene for us at this time by either causing the men to back down or by giving us direction as to what court action we should be taking. I am grateful to God for a Christian attorney who is of reputable character who has offered to defend us free of charge, all the way to the Supreme Court if need be . . .

So — what is 1984 to bring? Are we ready to face the financial consequences of maintaining principle over against government restrictions? Will we be able to bear the financial burden of loss of tax



exemption? Will some of us be fined or imprisoned for not following the directions of "Civil Rights Commissions"? 1984 will be a challenging year —

and by the grace of our God, we will stand in the face of all opposition.

## Troubles in Canada too

Not only does 1984 mark possible important developments in this land, but in Canada too the Christian schools face their problems. In British Columbia, where Christian schools are funded in part by the government, the government is placing added and objectionable restrictions on the schools. *Calvinist Contact*, Nov. 11, 1983, writes:

The Society of Christian Schools has taken a firm stand on the matter of government exams for grade 12s.

In response to the insistence by the provincial government that all grade 12s must write government examinations next June the society has begun to explain to its constituent schools why it is that Christian schools need to hold on to their freedom to determine their own curriculum. It has said to the Minister of Education, Mr. Heinrich, that it would be unfair to ask their students to write the government exams since their programs differ from public school programs.

Mr. Harro Van Brummelen, Curriculum Coordinator of the BC Christian schools, writes in *The Link* that trying to compare how Christian schools fare in public exams is like trying to judge a pear on how closely it resembles an apple. "History has shown, especially in The Netherlands, that writing government exams erodes the uniqueness of Christian schools," he writes.

"If the government lays the track, the Christian school 'train' can only follow its direction . . . ."

. . . If the matter cannot be resolved, and Christian schools do not have their students write the public exams, the schools may be reclassified by the government as group 1 schools at the grade 12 or possibly also grade 11 level. That means they have lost their funding at these levels and the family tuition may rise by \$300.

It is just another instance where government funding results in increased government control and direction.

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## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

### Our Order of Worship

*Prof. H. Hanko*

We are now, after several introductory articles, to enter into the various elements of our worship in God's house.

Before we do this, however, I want to remind you that the Scriptures, while laying down fundamental principles of worship, nevertheless allow for a great deal of freedom in various elements which go to form our order of worship. The Scriptures do not, in every instance, specify exactly what elements ought to be included in the worship services and what elements ought not be included. The Scriptures do not give us the *order* in which various elements must follow upon each other. The Scriptures do not, in every case, specify *how* each element must be carried out. There is, e.g., freedom in the use of different benedictions found in Scrip-

ture. We may not allow ourselves to become legalistic in these matters, but must preserve the freedom which Scripture itself gives to us.

The underlying principle which must, therefore, govern our determination of the order of worship is the principle of the edification of the congregation. Depending upon the circumstances in which a congregation finds itself, each congregation must, under the direction of the Consistory, decide for itself its order of worship. It must decide this on the basis of the principle of what can best serve the edification of the congregation as the congregation comes together to worship God. While, in a certain sense, this is a subjective judgment, it must be remembered that it is (and ought to be) the judgment of the sanctified consciences of God's people.



It is because there is liberty in these matters that in this article and the following articles, I will be giving my own personal judgment in some matters. I do this to provoke the members of the church of Christ to discuss these matters among themselves so that whatever may be the order of worship which a congregation follows, it is an order of worship which the congregation *intelligently* follows. The saints ought to know what they are doing when they worship and why they do things in their worship services the way they do. You may not, therefore, always agree; but at least know *why* you do not agree.

One final remark. The worship services are under the direction and control of the Consistory. For that reason, the order of worship and any subsequent changes ought to be determined and made by the Consistory itself. This does not, however, preclude the possibility of the Consistory submitting changes to the congregation for its approval or disapproval. There is no reason why the congregation cannot be actively engaged in these determinations, as long as the Consistory retains control, i.e., as long as the Consistory considers carefully any changes before they are submitted and proposes specific changes to be made.

Turning then to the order of worship itself, there are various actions which take place before the worship services actually begin. There are three of them which we purpose to discuss in this article: the meeting of the Consistory before the service; the prayer of the individual members before the service; and the organ playing which serves as a prelude to the service. We will discuss each in turn.

It is becoming increasingly common today to depart from the practice of having the Consistory meet separately before the service. There are, of course, denominations in which this has never been done, but it is a tradition within Reformed Churches. In many instances these latter churches no longer do this. The elders and deacons come in just as the rest of the congregation and sit with their families. In some of our churches, although the Consistory meets together before the service either the deacons alone or both the elders and deacons sit with their families during the worship service, each officebearer finding his own family when he comes with the minister into the congregation.

There is no rule of Scripture which must be followed here and each congregation may decide this on its own. We, however, favor the meeting of the Consistory before the service. The reasons are the following. In the first place, this practice emphasizes the fact that the Consistory is in charge of the service and under its direction. It is through the offices that Christ is present in the congregation,

and the congregation is reminded of this when the Consistory meets together before the service and comes in together. In the second place, this becomes increasingly important as our modern culture loses all sense of the proper relationships of authority and obedience — also in the church of Christ. Christ has placed our officebearers over the congregation in positions of authority. Scripture is clear on this. The Consistory occupies, therefore, a special place in the worship service and in the congregation, and this special place is underscored by the separate meeting of the Consistory before the service, by their entrance with the minister, and by their sitting together. In the third place, meeting together before the service gives the Consistory opportunity to pray before the service. This practice, still followed in our congregations, is not of ancient origin. It began during the time of the *Afscheiding* of 1834 when our fathers were persecuted by the government for separation from the State Church and the worship services were often interrupted either by soldiers or hoodlums who tried to prevent the services from continuing in *Afscheiding* Churches. The Consistory prayed together before the service to ask God's blessing upon the congregation so that the congregation could meet without harassment, interruption, and intervention of wicked men. Nevertheless, it is a good thing that those who are in charge of the worship service meet together before the service to ask God's blessing upon the gathering of the congregation, even though now we do not face these persecutions.

It is perhaps not superfluous to add here that the prayers of the various Consistory members before the service ought to reflect this. Sometimes prayers are altogether too long. Those praying bring all the general and particular needs of the congregation and its members before the throne of grace, including also petitions for the whole of Christendom. This is not necessary. A short and simple prayer asking God's blessing upon the minister and the congregation is enough.

Not only does the Consistory pray before the service, but it is generally customary among us that the confessing believers also pray when they enter the sanctuary. There are a few remarks which can also be made in this connection.

In the first place, you will notice that I mentioned that the custom is for *confessing* believers to pray. I have never been able to understand why this is done, i.e., why these prayers are limited to confessing believers. We believe, as I wrote in my last article, that our children must also gather together with their families to worship. They with us are included in the covenant of grace, and they with us can confidently expect God's blessing upon them as



they too worship. Why is it then that we practice the custom of telling our children to pray only after they have made confession of faith? There is no reason for this. Also our children, when they become old enough to pray themselves, ought to be told to pray before the service. They will have to be instructed in why to pray and what to pray, but that they should pray is an obvious fact.

In the second place, there is a difference of opinion among us whether the people of God should pray as soon as they are seated in their pews, or whether the whole congregation should pray together after the Consistory has taken its seat and the minister has entered the pulpit. If the latter practice is followed, the minister usually summons the congregation to communal silent prayer which is brought to a conclusion by the organist playing, "Hear Our Prayer, O Lord."

The arguments which are made in favor of the latter practice are: 1) This communal prayer is an expression of the communion of the saints. 2) It avoids disturbances in our prayers by others entering the auditorium or even waiting to enter the pew where we are sitting.

The arguments against this practice are: 1) It makes these prayers a part of the worship service proper which they are not intended to be. This argument seems to be somewhat weighty. 2) It limits the time of prayer by means of an arbitrarily determined point of stopping. This argument also carries some weight. When I come into the Lord's

house on the Sabbath, there are times when I need special time to pray, to cast away the cares of life, to put from my mind problems which may have risen in the early hours of the Sabbath Day, to put myself into a spiritual frame of mind and heart to worship properly. It is extraordinarily annoying then, when I have not yet finished praying and the organ tells me, "Time's up. Quit praying."

In the light of these considerations, it is best, I think, that God's people bring their prayers to God's throne when they enter the pew. There are always distractions if we allow ourselves to be influenced by them, and the ushers can see to it that people praying are not disturbed by others entering the pew.

While it is certainly true that these prayers are the individual prayers of the believer as he, before God's face, seeks to enter the proper mood for worship, the child of God ought not to forget that these prayers also ought to be for his pastor who must bring the Word in that service, for his officebearers under whose direction he worships, for his family which sits with him, and for the saints who are gathered with him and who join with him in the communion of the people of God.

These prayers too often become mere custom or habit. But from my own experience, I can testify that they are very important and ought not to be taken lightly.

Next time, the Lord willing, we will discuss the organ prelude to the worship service.

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## TRANSLATED TREASURES

# A Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church

*Dr. A. Kuyper*

(Kuyper has begun discussing what is actually involved when an individual breaks with his own church. He emphasizes strongly the spiritual frame of mind which a person must possess if he is to engage in church reformation. He has discussed this already in the last article which appeared, and he continues that discussion now.)

Also here one's spiritual point of departure must be the personal trembling of the soul over one's own sin, and dismay concerning the guilt of the people of the Lord.

This dismay shall of itself result in an inflowing of more grace and spiritual awakening because,

"He gives grace to the humble." And the reformation of the church shall in this way begin where it always must begin, with the reformation of one's own heart and life.

A new conversion to the living God and a renewal of the covenant with the God of our comfort for ourselves and others are the proof that our thirst for church reformation does not proceed from the opinion that we are better than others, but, on the contrary, from the deep conviction that our guilt above all invokes the judgment of God.

From such personal reformation, reformation



proceeds to one's own household. "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

And just as a circle on the water spreads out in widening circles, so also that reforming movement spreads out of itself in the yet wider circle of the communal church.

As much as in him lies, he shall not rebuke that church from a lofty position, but rather with a penetrating earnestness, and admonish and pray as if God through him beseeched, "Be reconciled to God!" If the Lord gives him the ability, then he shall himself bring the matters to his consistory in which the love for the Lord's name must be acknowledged. He himself, not out of pride, but out of a quiet subjection to God's Word, must refuse to do what is not good before God, and do what must be done according to God's Word, even if men attempt to prevent him. If this brings reviling, if this causes him suffering, he will willingly bear that reviling, "Joyful that he is considered worthy to suffer reviling for Christ's sake." And if it finally comes to the point that he cannot find in the public worship of his church the administration of the means of grace for himself and his family, he shall then weigh if perhaps the sickness of the church is only a temporary faltering, in which case, by himself, setting the hand to the plow, he must attempt to restore the church as a grieving church. And finally, where all these means are exhausted by every attempt for a milder reformation, and it becomes very evident that he only arouses hate against God's name and His Word, he shall have to decide the question, if God the Lord will give him the light to see clearly whether his church has indeed become the synagogue of Satan.

And then if he must answer that question, along the way not of argument and reasoning, but of penance and personal conversion, alas, with a terrible yes, then it speaks for itself that a letter of separation must be sent and the break has taken place.

This does not mean, however, that one's departure has completed the task of reformation.

He who suffers shipwreck and saves himself without caring about his fellows who are shipwrecked shall be guilty of hard-heartedness. We must draw from the image of Him according to Whose image we are renewed, not hard-heartedness but tender love and inner mercy.

When one departs he carries the obligation to persuade also his brothers to depart. Going through the flames, the fireman sometimes saves from the flames a child or a woman strange to him. That, children of God, is the humiliating example in which your holy calling is indicated.

But even so, the work of reformation is not at an end.

Good, let it be, that the church in which you were born and baptized has now become, according to your firm conviction, the synagogue of Satan. But where is then the true church?

Surely you must not remain by yourself.

Unless it appears that no church of Christ can be manifested in your locality, you must seek that church. And if it is not there, you must attempt, if it be with God's help, to bring it to manifestation.

Three possibilities follow from this.

You find in your locale another church which does not imitate the marks of the true church, but shows them in her life. Then your calling would be to entreat the brethren of that church that they would take you and your family into their fellowship after public confession of your faith.

You do not find such a church in your locale. Then you would be obligated, along with those who are as equally convinced as you are, to institute the church of God in your locale on the basis of your common confession.

Finally, if this seems impossible in the long run, then you must seek the occasion to move elsewhere to a place where the church of Christ exists.

And if each of these three is impossible so that you must stay where you are and are forced to live without a church, then it is your calling to manifest more strongly your own house-church so that the administration of the means of grace may be restored to you from God as a result of your humble prayer.

But now place over against this way of the godly the steep path of superficial members, and see what a chasm yawns between them. You hear them in shrill words shriek concerning errors in the abuse of the church, but without any recognition of God's judgment in this and without appreciating God's chastising hand. This zeal has no dejection of the soul and eliminates all consciousness of one's own guilt. It takes on much more the character of a proud censure of others and is far from penance and conversion. There is then no spiritual discernment, but a spiritual judging. Not out of the pressure of the soul nor with a bleeding heart, but with excitement, in recklessness and over-eagerness, one breaks the bond with his own church by means of a coldly-worded letter. He goes about this entirely without prayer and sincerity and with unbelievable lightheartedness. The coat had become too soiled; see, he lays it off and slips a new coat on the members.

This is not said to pass judgment on anyone's



transfer to another church. Only the One Who knows the hearts judges. Even the best man has to reproach himself all too strongly for lightheartedness in reformational work and is not in a position to judge others. He who puts his hand in his own bosom has enough with his own leprosy. But what must be emphasized is the twofold emphasis which can bring to separation, and of which the one is equally as praiseworthy and costly as the other merits censure and blame.

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It still belongs to this paragraph to describe the particular instances which can lead to a breaking of the connection between a church and one's self.

Four instances must be mentioned here.

1) Not a common member but a minister of the Word feels compelled to reject his church as the false church.

A twofold particular obligation follows from such a conviction. First of all, a minister has the obligation to warn the faithful from the pulpit and to take them along with him. Secondly, he has the obligation to seek the ministry of the Word elsewhere in a true church or in his own locale to bring to manifestation a new church structure. The minister must not bury his talent, and his ordination remains unharmed — even when the church which has ordained him has changed into a false synagogue of Satan.

2) Not a brother but a sister considers that she must leave her church which has become a synagogue of Satan.

It follows from her peculiar position as a woman that she may not take leadership in the matter, and must restrict herself to warning in private, and must depart the church by herself.

3) One is excommunicated from one's own ecclesiastical fellowship.

It can happen, e.g., that the Synod of the State Church now or in the future, by a final sentence, cuts me off and denies me my church membership. In the meantime it is by no means settled that the church of Amsterdam in which I live and to which I belong has become a synagogue of Satan.

Just because an ecclesiastical body of the church federation casts me out, my church in which I live need not cease to be the true church.

It is of the utmost importance to consider this point.

Nothing provokes us more quickly to an unjust judgment concerning the state of our own churches than to be ejected from the denomination. In such a moment one can hardly imagine anything else than that the church which ejected me is a synagogue of Satan. And yet it becomes a synagogue of Satan not because it ejects us, but because it ejects Christ.

And it is true that the ejection of a minister of the Lord and also the ejection of an elect can be an ejection of Christ, but certainly this is not absolutely so. At least the consistory of our church can remain outside the controversy and only the church federation can be guilty.

Therefore it appears to us that one who is thus ejected by a higher gathering, 1) has to wait to see whether his own consistory lends itself to the execution of the sentence. If it does not and it permits me to remain in the joy of the administration of the means of grace without taking my name from its book or giving publicity to the matter, I can still continue to live as if there was no mention of ejection. 2) If his own consistory executes the sentence on him then he ought to rally the like-minded with him and set up an aggrieved church with them. 3) And only when he is prevented from fulfilling his office may he proceed to reject his church and establish a new church.

With this we conclude our discussion of a consistory directly cutting off a member.

Fourthly, a minister of the Word may be set outside his office and outside his membership by the ecclesiastical power, not for bad conduct, but because of his maintenance of God's Word.

Also in that case it is not immediately settled that the church to which this minister of the Word belongs has become a synagogue of Satan. It may be that a hostile higher church government passed this sentence without one's own church consenting to it. And it could also be that one's own church, ensnared by wrong but legal ideas, or also out of fear, leaves him in the lurch. But it does not by any means follow that his own church would have cast him out. It can be turned into a synagogue of Satan, but this does not follow of itself from his deposition. Therefore we are of the opinion that such an ejected minister must still continue with the preaching of the Word in the church if possible. But if this is not possible, then he must continue outside the church. Then he, in case his consistory withdraws from this ministry, has to establish an aggrieved church. And if this also is prevented, he has to seek a ministry of the Word elsewhere or lead out the faithful and form a new church.

### NOTICE!!!

Beverly Christian School is in need of two elementary school teachers for the 1984-1985 school year. You must be willing to work in an urban setting with minority students and you must be heartily committed to the Reformed faith. Please write to: Beverly Christian School, 345 S. Woods Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90022, or phone (213) 267-1635.

### ANNOUNCEMENT!!!

The mailing address of the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church is: Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church  
c/o Sid Miedema  
8589 Homrich  
Byron Center, MI 49315



## News From Our Churches

December 29, 1983

First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids has changed the end of their worship service. The December 18, 1983 bulletin reads, "The consistory has decided to return to the practice of shaking the pastor's hand on the platform after each service. This should help those in the rear of the auditorium to know when the approbation of the sermon is finished so that the congregation may begin its exit."

According to the December 25 bulletin of First Protestant Reformed Church, "Professor Decker has received the call to 'Come over and help us' from our Byron Center Congregation." And at the New Year's Eve service at First Church it was announced that Rev. Van Overloop had declined the call to serve as missionary to Jamaica.

The Evangelism Committee of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church has printed another pamphlet and included a brief description of its contents. Their December 11, 1983 bulletin reads, "Our Evangelism Committee has published a new pamphlet, 'Try the Spirits (A Reformed Look at Pentecostalism).' Pentecostalism, or the charismatic movement, is one of the most significant and popular departures from the Faith in Protestantism, in the last hundred years. Our pamphlet answers, from Scripture, Pentecostalism's appeals to Scripture for its basic teachings (Holy Spirit Baptism and tongues-speaking). It shows the fundamental opposition between Pentecostalism and the Reformed Faith. It ends with a brief description of family, friends, and acquaintances who are tempted by Pentecostalism . . ."

Sometimes a bulletin announcement has to wait a couple of months before there is room to use it. First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan put this announcement in their October 30, 1983 bulletin: ". . . Our monthly collection for the Evangelism Fund . . . is running very low since our monthly offerings have not covered the expenses. The Evangelism Committee buys nine subscriptions to the *Standard Bearer* which they distribute to people outside our church who are interested in the truth. They also buy tapes and mail recordings of our worship service to those who ask for them and place a weekly advertisement in the Holland SENTINEL. These projects as well as

others cost money. May we remember this church extension work as we give freely according as the Lord has prospered us."

Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church put this notice in their December 11, 1983 bulletin: "For the time being the special offering on the third Sunday of each month will be for the Activities Committee so as to cover the expenses of the radio broadcast." They sponsor a broadcast called the "Christian Dialog" which is on every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, at 11:30 a.m., on WKPR.

The Reformed Witness Hour is still typesetting its radio sermons. Instead of printing these sermons, they are now being produced on a high quality mimeograph stencil at considerably less expense. You should see the March through April sermons coming out soon.

In Hope Protestant Reformed Church's bulletin of December 25, this appeared: "The Reformed Witness Committee has a need for old *Standard Bearers*, *Beacon Lights* and Sunday School papers to send to Africa. Please give them to Mr. Jacob Kuiper."

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church received this letter from Covenant Christian School of Lynden, Washington: ". . . We as a board wish to convey our appreciation for the monetary gift from Covenant Protestant Reformed Church. You can be assured the gift is needed and will be put to good use . . . We are located in the heart of the dairyland only a few miles from . . . Lynden. Classes are held in what was once a building used as a meeting place for the 'Grange' . . . We are in our sixth year of existence and have a total enrollment of 54 students, 38 of which are elementary and 16 in the high school . . ."

I will end with a quote from Newsletter No. 5 of the Randolph Protestant Reformed School Society. "And here too there must be agreement with the church and home. What confusion for the child if he is taught one thing in the home and church but another thing in the school! . . . What confusion if the school contradicts what the child learns in the home and church to be the proper way of serving God, of living antithetically in the world, of praying! . . . Above all we must have unity among the church, home and school." DH