

# THE STANDARD BEARER

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**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

*As we begin our sixty-fourth year of publication, our sincere and earnest prayer is that our covenant God may guide us and equip us to continue to hold aloft the standard of the truth, in harmony with His Word and our Reformed creeds.*

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## Meditation

Cornelius Hanko

# Thy Kingdom Come

*Ques. 123. Which is the second petition?*

*Ans. "Thy kingdom come"; that is, rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to thee; preserve and increase thy church; destroy the works of the devil, and all violence that would exalt itself against thee; and also, all wicked counsels devised against thy holy word; till the full perfection of thy kingdom take place, wherein thou shalt be all in all. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 48*

Our Father, which art in heaven.  
Our foremost desire is that Thy Name be hallowed, highly exalted above and beyond all that is creature, that all eternity may declare Thy praises, as the eternal,

*Cornelius Hanko is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*

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infinite, almighty, ever blessed, adorable God!

Thou art the Holy One of Israel, who hast exalted Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, with the glory which He had with Thee before the world was. He now has a Name which is above all names, with all power entrusted to Him over all the works of Thy hands.

Thou hast promised to Him and to us as heirs of salvation the kingdom that abides forever. And Thou hast created in our hearts an abiding desire, an eager expectation and longing for that kingdom.

Thou teachest us to pray: "Thy kingdom come."

No, we do not join our voices with the clamor so often heard in ecclesiastical circles. We are not a part of those who might formulate their prayers somewhat like this: "O great Father of all mankind, help us to win souls for Christ, that the whole world may turn to Thee in a universal revival, all powers of communism and atheism may learn to bow before King Jesus, and He may reign supreme in every country and every nation, so controlling all commerce and industry, all business and labor, also all the economic and social affairs among us, that wars and race hatred may be banished from the earth, a universal peace may be established, sickness and death may be overcome, prosperity may be shared by all alike, and a paradise may be created for all races and peoples here on earth for ages to come."

Indeed, we do not seek a kingdom in which man is exalted to the throne, in which all activities center about man, that man may be great and powerful, living an abundant life of carnal satisfaction, so that he is sufficient unto himself. Our selfish ambitions are not the goal we strive for. We do not seek ourselves. But in all sincerity of heart we pray: Thy kingdom come, in which Thou art all in all!

Thou, Father hast decreed and founded Thy very own kingdom, based on the eternal principle of mutual love. Thy love for Thyself, and for Thy Son Jesus Christ as Head over all, and for the family

Thou givest Him, and Thy love in them responding to Thee and to Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, forms the basis for Thy everlasting kingdom; for of Thee, and through Thee, and unto Thee are all praise and glory forever and ever. Thou hast chosen Thy subjects with sovereign wisdom and infinite love, appointing for each his or her own place in that realm as devoted servants, redeemed by the blood of Calvary, and drawn from death into life, to worship and adore Thee, the ever-blessed God.

Thou hast sent Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ into our world, as a shining light in a world of sin and death, made like unto us, in order that we may be made like unto Thee. Thou hast cast Him into the horrible darkness of Thy wrath at Calvary, to bring for us the eternal day. As the mighty Conqueror over all the powers of darkness He arose from the grave and ascended to heaven on His great coronation day. He now lives and reigns in the heavens to put to naught all the powers of darkness and to bring His people unto Himself, where we will live and reign with Him forever in the new creation. Thy kingdom is also the kingdom of Thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.

By Thy Spirit in our hearts we become new creatures, with the life of Christ within us, willing subjects of the kingdom of heaven. Thou hast made us pilgrims and strangers on the earth, citizens of the heavenly realm, with our home in the heavens. By Thy grace we seek the things above, where Christ is, for our lives are hidden with Christ in Thee.

Therefore our attachment can no longer be to the things below. We have here no abiding city, but we seek one to come. We know that Thy kingdom will not come through outward display, for it is already within us, within our hearts. According to the new principle of life within us we seek the heavenly kingdom, in the world to come, where we shall be with Christ, dwelling in Father's House, beholding and reflecting Father's glory, enjoying to the full covenant fellowship with Thee our God, to the praise of the glory of Thy grace in Christ Jesus.

With that incentive in our hearts we pray: Thy kingdom come.

With an eye of faith we see Thy promise being realized in the coming of Thy kingdom throughout the ages.

Already in paradise our first parents experienced the blessed covenant relationship with Thee as their sovereign Friend, and themselves capable of being Thy friend-servants. Adam was king over the entire earthly creation, with Eve as his helper. The whole earth, as far as eye could see, was his domain, to keep and to care for in Thy fear. When he fell, Thou didst not allow Thy sovereign rule to cease, but Thou didst reveal the wonder of Thy grace in having prepared Christ Jesus, as our new representative Head, as appointed to be Lord over all for our sakes, that we may live forever to Thy glory.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Shepherd-kings, were strangers on the earth, citizens of a better kingdom, and types of the great Shepherd-King Who was still to come. Jacob longed for His day, as he prophesied that "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the nations be." (Gen. 49:10)

Thou didst bring Israel out of the house of bondage to make of them a nation, a theocracy, and gavest them the land of Canaan as their inheritance, driving out Thy enemies before them. Thou gavest them David, a man after Thine own heart, who fought the battles against Thy enemies and overcame them, as a type of David's Son who would eternally sit upon Thy Throne. In Thy faithfulness Thou gavest David a son, Solomon, who was the type of Christ, the great Prince of Peace, whose riches are unfathomable, and whose kingdom knows no end.

In the fulness of time Jesus was born, sought out by the wisemen as the newly born King of the Jews. John the Baptist announced His coming, assuring Israel that the



kingdom of heaven was at hand. Christ Himself spoke of the great wedding feast of the King's Son, about to begin, as a feast of bounties and blessings that endure forever.

The charter of the kingdom is summed up in the ten commandments, which require of the citizens: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and thy neighbor as thyself." The citizens of the kingdom are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

For that kingdom our hearts long in eager anticipation. Therefore we pray: Thy kingdom come!

Our desire is: "So rule us by Thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more unto Thee."

Thou hast adopted us as sons and daughters in Thy House, citizens of the heavenly kingdom, and heirs of the world to come. Thou hast created within us the true obedience, as subject unto Thee, and to Thee only. Thou hast entrusted to us Thy Word as our sure Guide on the narrow way that leads to Thee above. Thou requirest of us child-like submission, complete self-surrender, humble trust. Yet we are still in the flesh; sin wars in our members.

Therefore we pray for Thy sustaining grace that we may overcome the sins of our flesh and gain the victory over sin and death through Thy mercies and goodness.

We also ask of Thee: "Preserve and increase Thy church." As a militant church we are still surrounded by enemies, who undermine the truth of Thy holy Word, who create a spirit of complacency among Thy people, proclaiming peace where there is no peace. Give Thy church valiant leaders who spur Thy people on to fight the battle of faith as soldiers of the cross, even when it involves suffering, shame, or death.

Gather Thy chosen out of every nation of the earth, bringing them to a unity of faith on the sound foundation of the Scriptures, ready to stand even in this last day. Bless the labors of Thy servants who proclaim Thy Word on the mission field, that they may see that Thou art using them unto the gathering of Thy church and the coming of Thy kingdom. Preserve Thy church also in the line of generations of believers, so that we may not be wiped out in our generations, but may see Thy promises realized also in and through us, that Thou wilt be our God and the God of our seed after us.

Moreover, we ask: "Destroy the works of the devil, and all violence which would exalt itself against Thee, and also all wicked counsels devised against Thy holy Word."

The devil uses his cunningly devised deceptions to the utmost, since he knows that his time is limited. His willing cohorts, both outside and within the church, exalt science above the Scriptures, introduce the foolish philosophies of unbelief, and contrive to corrupt the Scriptures to mislead the unwary. These are all obvious forerunners of the Man of Sin, whose coming becomes increasingly obvious. These powers of darkness always have and always will outnumber the saints on earth. Their massive host seems to overwhelm us. Yet we know Thou art always at our right hand. With Thee at our side we always far outnumber and are far stronger than any enemy that can ever assault us. We can confidently sing:

To Thee, O Lord, I fly, and on  
Thy help depend;  
Thou art my Lord and King  
Most High;

Do Thou my soul defend.  
A heritage for me Jehovah  
will remain;

My portion rich and full is He,  
My might He will maintain.

Though still waiting, we confidently expect "the full perfection of Thy kingdom, where Thou shalt be all in all."

In that assurance we lift our prayers to heaven, saying: "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly." Amen. □

## Editorials

### Beginning Our Sixty-fourth Year A Future Change More About "Evolution At Dordt College" A Letter From Dordt College

#### Beginning Our Sixty-fourth Year:

Each year, beginning with 1924, when our *Standard Bearer* first made its appearance — and with that appearance produced both joy and consternation — our October 1 issue marks the beginning of a new volume-year for our magazine: this time, Volume 64.

Usually there are some changes with that new beginning; and this year is no exception.

The first and most obvious change this year is in the dress, or format, of our magazine, a change which you undoubtedly began to notice as soon as you picked up your mail. For several months we have been



working with Mr. Jeff Steenholdt, a commercial artist who is a member of our Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church and who has been responsible for the cover and jacket art of most of our RFPA books. He began with suggestions for a new cover page, and then made some further suggestions to "dress up" our entire format, including a change to a 3-column format and a change of type-style — all in the interest not only of making our magazine more attractive but also more readable. We hope you like the changes.

Next are some changes in staff, in staff-appointments, and in departments. As some of you undoubtedly know, our Staff meets once a year in late May or early June. At the time of this meeting all appointments or reappointments of staff personnel are made, and decisions are made as to the various departments for the new volume-year. After that it is left to the Editor-in-chief to carry out these decisions, to notify everyone of his duties, and to try to plan every issue and get it to the printer on time. The *Standard Bearer* has no full-time help nor paid staff. This is the way we have operated for all the years of our existence.

This year there are several changes.

The first of these is the retirement of the Rev. Herman Veldman as a department editor. The Rev. Veldman has been a faithful and very regular contributor to our magazine for many, many years. Since late 1947, at the time when the Rev. Herman Hoeksema was incapacitated by a stroke, the Rev. Veldman has contributed, I believe, regularly without a letup. But before that time he also wrote on a more or less regular basis. Further, he was always willing to write; and he was always prompt about sending in his contributions. At our Staff Meeting a motion was passed to "express the Staff's appreciation for his faithful writing in the past forty years." That should have been "forty-plus" years. We hereby publicly express that appreciation. The Rev. Ronald Hanko was appointed to assume sole responsibility for the department *Taking Heed To The Doctrine*.

Another change involves our Meditation department. The Rev. Cornelius Hanko will complete his current series of meditations on the Heidelberg Catechism, D.V., and after that the Rev. James Slopsema will be solely responsible for Meditations. This does not mean, however, that the Rev. Hanko will no more write. For one thing, he remains responsible for our Question Box department. And, speaking of Question Box, he cannot very well write answers unless you send in questions. Send them to me, and I will see that they reach him. Besides, we still hope to have other fruits of the Rev. Hanko's pen.

Still another change involves the reintroduction of the department *Decency and Order*, which will be concerned with our Church Order, and of which the Rev. Ronald Cammenga will be editor. The Rev. Barrett Gritters will take over the rubric *The Strength of Youth*. This, in turn, means that the Rev. A. den Hartog will be solely responsible for the department *In His Fear*. This year the Rev. Gise J. Van Baren will be solely responsible for *All Around Us*. All other departments and writers will be the same. We have also asked four of our ministers, the Revs. R. Van Overloop, S. Houck, K. Hanko, and S. Key, each to contribute a couple guest articles.

One more attempted change has failed, at least for the time being. We had hoped to present some Study Outlines which would be suitable for the Sunday evening discussion groups which are current in some of our churches. However, the two nominees for this department both declined the privilege.

May our faithful covenant God bless our magazine in the coming year!

### **A Future Change**

Among some of our readers, as I know from personal experience, rumors have been flying thick and fast — and some of them, sad to say, very falsely — about the future editorship of our magazine. The Staff was informed that in this issue our readers would be officially informed of the proposed change.

Our Staff has always been a some-

what tenuous and informal organization, and most of the responsibility for the actual publishing of our magazine has come down on the shoulders of the Editor-in-Chief. In all our years we have not even had — not apparently even so much as considered having — as assistant editor.

For several years this has been a concern of mine. Twice we have had a crisis in this respect. The first time was in 1947 when, as mentioned above, the late Rev. Hoeksema suffered a severe stroke. At that time there was no provision for anyone to make substitute arrangements which would insure the continued publication of our magazine. Representing my father, I met with some of the Staff members at the time; and we quickly made arrangements for the late Rev. Vos to write meditations and editorials temporarily (we hoped) and for the Rev. H. Veldman to write for *Our Doctrine*. Then in the period 1963-65, when the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema was still editor-in-chief, we faced another crisis when his health began to decline and he finally died. At that time, because of the close working relationship between my father and me, I was able to help out as acting editor even before I was officially appointed Editor in 1965. In 1984, at my suggestion, the Staff began to work on this problem, thinking first in terms of appointing an Assistant Editor, who would be able to take over in case the Editor were incapacitated. As the subcommittee appointed on this matter studied it, however, it became apparent that as long as the duties of Editor and Managing Editor were combined, the choice of a new Editor would, in the nature of the case, be limited to the immediate Grand Rapids area. The committee therefore recommended to the Staff that these duties be separated, so that a new Editor could be appointed regardless of his place of residence and a Managing Editor could be appointed from the Grand Rapids area, so that he could readily supervise the actual preparation and



production of each issue of the *Standard Bearer*. This proposal was approved by the Staff already in 1985. Thereupon the same sub-committee was instructed to come with nominees, something which was not done until the 1987 Staff meeting.

To help pave the way for the change — and, frankly, to furnish an incentive for action — I submitted the following statement to the Staff after they had re-elected me as Editor this year:

"If the Lord in His providence grants me to serve for another full year as Editor-in-Chief, I will have reached the age of 65 by our next annual Staff meeting. I have reached a decision that after that I will not accept a new appointment as Editor-in-Chief, though I will continue to serve on the Staff in another capacity as you see fit. My reasons are as follows:

1. I will have served officially since 1965 and *de facto* really since 1963.
2. I deem it important for the *Standard Bearer* that in making a transition to a new Editor-in-Chief a crisis situation, such as occurred in 1964-65, should be avoided and that the transition should be orderly.
3. I believe it is in the best interests of our magazine that a younger man take the helm.
4. I would like to have the opportunity to write again for a department rather than to be an editorial writer and a managing editor."

The result of all this was that the Staff elected the Rev. David J. Engelsma, of South Holland, Illinois as Assistant Editor-in-Chief, to assume the duties of Editor-in-Chief beginning, D.V., with the October 1, 1988 issue (Volume 65); and they elected Prof. Robert D. Decker to assume the duties of Managing Editor at that time.

I am happy to report that both have accepted their appointments.

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*Read and  
study the  
Standard Bearer!*

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### More About "Evolution At Dordt College":

[This editorial should have appeared in the September 15 issue. Due to a colossal error on my part, only the very last part of it appeared; and that small part did not make sense by itself. Besides, I had promised Dr. Hulst and Prof. Hodgson that I would publish their letters. My apologies to all concerned. HCH]

The reader will recall that in our June issue I presented evidence (by way of quotations) showing that Prof. Richard G. Hodgson, of Dordt College, teaches evolution. The quotations were from a tape recording of Prof. Hodgson's remarks in the course of a Creation/Evolution debate with Dr. Duane Gish at Hillsdale College.

After the June editorial appeared, I received responses from both Dr. John B. Hulst, President of Dordt College, and from Dr. Hodgson. Dr. Hodgson first sent me a rather lengthy reply. I wrote him to inquire whether he wished to have his reply published, assuring him that *The Standard Bearer* wishes to be fair and was quite willing to publish his reply. Dr. Hodgson replied affirmatively, but later sent me a much briefer reply which he wished to substitute. Dr. Hulst also informed me that he wished to have his letter published, at the same time informing me that the Board of Trustees of Dordt College would reach a decision about the Hodgson matter on August 21, and assuring me that he would send me a copy of that decision.

Here follows, first of all, the letter I received from Dr. Hulst under date of July 8, 1987:

Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema, Editor  
*The Standard Bearer*  
4975 Ivanrest Avenue S.W.  
Grandville, Michigan 49418  
Dear Editor:

I am writing in response to your editorial, "Evolution at Dordt College."

Dordt College is opposed to the theory of evolution, declaring in its statement of purpose that "In the beginning, the Bible tells us, God created all things . . . . The creation belongs to God and is under his sovereign rule . . . ."

Because of our commitment to the biblical doctrine of creation, we were very disturbed by your report of Professor Hodgson's presentation concerning creation and evolution at Hillsdale Conference.

This matter has been brought to the attention of the Board of Trustees of Dordt College and will be dealt with accordingly.

Sincerely,  
(w.s.) J.B. Hulst  
President

Next follows the letter which I received from Dr. Hodgson under date of July 21, 1987:

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema, Editor  
*The Standard Bearer*  
4975 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville, Michigan 49418  
Dear Prof. Hoeksema:

Having just returned from northern Michigan where I have been very busily occupied during the past six weeks, I have had time to think further concerning my response to your editorial, and to my statements made at Hillsdale last April. The reply I sent you a few days ago is rather long, and not as clear and to the point as I should be. *I wish what follows to be printed instead of the earlier letter if that is possible. If it is too late, I then wish to reconsider its publication, in a somewhat revised form.*

I wish to respond to the editorial "Evolution at Dordt College" which appeared in *The Standard Bearer* in June, which reflected upon final remarks I had made at Hillsdale College at the end of a three hour discussion in a hot, humid, stuffy auditorium. Speaking under mounting pressures of a time limit, and with some fatigue, I uttered most of words you printed. (The reconstruction from a student tape is reasonably, but not perfectly accurate.) I am very sorry that my wording on this occasion has caused misunderstanding. (One must remember the context of my words: I had been setting forth, for the sake of discussion, various viewpoints on creation and evolution held by Christians and by humanists. I obviously could not be a proponent of all the views I described, for they differed sharply. I am myself actually an "Old Earth Creationist" strongly influenced by



Charles Hodge, B.B. Warfield, E.J. Young, etc., and have held that position for many years.)

At the close of the evening I was talking about the available *scientific* evidence. I was indicating that at broader taxonomic levels (i.e., above the family taxonomic level) the evidence for evolution was uncertain; that those who are special creationists (including myself!), can make a viable case for their views. I have great difficulty understanding how such a diverse group as mammals, for example, could all be descended from a common ancestor in the Triassic Period, the time of the earliest known mammals.

My sentence which you have transcribed from an admittedly imperfect student tape as "I think that there are some things that strongly suggest evolution as an explanation for a lot of the varieties of life that we find" should have been (and, if in fact I did not say it, I meant to say it) "*microevolution*." (Microevolution is the biological term for small scale changes in species, genera, etc., and was discussed at some length by me in Biblical perspective in the earlier part of the debate). As I indicated that evening, I believe the Sovereign God is able to work through the genetic structures He has created to permit increasing diversity within species, etc., over the passage of time. I had supported this with reference to Acts 17:26 in my opening statement — a fact that my critics want to forget.

My highest desire in life is to be faithful to the God of the Bible, and to walk in all His ways set forth in Scripture. I am sorry some of my words have been misunderstood by fellow Christians. I am also sorry the full scope of what I said that night has not been accurately reported.

Your fellow-laborer in Christ,  
(w.s.) Richard G. Hodgson

At this time I will not comment at length on this matter. I prefer to wait until I have received the decision of the Dordt College Board of Trustees. My comments at this time are as follows:

1) The tape recording of the entire debate was of poor quality, having been made from the audience. Yet I

went over the parts quoted very carefully and repeatedly (and with help and confirmation from others) and even with equipment by means of which I was able to slow down the playing of the cassette. I assure the reader that my transcription is accurate in every essential respect.

2) Dr. Hodgson's insertion of the word *micro* at one point in the quotations does not essentially change matters.

3) Theoretically it may be true that one can adopt the "old earth creationist" (or "progressive creationist") position without adopting evolutionism. In Dr. Hodgson's case, however, it is plain to me, not only from the quotations made in my June 1 editorial but also from the rest of his remarks and from other sources that he teaches evolution. The reader may review for himself the evidence cited in our June 1 issue. I do not see how anyone can deny the facts here.

But we will await the Board of Trustees decision. □

HCH

#### A Letter From Dordt College

Space does not permit further discussion in this issue concerning the matter of "Evolution At Dordt College." However, I received a letter from Dr. John B. Hulst, President of Dordt College, in which he conveys the decision of the Board of Trustees concerning Professor Hodgson's teachings. This letter is reproduced below. Shortly before this went to print, I received a telephone call from Dr. Hulst in which he informed me that the Board of Trustees had taken a further decision concerning Prof. Hodgson's instruction, and that, if possible, he would like that decision published along with this letter.

My editorial comment will be reserved for a later date, except to say that I find Prof. Hodgson's claims, and consequently Dordt's decision to be very unsatisfactory. The letter, under date of September 1, follows:

"Dear Editor:

"On July 17, 1987, I wrote in response to your editorial "Evolution at Dordt College" (*The Standard Bearer*, June 1, 1987), in which you commented on quotations taken

from a presentation by Dordt professor Richard Hodgson at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan.

"In my letter I stated that the matter of Professor Hodgson's position regarding creation and evolution had been brought to the attention of the Board of Trustees of Dordt College and that the issue would be dealt with accordingly.

"Subsequently the Board of Trustees appointed a committee to work with me in dealing with this issue. We (the committee and I, along with other members of the administration) have carried on extensive conversations with Professor Hodgson. As a result of these conversations we were able to formulate a statement which we placed before the Board of Trustees. The Board, after some revisions, adopted the statement which reads as follows:

The Dordt College Board of Trustees, through a duly appointed committee, has met with Professor Richard Hodgson and discussed with him the views he expressed concerning creation and evolution in a conference held at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan on April 10, 1987.

Professor Hodgson has acknowledged, with great sorrow and regret, that he failed to make his position clear and, at many points, spoke in such a manner as to give the impression that he favored an evolutionary interpretation of the origin of the world and mankind.

When asked how he could have been so greatly misunderstood, Professor Hodgson responded by pointing out that the format of the meeting was a debate between himself and Dr. Duane Gish from the Institute for Creation Research in San Diego, California. Since Dr. Gish was presenting the view of "recent creationism," Professor Hodgson was asked to present other views of origins along with the reasoning upon which these views were based.

When asked to state his own position, which he will do in greater detail elsewhere, Professor Hodgson declared that he acknowl-



edges that God is the Creator of the world and of mankind, and that he rejects both evolution and theistic evolution. He further indicated that it is his constant desire to teach only in harmony with the Word of God and the Reformed confessions.

On the basis of our inquiries up to this point, while we remain very concerned about the impressions left at the Hillsdale Conference, we believe that we are justified in retaining Professor Hodgson as a member of the faculty of Dordt College.

"Again, I trust that Dordt's commitment to the biblical doctrine of creation is clear. I trust also that the above statement demonstrates our concern to deal forthrightly with the scientific issues, but always in light of the Word of God as interpreted in the Reformed confessions.

"Sincerely,  
J.B. Hulst, President"

**Addendum:**

Here is an additional decision of the Dordt College Board of Trustees:

"We have addressed the problem which developed because of Professor Hodgson's presentation at the

Hillsdale Conference (April 10, 1987). However, because we remain troubled by statements made at the Conference which could be reflected in his instruction of our students, we, the Dordt College Board of Trustees, have decided to appoint a committee to study and evaluate further Professor Hodgson's position regarding creation and evolution. We do this because we must assure ourselves that the teaching of Professor Hodgson is fully in harmony with the Word of God as interpreted in the Reformed confessions." □

HCH

## All Around Us

Gise J. Van Baren

# Concern About The C.R.C.

That there is deep concern among the "conservatives" in the Christian Reformed Church becomes obvious in reading some of the publications, as *The Outlook*, and *Christian Renewal*. Again and again, these magazines decry the signs of growing apostasy (though few seem to dare to use the word) in that church. A recent issue of *The Outlook*, August 1987, is an example of that great concern. Several articles give instances of disturbing developments. In an article, "Creation and Evolution at Calvin College", the Rev. Randal Lankheet expresses his own great unhappiness:

*The Board of Reformed Fellowship also disagrees with much of what Professor Van Till has written in his book. So, at a recent meeting, the Board discussed how it might help to bring about some clearer understanding of the issues raised in The Fourth Day. It was thought that a debate between Van Till and an*

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*equally knowledgeable scientist taking a different position would most quickly get at the heart of the issues involved. Besides, in a debate format, each scientist could marshal his evidence and show how he reached his particular conclusions. The audience would be able to judge whether the conclusions were warranted by the evidence each man presented.*

*So the secretary of the Board was instructed to write two letters: one to Dr. Van Till of Calvin College and the other to Dr. Gish of the Institute for Creation Research. Dr. Gish immediately responded that he would be happy to come and debate Dr. Van Till. However, Dr. Van Till declined the Board's invitation. So the Board scheduled Dr. Gish as the sole lecturer for that evening . . .*

*I came away from the lecture with a profound sense of gratitude that in Dr. Gish and others we have scientists who are not afraid to take on the evolutionists on their own scientific turf. Surely, as a pastor, I have neither the time nor the expertise to study and to refute evolutionary theories. Thank God for men like Dr. Gish who have that time and expertise.*

*What saddens me is that we did not have the opportunity to hear the other side that night. How helpful it would have been for Professor Van Till or one of his colleagues from one of the science departments to respond to Gish's facts and to his conclusions. Yet, despite pleas from the Board of Reformed Fellowship for a public forum on these important matters, the science professors at Calvin College turned us down. Can it be that these are the same men who frequently champion the cause of free inquiry at Calvin? Or does their definition of free inquiry go only as far as the closed doors of the classroom where they can teach what they want in secret?*

In another article, in which a summary of the decisions of the C.R.C. Synod of 1987 was given, Rev. John Engbers concluded:

*. . . Though there were few major issues, many small decisions concerning the ways in which the CRC will carry on its business through ministers, elders, and deacons will undoubtedly have long-ranging effects on the style and identity of the denomination. The "women's issue" surfaced time and time again in*



the debate and those who wish to open all the offices of the church to women could take great satisfaction and encouragement from the actions of this synod. In my judgment, the CRC will have women serving in all the offices in less than five years, and there are churches waiting in the wings eager to be the first to make such history. The roll call votes, of which there were eleven, were decided by small margins, usually five or six votes. The debate gave clear evidence that we are a divided house; in fact, one often wonders how it is possible for such widely divergent views to co-exist in the same denomination. This was a synod that had its mind already made up on many of the issues. Who did the speaking seemed to have more influence than what was being said. From my vantage point I could see delegates signaling to fellow delegates at tables across the aisle or stage with a "thumbs up" or a "thumbs down" gesture. There was not heated debate on any issue, though there was an indifference to some speakers and positions. As I listened to the debate, it became obvious to me that we need to review our ecclesiology and understand more clearly the nature and government of the church. For many delegates synod is an exciting and learning experience. It once was that for me too, but of late it has become an exercise in futility.

In another article, "Partnership in the Gospel Conference", Laurie Vanden Heuvel reports:

On Friday evening, April 24 and Saturday, April 25, a "Partnership in the Gospel Conference" was held at Geribee's in Grandville, Michigan and Calvin College Gezon Auditorium respectively . . .

Laurie Vanden Heuvel comments and makes the following observations about that conference:

1) About 130 people attended the conference, few men and few college or seminary students. About 60 people attended the communion service at which Neva Evenhouse preached and served communion. Several CRC ministers and college professors were among the participants.

2) There was almost no discussion of Scripture through the day. Rev. Len Vander Zee (brother of Neva Evenhouse) led a workshop in 1 Tim. 2 but the exegesis was a mutilation of the obvious meaning of the passage.

3) There was a lot of talk throughout the conference about how much the promoters of women in office are "hurting." Quite honestly, I am weary of hearing this theme. They are not the only ones hurting in the CRC. Many of us have grown up in the CRC, have embraced its doctrines and positions not only because of tradition, but because we have examined the Scriptures carefully and found them to be true. We find that new views are being imposed on us which we feel are contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture and this hurts. We are called demonic and told to repent and this hurts. We cry too — and for better reasons.

4) Another recurring theme throughout the day was the number of talented, educated women in their ranks who are convinced of their position and need to be used. Again — I am weary of this theme. Believe it or not, there are very intelligent, talented women with fer-

tile minds and advanced degrees who do not agree with women in church office.

5) Two items of strategy surfaced which we do well to heed. One is the attempt to furnish constituents of the CRC with positive "experiences" in female leadership in worship and official decision-making and the church will change its mind. This is an off-shoot of behavioral psychology and it is effective. Another item of strategy is Dr. Mouw's exhortation to imitate the rule-benders, the rule-breakers; again — a very effective strategy. "OK — most of the churches are doing it (when really only a few are) so we better change the rules to accommodate them." Does this sound familiar? Children and teen-agers use this strategy all the time and it works.

6) What impressed me the most was the depth of the chasm and the width of the gulf that divides us. Each side of the issue approaches the Scripture with a different hermeneutical stance (and the same thing is true in the creation-evolution debate) and never the two shall meet. May God grant strength and courage to go forward in the truth of His Word.

While sympathizing with the expressions of concern, one can really ask: how long can the conservatives remain one in a body of such diversity as is presented in the above quotes? With "wounds" this grievous, the whole body must shortly be affected with its "poisons". Either the wounds must soon be excised (which seems hardly possible anymore), or the conservatives, for the sake of their own souls, must separate. □

## The Strength of Youth

Barrett L. Gritters

# A Pastor's Prayer for Young People

Barrett L. Gritters is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan.

O blessed Father, the great God of spiritual Israel, of Thine elect over the whole world; we raise this prayer especially on behalf of the youth of the church, who are Thy chosen, on whom Thou dost look with loving eyes of favor, for those in the

strength of their youth — the covenant young people.

Their needs are great, Father — sometimes greater than the needs of others. And if not greater, yet the position and experience of the young people in the battle of faith make their needs different and unique. We



raise a special prayer for them that they might receive a unique blessing from Thy hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

Grant to them, Lord, the grace to know Thee as Father, as the Father Who has written their names in the palm of Thy hand. May they know Thee as the Father Who has adopted them in everlasting love, and now made them alive again by the powerful Spirit of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Grant them faith to call Thee their Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ their Lord. Oh, so much would take that trust away from them. Bind on their hearts the knowledge and trust in Thee that will pulsate in their hearts daily.

Grant, Father, that their fathers would reflect Thy great Fatherhood, so that through them, our young people might come to know Thee as a gracious and merciful God. Grant that their fathers might not be stern, unforgiving, aloof, and violent, under whose rage they cower in fear, but fathers who have patience and understanding toward them, forgive them, walk with them, speak to them, love them. Then, Father, we are confident of Thy blessing on their hearts and minds as regards their view of Thee, the most blessed, merciful, speaking, loving, Father.

O, blessed Father, may they know Thee as a heavenly Father, not only One to be revered, but One able to supply their needs. May they never become flippant in their prayers, even when many in the church today commune with Thee in language we would be ashamed to use in our prayer now. May they know Thee as a Friend, a Father, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. May Thy name be set apart in their heart as a holy name.

\* \* \* \* \*

Father, our heart's desire and prayer for them is that they be saved. Our hearts burn within us with a hope that they be assured of their salvation through Jesus Christ alone, and confess that faith with a good confession before Thee and before men. In the strength of their youth, may they not trust in their own works, or will, or worth, for their standing in Thine eyes. And yet,

we confess, that is a fault of us all because we become overly confident in our ability and worth. When all is well, we think we are sufficient in ourselves. Help them submit, rather, to Thy righteousness through Thy Beloved Son.

So work faith in their hearts mightily by Thy Spirit and Word — confidence that Thou canst wash their hearts clean; faith that Thou wilt not remember the sins of long ago . . . Ah, Lord, our sins rise up against us, prevailing day by day; but Thou wilt show us mercy, and take our guilt away. O, teach them to sing victoriously from Thy wonderful songbook, from Psalm 79:

"Remember not, O God, The sins of long ago;

In tender mercy visit us, Distressed and humbled low.

O Lord, our Saviour, help, And glorify Thy name;

Deliver us from all our sins

And take away our shame . . .

Then safe within Thy fold, We will exalt Thy Name;

Our thankful hearts with songs of joy Thy goodness will proclaim."

\* \* \* \* \*

And then, washing their hearts clean, Father, kindle in them an unquenchable fire of zeal for Thee and Thy great kingdom, so that the strength of their youth may be for Thy glory.

May Thy kingdom come in their lives more and more. Rule them so by Thy Word and Spirit that their lives more and more be transformed by Thee and then conformed to Thee. May they know Thy law, and know it not as a list of rules that constantly hinder them, but as a wonderful guide for showing their thanks to Thee. O, may they be thankful for their covenant privileges, for their blessings, for their salvation. And, thankful for them, may they submit in gratitude to Thy will. Destroy in them all the works of the devil; break to shivers all violence in them that exalts itself against Thy kingdom. Father, be their all.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are many cares in their lives. For these we pray too. Hear

every cry. Answer every request for strength. Receive with favor each petition they raise, especially from those with special struggles. Bind up the broken hearts. Heal the wounds they receive in the battle of faith. Apply the balm of Gilead to their wounded souls.

Grant that help especially when all seems lost, when the temptations are too great (and the flesh so weak), when friends forsake, when mockery stings and ridicule cuts deep, when they sink in deep mire where there is no standing; when the deep waters overflow them; when they are weary of their crying, their throat is dried and their eyes fail. Let them wait for their God. O, that they know Thee as a refuge and their strength, a helper ever near them. Then they will not fear though earth be moved, for Thou art nigh to cheer them. Their mighty God will hear them.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nor are their lives easy, Father. And we confess that we are not always sympathetic to that. For what occupation shall they study? To what church shall they join themselves? To what school shall they go? With what leisure shall they entertain themselves? To what acquaintances shall they join themselves? What about marriage? What about dating? What about drinking and smoking? These are the questions they struggle with, Lord. Give them grace to seek Thee for answers; then show them the good way.

Give the young men direction in their lives regarding occupation. Grant that their work might be fully in the service of Thy kingdom, whatever work it be. Train men to work with the gifts given in Thy wise providence. Make each know that their divine calling and station in life is a place divinely ordained. And then, in their labor for bread, may they withdraw their trust from their own care and industry, and place it alone in Thee, the Giver of all good things.

Raise up among them those with the desire to serve Thee in the ministry of Thy Word. Prepare them from their youth for that great work, so that Thy church will always have pastors who feed the flock purchased with Thine own blood.



*Influence young men for good so that they will grow up not only with a desire to serve in the other offices in the church (although that too), but with qualities necessary for that service. Raise up young men who are spiritually minded. Train them for faithful service in the kingdom. And use every experience for their good. An awesome calling awaits them — to be responsible for the ongoing of the church in a few years. Provide for the needs of Thy church.*

*Give the young women direction as to their future beyond their required schooling. Many face the question of college or work. And what work? Others are perplexed because Thou hast not yet led them into permanent friendships that would lead to marriage. It is a time of worry, Lord. Thy will be done, here, too. Strengthen against the temptation to date and marry contrary to Thy will. Always may they marry "in the Lord."*

*Raise up young men and young women with a desire to teach in the schools. Oh, Father, Thy covenant is a blessed covenant, Thy children precious children. And we need teachers committed to covenant education, Christian education, Reformed education, for our youth. May it ever be that the young people see that great need. May it ever be*

*that some train well and give their lives for it.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*We pray for their parents and teachers and pastors and elders as well, that we would not only see the weaknesses and sins of the young people, but their struggles and hopes and strengths as well. May we encourage them in their confession, motivate them in their work, love them in their good works.*

*We desire to help the young people, Father. We desire to give them guidance, to encourage and support them. Our prayer is that we may be used mightily for that great work among them.*

*So this, too, we pray: Grant the young people the willingness and freedom to come to us as pastors for counsel. Continue to give to us pastors the grace truly to be concerned for them in their needs; that we may so show our love in our actions that it hardly need be spoken aloud. May the young people find in us a friend and counselor at any time, who is not surprised at their sins, nor hasty in criticism, but one who is able to exhibit the wisdom, love, the grace of God, the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ.*

*May we then be a help. Use us. Please, Father, use us.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*But we also know, Father, that we cannot direct them in every decision, cannot counsel them in every problem. They will, in the strength of their youth, make many decisions on their own. Then bestow them with a sanctified heart.*

*Bless them in Bible study, catechism, sermon listening . . . Attend these means with the indwelling of Thy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ.*

*May they know Thy Word, able to make them wise to salvation.*

*Teach them to pray.*

*Grant, Highest Majesty, that these Thy young people may learn to know Thy voice. Oh, that they might live so near to Thee as to be familiar with Thy voice. Oh, that amid so many other voices today, so many alluring sirens, the voices of all the other gods crying to be worshiped might be voices strange and hideous.*

*The day, oh, the day is evil. Shorten the days for their sake. Hasten the day when our faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled back as a scroll. The trumpet shall resound and the Lord shall descend — Oh, so make it well with their soul.*

*May these Thy sheep rejoice in the strength of their youth!*

*The young people of the church we commit to Thy care, Father, with the confidence that Thou wilt hear and answer our prayers.*

*In the name of our (and their) blessed Saviour we pray, AMEN. □*

## Guest Article

Ronald J. Van Overloop

# Effective Personal Witnessing (3)

*Ronald J. Van Overloop is a missionary-pastor of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Northwest Chicago area.*

The calling to give witness of the Savior and of the salvation He earned is the responsibility and privilege of every Christian.

Proper motivation is so important in the performance of any work or play, and that is equally true for witnessing and evangelism. Proper motivation for witnessing consists of

the following: the glorification of God, gratitude for so great salvation of such a worthless sinner, conviction of and zeal for the truth, confidence and trust in the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit and the power of the preaching, and love of one's neighbor. Proper motivation delivers from the constant danger of



heresy, which creeps in through false zeal and unscriptural methods.

Methods flow from motivations. While Scripture condemns some methods, it does set forth methods which are at the disposal of the Christian.

\* \* \* \* \*

The first method is prayer.

This is usually not mentioned when a list of methods is given. It is to be hoped it is assumed. However, it is feared that prayer is often forgotten. These are not general prayers for growth, but petitions for specific contacts and specific situations. After any contact and conversation, one should pray that the Lord of the harvest will bless the seeds of the Word that were sown in that contact or conversation.

The Calvinist has the highest doctrinal and experiential reasons for praying. First, praying is essentially the acknowledgment that God alone can make fruitful the seeds sown. Paul writes, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Cor. 3:6). Secondly, prayer is the acknowledgment of man's total depravity and our helplessness to overcome that depravity. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). This verse makes plain the extent of the depravity of the natural children of Adam; it is impossible for them to know spiritual things. We are driven to God, Who can give a new heart and implant a new spirit, Who can take away the stony heart and replace it with a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26).

These prayers must have the same urgency of supplication that Paul exemplifies: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). Could it be that sometimes the reason for the lack of fruit upon diligent labors is the lack of prayer? If that were true, it would not be unusual. "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2b).

The second method for Reformed evangelism is humility. The Reformed believer knows that he is the object of the marvellous grace of

God, but he knows that this is true only because of God's good pleasure. He knows that he has nothing of which to boast in himself. He did not make himself to differ from those who do not receive this grace, according to God's good pleasure. Therefore, his presentation of the gospel is always with humility, with a strong sense that of himself he is no different from any sinner, in fact, that he is the chief of sinners.

In close relationship to this humility and the reason for it is the virtue of covenant courteousness and friendliness. Praying that friendships will develop (on the basis of common salvation), friendliness and neighborliness are used as the means to that end. Believing that the covenant is not an agreement, but a relationship of friendship, we have most reason to be friendly. By neighborliness and friendliness are meant all that is included in what Jesus calls the second, great commandment: loving our neighbor as ourself. This humility is a readiness and eagerness to condescend to the lowly, just as Jesus did with the Samaritan woman, with the woman taken in adultery, and with the women with the issue of blood. This humble friendliness has as its goal their spiritual needs (just as Jesus emphasized that of the young rich ruler); it is not an end in itself.

Part of this humility of the Reformed believer in his witnessing is the willingness not to cover up our own weaknesses. Also here we must be careful, for the devil can destroy this virtue, too. Satan can make the believer proud of his sin or make the saint so busy admitting his own faults that the gospel is either neglected or forgotten altogether. This is not to be taken as the proverbial hanging out our dirty laundry before all. Positively, all that is meant is the Scriptural and Reformed consciousness that we do not give the impression to others that, while we are emphasizing their spiritual needs, we do not have any spiritual needs ourselves. This is to be seen as the manifestation of godly sympathy or compassion (both of which mean literally, "to feel with").

Deeply conscious of the graciousness of his own salvation and of loving his neighbor for God's sake, the believer will use the opportunity God gives to witness of the glory of his heavenly Father, of his wonderful Savior, and of the joy of his personal salvation.

\* \* \* \* \*

What should be the believer's attitude towards witnessing?

1. Beginning with a big view of God and of Jesus, one can be expectant and at ease. He is very conscious that while he is responsible for the sowing of the seed, it is not within the realm of his ability to bring forth fruit. Thankfully, he can leave that to the Lord of the harvest. On the one hand, he does not have to make the fruit. On the other hand, he can be very expectant about the possibility of fruit because God is sovereign and Jesus has all authority. That means that positive results are always possible, for with God all things are possible. It also means that whatever the results, even if they are negative from the human viewpoint, they are for the glory of God and according to His good pleasure.

2. If there is a lack of desire to be a witness, then we need a strong dose of preaching on justification by faith. Nothing softens the cold heart of the Christian more than hearing again about unmerited mercy, of which he is the most unworthy recipient.

3. If we are afraid because of weaknesses we perceive in ourselves, then let us remember that others who were hesitant and full of excuses were reminded of Him Who makes the tongue (Exodus 4:11). Others were told not to be ashamed of the gospel (II Timothy 1:8).

4. If we are not sure people will respond, and are insecure, then let us remember that the gospel is unavoidably offensive to the unbeliever. And remember that for the Reformed believer success is not measured in terms of numbers, but in terms of faithfulness. The world counts success only in terms of increased numbers. But God has promised repeatedly to bless faithfulness to Him and to His Word. After all,



we are but stewards, who must be faithful unto death (Luke 17:10).

5. Finally, our attitude should be that of patient expectation. The former waits (is longsuffering) for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain, so must we also be patient (longsuffering). Highly instructive is the Bible's frequent use of the figure of the farmer in its treatment of the subject of the presentation of the gospel.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the performance of this awesome task the Reformed believer has all the encouragement he needs in the words and promise of Jesus to his disciples when He gave them the Great Commission. While this serves as encouragement in the performance of the task of missions and evangelism on the part of the church institute, it accomplishes the same for the individual believer in his calling to witness.

First, Jesus said that all authority in heaven and earth was given to Him.

Jesus said this to a motley group of unschooled men to whom He had just given a world-encompassing task in a hostile world. If they would ever forget His authority over all, then they would fold under the pressure of the work, deviate from His goals, or find the task too burdensome.

The fact that Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth makes us confident about the ultimate triumph of Christ in the work of witnessing and evangelism. Confidence arises because we know He works in hearts and makes disciples of the chief of sinners. No one is beyond His power to regenerate and convert unto salvation.

Therefore, we give witness to the exalted Christ. We do not offer Him. We do not speak primarily about the man of Galilee, Who may have been such a wonderful example. But following the example of the apostles in the book of Acts, we preach the exalted Christ (cf. Acts 2:23, 33, 36; 5:30).

Secondly, Jesus promised that He would be with us always, even unto the end of the age.

This is great consolation in the face of any discouragement. We can

perform this responsibility with the consciousness that the Lord Jesus Christ is at our elbow. God reminded His apostle of this at a time of difficulty and discouragement (Acts 18:9, 10).

This is the source of great humility in the face of success. When there is positive fruit to our witnessing, then the fact that Jesus promised to be with us and to give the increase keeps us from the sin of pride.

Realizing that we have the ever-present Christ with us, we are careful to carry out this never-ending task. The consciousness of His presence is the strongest motivation to keep up the work.

\* \* \* \* \*

Such is the calling of the Reformed believer. He must witness. He wants to witness. He delights to witness. □

## "Reformed Conference On The Christian Family"

To be held on October 16 & 17, 1987, the Lord willing.

Spend an inspiring week-end in South Holland Protestant Reformed Church. The speeches will be timely and the fellowship will be rich. Bring your Bibles and plan on an instructive and enjoyable time. Invite your friends. Public invited.

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

#### Friday Evening

- 7:00 Welcome and Opening Remarks
- 7:30 Speech: "The Biblical Foundations of the Family" by Rev. Carl J. Haak, Pastor Lynden Protestant Reformed Church, Lynden, Washington.
- 8:30 Panel Discussion: "Discipline in the Christian Home." Participants: two Pastors-an Elder-a Teacher-a parent
- 9:30 Coffee and Fellowship

#### Saturday Morning

- 8:45 Devotions
- 9:00 Book Reviews
- 9:15 Speech: "The Role of Family Worship" by Rev. James D. Slopsema, Pastor Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- 10:15 Three Workshops conducted concurrently at two times, 10:15 and 11:00, arranged so every registrant has the choice of attending at least two of the three Workshops. Each Workshop will be conducted by two Moderators.
  - 1) Coping with Teen-Age Problems
  - 2) Sex Education in our Homes
  - 3) Help For Mom
- 12:00 LUNCH — at nearby restaurants of your choice

#### Saturday Afternoon

- 1:30 Question and Answer Period
- 2:30 Speech: "The Happiness of a Godly Home" by Rev. David J. Engelsma, Pastor Protestant Reformed Church, South Holland, Illinois
- 3:15 DISMISSAL

Registration forms will be sent to each of our churches.

Registration is limited. Registration fee.

The speeches will be taped with a view to offering them in a Cassette Album.

SPONSORED BY: The Evangelism Committee  
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16511 South Park Avenue  
South Holland, IL 60473

For more information call (area code 312) 596-3113; 529-4676; 895-0980.



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## The Day of Shadows

John A. Heys

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# Brought Home By A Sanctifying Grace

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In a sense we can call Naomi a prodigal daughter, for there is a unique similarity between her and the prodigal son in Jesus' parable. No, she did not leave her father's house with an inheritance. She did not go away to squander that inheritance in riotous living. But she did leave her spiritual Father's house and lived for ten years in a place where He did not reveal Himself in His love in Christ. And she did return to Bethlehem-Judah, even as the prodigal son did return to his father's house. Like the prodigal son, she returned because she realized that there was no other place on earth where she could find blessedness. By God's grace she returned and confessed her sin, stating: "The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home empty; why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" Ruth 1:20, 21.

What is striking is the fact that Naomi with her husband and sons left Bethlehem-Judah, for earthly bread during a famine, and came back with a Moabitess who was seeking spiritual bread. This daughter-in-law, Ruth, sought the Bread of Life when Naomi was used by God to teach her the value of

spiritual matters. Naomi left for earthly reasons. Ruth came for spiritual reasons. Naomi left for earthly bread. Ruth came for heavenly bread. Naomi left the promised land for daily bread. Ruth entered that land for the everlasting bread which was in the day of shadows pictured by God in the land which He gave His people, and where His Son's blood was typically shed every day in His tabernacle.

Note that we read in Ruth 1:6 that Naomi heard "how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread." Then Naomi decided to go back to that promised land. But this was not Ruth's reason for going there. She had plenty of food in Moab and could have stayed there for her natural, physical life. Naomi could also have stayed in Moab for earthly bread; but in His grace God made her realize the need for spiritual bread. For Naomi was undeniably an elect, born-again child of God. She had her spiritual weaknesses. She slipped and fell into gross sin. But in His grace God brought her back to her spiritual senses and even used her to instruct this Moabish daughter-in-law in the things of His kingdom. And nevertheless we do well to note that it was not until He opened her eyes to her sin and made her realize her calling to go back to the land of Canaan that she did return.

It is also striking that Elimelech and Naomi took their sons with them for bread out of Bethlehem-Judah, and that all this happened to a family that came out of that city. For the name of that city means House of Bread, and it originally was called Ephrat, which means fruitful. Here Rachel bore Jacob's son, Ben-

jamin, and died and was buried, Genesis 35:16 and 48:7. Bethlehem-Judah then was surely a fruitful place where one could certainly find bread in greater abundance than in many other places. When the famine came in Bethlehem, Elimelech's and Naomi's flesh certainly cried out for Moab. For the flesh, there was no other place in Canaan to go for the satisfaction of the flesh. And let us not be too harsh in our criticism of this family, without looking at our own flesh and its demands. Be sure that if such a situation arises for us, we of ourselves are no stronger than Elimelech and Naomi. All too easy it is for our flesh to stay home on the sabbath and fail to go where there is spiritual food for us. How often were you an Elimelech or a Naomi?

Now Bethlehem was about eight miles away from Jerusalem, but in that day the tabernacle was not yet in Jerusalem. It was in Shiloh, which is twice as far from Bethlehem as Jerusalem is. Not till David captured Jerusalem was the tabernacle pitched there and was the ark, with its mercy seat on which God dwelt symbolically, established. Now all the elect children of God could not live in Shiloh, nor in Jerusalem. Nor was this necessary. But living in the promised land was necessary. Moving away from it in that day was moving away from God's promises in Christ. Leaving the land where God gave pictures of the Kingdom of Heaven in the day of shadows was turning one's back on Christ, its King. When forced to do so as Joseph was, and when Jacob was told by God not to fear going down to Egypt, it is something else. After

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the church in the days of Joshua entered this promised land, it was turning one's back on God's promises to leave it for material gain. After God entered that land typically, when the ark was brought across the Jordan river, it was sinful to move out of His land for the satisfaction of the flesh.

All this changed when Christ was born in Bethlehem, died for our sins, arose, and ascended up into heaven. When all the types and shadows of the Old Testament dispensation were fulfilled by Christ, it was an act of unbelief to go to the temple to sacrifice for the removal of sin. One could go, as Paul and the disciples of Jesus did, to bring sacrifices of thanksgiving for Christ's atoning sacrifice. One could go there to pray to God in Christ; but to go there to put trust in these shadows was to turn one's back upon Christ. In Naomi's day it was turning one's back upon Christ to leave the promised land for material gain and enjoyment for the flesh.

But, as we already noted, in His grace God rekindled Naomi's wavering faith, made her see her sin, and caused her to go back to the promise in Christ, even though it would mean separating herself from Orpah and Ruth, with whom she had an earthly attachment of fleshly love. She will now sacrifice the enjoyment of her flesh in order to seek the things which are above, and were types and shadows of Christ and the salvation in Him. Naomi, whose name means pleasant, left the promised land for pleasant things of this world and of the flesh. Seeing her sin, by God's grace, she now realizes that her name should be Mara which means bitter or bitterness.

It is possible that her name Pleasant One refers to the physical beauty of her face and that now, after ten years of grief, loneliness, and the loss and bereavement, it showed on her face, and that this is the reason why the women asked, "Is this Naomi?" Her hair may have turned gray and her face developed wrinkles, so that there was nothing pleasant to look upon as before she left Canaan. Then she gained no fleshly advantage by going to Moab for bread. Leaving the promised land

was not wise, but definitely sinful. The name Mara, which she gave herself, was an expression not of her outward physical appearance, but of the inner grief of her soul and of how she looked in God's eyes.

For Naomi confesses it all to be God's work of testifying against her. She said, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"

Let it be emphasized, this was not an accusation. She is not finding fault with God. Notice that she confesses that God brought her HOME, not merely back to Bethlehem. Here she belonged. This was her home where she would dwell with God and enjoy spiritual blessings. She confesses that HE brought her back to this home. And she was finding fault with herself, not with God. What she means is: "I do not deserve to be called Naomi, the pleasant one. I did a thing very bitter in God's eyes. Call me Mara, the bitter one." She said, "I went out. It all was my fault. I did the bitter thing of sinning against God. No matter how I look, I do not deserve to be called Naomi, the Pleasant One."

She did have a bitter pill to swallow. She lost her husband and then both of her sons, all her descendants, for she had no more children, and cannot have any in the future, at her age. Grandchildren are out of the question for her. And Ruth, as far as she could then see, would never be taken by an Israelite to be his wife. Call again to mind Deuteronomy 23:2. And only shortly after this, we find that the closest relative, whose calling it was to take her as his wife, refused, though he wanted the land.

But let us not close our eyes to the fact of what God did here in the life of Naomi. And let us take careful note of the fact that Naomi brings Him into the foreground. She calls the God of her salvation to the attention of these women who questioned her and her change. For in these two verses, Ruth 1:20, 21, Naomi

speaks to God four times. Twice she calls Him The Almighty One, and twice she uses the name Jehovah. Our KJV has the word Lord, but the Hebrew has Jehovah, God's covenant name, the name He told Moses to bring to the attention of the Israelites when He sent Moses to deliver them from Pharaoh's yoke and into this promised land. As the Almighty One He "dealt very bitterly" with her and afflicted her; and as Jehovah, the Covenant God, He brought her back and testified against her.

Clearly she saw the hand of God in her bereavements and confessed her sin of leaving that promised land with its types and shadows. She did not say, as so many sinfully say today: "I had a lot of back luck." No, she saw it all and confessed it all as God's work of testifying against her. That is a confession of sin, a confession not only that it was God's work, but that she deserved it all. God spoke against her and she heard it as God's judgment. She is not at all trying to deny her sinfulness. There is not the slightest hint in her words or speech that she did not deserve this affliction. God, Who afflicted her, gave her grace to bow before it and to confess that He brought her home. Get that! He brought her home to blessings and then plainly to forgiveness of her sins. She wants these women to look at God and away from her. In effect she says, by choosing that name Mara, or Bitter One, "Look at me as a sinner who deserves all this. I have that name Mara coming to me." What a grace of God! Naomi did not write Psalm 119:71, but she believed this truth: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes."

One can only wonder whether Ruth was there when Naomi said these words to the women of Bethlehem. Had she heard it, we may be sure that she agreed wholeheartedly. And that name Jehovah would mean much to her. That name means I AM. That God is, not only in that He is self-sufficient, but also in that He is unchangeable. WE always have to say that we were, or that we will be if . . . But God is unchangeable as well as utterly independent. He did



not change. It was Naomi who changed from a faithful believer in the promised land to live as a sinner in the midst of the world. She did not change God by doing this, but in His grace He changed her. Because His grace never changes, He changed Naomi and brought her out

of the world and back home in His promised land. By God's unchangeable grace, the prodigal daughter was brought home to her heavenly Father, and unto the blessings in His house.

Yes, God's work of testifying against her and of bringing her af-

fliction was a work of His grace. Through these He sanctified her and brought her back home where she could enjoy the blessings in Christ that were typically set forth in the promised land in the day of shadows. □

## Taking Heed To The Doctrine

Ronald H. Hanko

# The Two Natures Of Christ — Introduction

### 1. The importance of this doctrine.

The confession that our Saviour is both God and man is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. It is fundamental to every doctrine of the Scriptures and to our confession of those same doctrines. Very obviously, everything that we believe about Christ Himself as Saviour hangs upon the truth of His incarnation. Unbelief staggers at the doctrines of the virgin birth, blood atonement, and the resurrection, and will not acknowledge His miracles, because it does not know Who and what He is. For us, therefore, these truths and all that we believe concerning Christ as our Saviour, hold or fall at this point.

But it is not only the doctrine of Christ which is at issue in our confession concerning Him. It is the touchstone of faith in God Himself as the only true God. As John says in II John, vs. 9, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." The very fact that most heresies,

which deny the doctrine of the Trinity, attack at this point is evidence of the importance of the doctrine of the Person and Natures of Christ for the whole of Theology.

We shall see too in these studies that this same doctrine of Christ is critical for a full understanding of the covenant of God. The blessedness of that covenant of grace, both in its divine reality and in its revelation, are inseparably tied to the revelation of Christ as God come in the flesh.

As far as the hope of the church is concerned, this confession concerning Christ is for her the only way of salvation. Her preaching is without power to save, her love cold, and her work in vain when she loses this truth. Even in those churches which do preach and teach the sound doctrine of Christ it is impossible to be saved apart from a living confession of this doctrine. The Athanasian Creed is very much to the point here when it says, "Furthermore it is necessary to eternal salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man." It is possible that there are doctrines which we may understand imperfectly, or about which we may even be in error, and still be saved, but this is not one of them. A clear confession at this

point is the difference between life and death.

So important is this doctrine of Christ, that it is basic even to our Christian life. In answer to the question how we must behave as Christians, especially as members of the church, Paul speaks of this doctrine first of all. The confession that God is come in the flesh, he says, is the "great mystery of godliness" (I Tim. 3:16). Whatever else that may mean, it means this first, that this doctrine, believed and confessed, is the power of obedience and consecration to God. How can anyone, for example, be a disciple of Jesus when he underestimates or does not clearly understand the truth that Jesus is God, and that as a disciple of Jesus, he is a follower of God (Eph. 5:1, 2).

So important is this doctrine of Christ and so closely connected to our worship of God, to confidence in Christ as Saviour, and to our calling to live godly in Christ Jesus, that we are not even to have fellowship with those who do not receive it, nor bid them Godspeed, lest we be partakers of their evil ways (II Jn., vss. 10, 11).

### 2. Reasons for studying this doctrine.

Because this doctrine is so important we do well to study it carefully, especially because there are several points at which this doctrine is not well understood among Christians. These points are especially two: first, a lack of appreciation for the truth

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that Jesus is *God* in all His work as Redeemer; and secondly, a failure to see clearly the connection between His work and His humanity, especially as far as His exaltation is concerned.

With regard to the first, it is characteristic of modern Christianity that it loses the truth of Christ's divinity, not so much by denying it openly as by neglecting it. The result is, as we shall see, that believers do not come to God through Christ, to the detriment of all holiness, piety, and assurance. On the other hand, it is not uncommon to find that believers have such vague notions concerning the humanity of Christ in union with His divine nature, that they do not even realize that Christ is now in heaven not only as God but also as man. This too is harmful to their spiritual life, for so they lose very much of the comfort of Christ's resurrection, ascension, and exaltation.

It is necessary, therefore, not only to understand that Christ is God and man, but to understand what the Belgic Confession calls "the union and distinction of the two natures in the Person of Christ" (Article XIX). To these matters we shall give our attention.

### 3. Scripture's presentation of this doctrine.

Searching the Scriptures we immediately notice that Scripture does not give a detailed, logical presentation of this doctrine. It does not even use such words as "nature" and "person," but simply presents clearly the three fundamental truths that Jesus Christ is true and eternal God, that He is also a real, righteous man, and that there is but one Christ. From this we can learn several things.

We are reminded first of all, therefore, by Scripture, that the truth of the incarnation is indeed a "great mystery" (I Tim. 3:16), beyond all comprehension, and to be received by faith. For this reason, too, it is always easier to say what the incarnation does not mean, than to say what it does mean theologically and doctrinally. Any reading of the creeds of the church will quickly show this. The Athanasian Creed, for example, really says all that can be said in these few words:

*We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man. God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of the substance of His mother, born in the world. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable (reasoning) soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood. Who although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.*

Such a confession is complete and sufficient for salvation and joy in Christ, but it leaves many questions unanswered. Such a confession is also Scriptural, since it avoids idle speculation and turns our attention to the miracle of the incarnation. And that is where our attention must be focused, for it must be our purpose not to explain, but to confess; not to speculate, but to wonder and worship.

### 4. The name Christ.

All that Scripture says about the two natures of Christ is encapsulated, as far as Scripture is concerned, in the confession that He is Christ. There are various other names which point to one or another of His two natures or to their union, notably the name "Immanuel" which is beautiful for its warm, personal emphasis on the saving importance of the incarnation. But the name or title "Christ" is the most comprehensive as far as this truth is concerned.

The name "Christ" is not really a name but an official title. With its Old Testament counterpart "Messiah" it means "Anointed one" and describes Him in His official position as our Mediator. It directs our attention primarily to the fact that as God and man in one Person He is fully qualified to be our Saviour. In so far as this name points to His work, therefore, it does so, not by speaking of any specific task (as the names "Lamb of God" and "Advocate" do), but by reminding us of the peculiar and unique qualifications He has for all His work, that is,

that He comes from God, and as God, with all the power and authority of God, to us, to abide with us and be among us forever.

To confess that Jesus is the Christ, then, is to confess in brief the whole truth concerning His Person. It is the confession that He is the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16) and therefore the confession on which the church is built (Matt. 16:18) and the confession through which we also know that we are sons of God (I Jn. 5:5, 13). It is also a full confession of His humanity, for "every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God" (I Jn. 4:3). Certainly we confess all His Names and do so with holy delight, but the critical question is always the same, "What think ye of the Christ?" (Matt. 22:24). That is the question according to which Christ Himself was judged before the unbelieving Jews and they before Him (Matt. 26:63, 64). This is also the question which we must answer in giving account before God and the world, inasmuch as we claim to be Christians.

### *The Deity of Christ*

#### 1. The testimony of Scripture.

It is both unnecessary and somewhat presumptuous to attempt to prove the divinity of Christ from Scripture. It is unnecessary because the believer does not need it, and the unbeliever neither wants it nor can receive it. It is somewhat presumptuous, not only because the testimony of Scripture is so clear, but also because it is the central doctrine of Scripture from beginning to end. Charles Hodge says it very well:

*From the beginning to the end, therefore, of the sacred volume, from Genesis to Revelation, a Godman Redeemer is held up as the object of supreme reverence, love, and confidence to the perishing children of men. It is absolutely impossible to present a tithe of the evidence which the Scriptures contain of the truth of this doctrine. It is to the Bible what the soul is to the body — its living and all pervading principle, without which the Scriptures are a cold, lifeless system of history and moral precepts. It seems, therefore, to be a work of supererogation to prove to Christians the divinity of their Redeemer. It is life proving the sun to be the source of the light and heat*



to the system of which it is the center. Still as there are men, professing to be Christians, who deny this doctrine, as there have been, and still are men, who make the sun a mere satellite of the earth, it is necessary that a part at least of the evidence by which this great truth

is proved should be presented, and should be at command to resist the gain-sayers. Systematic Theology, part I, chapter VII, section 1.

We present that same evidence not only to stop the mouths of

blasphemers, but also that we ourselves may better know Him in whom we have believed and be always better equipped to make a good confession of His glory. □

## Decency And Order

Ronald L. Cammenga

# Our Church Order — An Introduction

At least three reasons can be given for a study of the *Church Order* in the pages of *The Standard Bearer*. In the first place, the *Church Order* occupies an important place in the life of our denomination. The labors of our consistories and broader assemblies are regulated by the *Church Order*. Next to Scripture and the confessions, the *Church Order* has to be the most significant and most consulted document among us. In the second place, it has been more than 30 years since a discussion of the *Church Order* took place in *The Standard Bearer*. In the meantime a new generation of officebearers has arisen in our denomination. This is true not only of our ministry, but also of the office of elder and deacon. Especially for the sake of these younger officebearers, a consideration of the articles of the *Church Order* is well worthwhile. In the third place, increasingly today the *Church Order* comes under serious attack. In some quarters, the

authority of the *Church Order* is regarded tongue-in-cheek. In other places, radical revisions of the *Church Order* are introduced in deference to those who hold hierarchical views of church government, or who are in favor of introducing women into the special offices. In light of this situation, we feel constrained to defend the *Church Order* and to demonstrate the scripturalness of its articles.

### SOURCES

The *Church Order* itself may be found in its unamended form in the back of *The Psalter*. Its amended form may be found in the booklet *The Church Order Of The Protestant Reformed Churches*. This latter includes: the English translation of the *Church Order* adopted by our Synod of 1944; decisions by our Classis (before we had a general Synod) and Synods relative to some articles of the *Church Order*, which decisions are placed under the articles to which they refer; the constitutions of the standing committees of Synod; rules and regulations adopted by Synod; various formulae in use in our churches; by-laws of the Protestant Reformed Churches In America; questions used for church visitation; and "The Declaration Of Principles." This booklet is available from the Stated Clerk of Synod at a cost of \$6.00.

There are also various commentaries on the *Church Order*.

Although several excellent commentaries have been written in the Dutch language, and assuming most of our readers are unfamiliar with the Dutch, we will mention only those available in English. *The Church Order Commentary*, by Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma (the older edition) is generally regarded as the authority on the *Church Order*. *Notes On The Church Order*, by Prof. Herman Hanko is an excellent commentary. This is available from our Seminary at a cost of \$3.50. There is also the *Explanation Of The Church Order Of Dordt*, by Rev. K. De Gier, Prof. Wm. Heyns' *Handbook For Elders And Deacons*, and J.L. Schaver's *The Polity Of The Churches* (2 volumes).

Two series on the *Church Order* have been run in *The Standard Bearer*. The first series begins in Volume 8, p. 190, and was written by Prof. G.M. Ophoff. The second series begins in Volume 29, p. 260, and was written by Rev. G. Vanden Berg.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH ORDER

John Calvin is to be credited with the early development of Reformed church polity. Although Calvin was not one of its immediate authors, nor had any direct hand in its production, the principles of church government established by the *Church Order* are principles developed largely by Calvin.

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Calvin formulated an early church order entitled the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances," which was the foundation of the whole organization and discipline of the church of Geneva, and which was adopted on November 20, 1541, scarcely more than two months after Calvin's return from exile to Geneva. A copy of the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances" can be found in *The Register Of The Company Of Pastors Of Geneva In The Time Of Calvin*, edited by Philip Hughes. Calvin also enumerated the main principles of Biblical church government in his *Institutes Of The Christian Religion*. In the University of Geneva, Calvin taught the principles of church government to students from all over Europe, who carried these principles into all the lands where the Calvin Reformation spread. *The Book Of Common Order*, adopted by the Church Of Scotland in 1560 derived from Calvin. John Knox's *First Book Of Discipline* owes much to Calvin. The *Form Of Presbyterian Church Government*, drafted by the Westminster Assembly is heavily influenced by Calvin. Thus also our own *Church Order*.

Our *Church Order* is a direct product of the Reformation in the Netherlands. The first work on a church order for the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands was done by the Convention of Wezel in 1568. This convention met in Wezel, Germany, because of persecution in the Netherlands. To this original church order many provisions were added by subsequent national synods of the Netherlands. Particular attention was paid to the formulation and adoption of the *Church Order* by the Synod of Dordt, 1618-'19. This Synod adopted the *Church Order* which is essentially the one we have today. For this reason our *Church Order* is often referred to as the *Dordtsche Kerk Orde* (D.K.O.).

In 1816 the Dutch government, in an effort to curb the power of the church and insure the government's control over the church, discarded the *Church Order of Dordt* as regulative for the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The secession from the State Church in 1834 known as the "Afscheiding" was not

only a return to the true doctrine of the Reformed faith, but was also a return to the *Church Order of Dordt*. Initially, at the insistence of Rev. Scholte and Rev. Van Velzen, in 1837 a new church order was drawn up for the churches of the Secession. But in 1840, especially at the insistence of Rev. Hendrik de Cock, the *Church Order of Dordt* was adopted anew.

Also the secession from the State Church in 1886 under the leadership of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, known as the "Doleantie," returned to the authority of the *Church Order of Dordt*. The above two secession movements were united into one denomination in 1892, and became known as the Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland (GKN). The basis for their church government was the *Church Order of Dordt*.

#### THE USE OF THE CHURCH ORDER

The *Church Order* contains the set of regulations according to which the local congregation, as well as the broader assemblies of Classis and Synod, are governed. The *Church Order* rests on the apostle's injunction in I Corinthians 14:40, "Let all things be done decently and in order." How the church is to be governed is set forth in God's Word. However, Scripture is not a ready-made church order, or manual of church government. Instead, Scripture sets forth the fundamental principles upon which the government of the church is based. The *Church Order* seeks to enunciate and apply these principles in the actual government of the church.

The *Church Order* also serves an important role with respect to the unity of the church. The *Church Order* itself is an important basis for church unity. At the same time, the *Church Order* preserves and safeguards the unity of the churches bound by its regulations. The unity of the church depends on the pure preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of Christian discipline. It is the purpose of the *Church Order* to establish those regulations in the life of the church

which will assure that the pure preaching is maintained, the sacraments administered properly, and discipline exercised faithfully.

The *Church Order* also serves as a minor confession. The major confessions of our churches are The Three Forms Of Unity: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic or Netherlands Confession, and the Canons of Dordrecht. Our churches also have minor confessions. These would be especially our adopted liturgical forms, as, for example, the Baptism Form, the Form For The Administration Of The Lord's Supper, the Form Of Ordination Of The Ministers Of God's Word, and others. To be included as a minor confession is also our *Church Order*. The *Church Order* is the confession of our churches concerning what we believe to be the Scriptural principles of church government. The *Church Order* sets forth fundamental Biblical truths concerning such things as: authority in the church of Jesus Christ, the nature and duties of the offices, the sacraments, and Christian discipline.

#### THE BINDING AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH ORDER

The authority of the *Church Order* is not an independent or innate authority. This is the unique authority of Holy Scripture. Scripture alone is the ultimate authority for the faith and life of the individual believer, the local congregation, and the denomination. Instead, the authority of the *Church Order* is a derived authority. The *Church Order* is of binding authority because and to the extent that it is derived from Scripture. Its authority is binding as long as it is not shown to conflict with Scripture. The *Church Order* is a human document. Because it is, it

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*Take the time  
to read and  
study the  
Standard Bearer!*

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must always be subjected to the scrutiny of God's Word. The *Church Order* itself leaves opportunity for change and revision: "These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they (if the profit of the churches de-

mand otherwise) may and ought to be altered, augmented or diminished," Article 86.

The *Church Order* is also of binding authority because of the willing consent of the churches. This is also mentioned in Article 86. The churches have mutually agreed to

bind themselves by the authority of the *Church Order*. Any who desire to become or to remain a member of the denomination must willingly consent to the authority of the *Church Order*. Thus, the binding authority of the *Church Order* is the authority that we willingly give to it. □

*From Holy Writ*  
George C. Lubbers

## Believing All The Scriptures (9)

**The Hope Of Heaven And Earth**  
*THE CHERUBIM IN THE EAST GATE — Genesis 3:24.*

It is of the greatest importance carefully to notice the text here in Genesis 3:24b what the Holy Spirit tells us concerning God's placing these Cherubim at the east gate with their flaming swords. The text reads as follows:

"... and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life"

There are a few facets in the entire section here, which we have thus far discussed which need to be repeated. We must not lose sight of the preponderant fact that the name of "Jehovah God" appears repeatedly in this section (Gen. 3:22-24). Also here, at the time of the fall, God appears to Adam and Eve as JEHOVAH, the Covenant God. He is the God who gives His great promise (Gen. 3:9-17). He is the God who is not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, Isaac and of Jacob (Heb. 11:16; Ex. 3:6; Matt. 22:32; John 14:2; Rev. 21:2). This is the Jehovah God who dwells between the Cherubim (Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Is. 37:16).

We must not ever lose from our sight the new legal and spiritual *status quo* in which Adam and Eve had already been placed by God in the great promise of the victory in the Seed, the Head over all things, the Christ, who is the firstborn of all creatures, as He is the firstborn out of the dead (Col. 1:18). At this point Adam had already in faith renamed his wife (ishah) with the new name and position in the church: Eve, mother of the living (Gen. 3:20). Were they not already under the blood of the sacrificial animal with whose skins the shame of their nakedness was covered (Gen. 3:21)? Adam stands on a cursed earth,

which had been subjected to vanity in hope of being delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of adoption, who in the Spirit will cry Abba Father (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5)!

Equally important it is that we keep in focus the Scriptural teaching of the presence of the Cherubim, who are the keepers, protectors of the holy place of God. The righteousness and the holiness of God's command to Adam both *before* the fall as recorded in Genesis 2:17, as well as the holiness of God's promise made to Adam *after* the fall, as stated in Genesis 3:15, must be protected. In both instances God's Word must stand as yea and amen to the glory of God the Father. Cherubim, too, are ministering "spirits" sent out for those who will inherit salvation. When we attempt to gain a total view of the Scriptural teaching concerning the class of angels called "Cherubim" we will need to see them in their office, as identified in Hebrews 1:14.

There has been much written concerning the nature and office of the cherubic angels in the history of the New Testament church. Biblical scholars nearly all agree that a mere study of the etymology of the Hebrew term (name) is of little or no

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avail to tell us much concerning the office of these angelic beings. Certainly the name is not a name of any one angel as seems to be the case with the two names Gabriel and Michael. However, even here it is doubtful whether these are anything like our surnames. There is something very elusive and mysterious about these ministering spirits. For "spirits" they are. When they do appear to men they come accommodating themselves to our world of sight and hearing. Yet withal they remain spirits. Understandably, therefore, the name "cherubim" tells us very little about these heavenly beings around the throne, whose wings cover the mercy-seat.

Still there are some very clear-cut matters which we may enumerate when we consider the keepers of the holy-place of God, the place where God comes to dwell among men. Here we receive a glimpse of these angelic beings in their liturgical service in the temple of God. Primarily the Old Testament Scriptures speak of the Cherubim. In the New Testament Scriptures we read only once of the Cherubim by this name. That is in Hebrews 9:5. It must be remembered, however, that even here we are dealing with a reference to the Cherubim as they overshadowed the mercy-seat in the most holy place in the Old Testament "worldly" temple. The only other passage in the New Testament where the Cherubim are mentioned is in Revelation 4:6. Here these angelic spirits are called "living creatures" in the Greek. The term is "zooa." The KJV translates this term as "beasts". The Holland language translates the Greek name "zooa" by the noun "dieren" in distinction from "beest". This is a very happy distinction which the KJV fails to observe in its translating both times as "beast", when it is the Greek noun "zooa" or "theerion". Compare Revelation 4:6 and 13:2, 11.

At any rate we must study the Old Testament revelation of these Cherubim in order to gain some conception of these Cherubim at the east gate of the garden of Eden!

For in the Old Testament we see a gradual unfolding of the fulfilment of the promise, the great promise of God to be fulfilled in the death,

resurrection and ascension of the Son of God at God's right hand.

There are certain great truths in the Bible which we must carefully consider in connection with the presence of the Cherubim in the holy place of God. These lines of Scripture we may not arbitrarily draw, but we must carefully trace the architectural lines of the Builder and Maker who is God alone. He is Jehovah God! God's plan and design we must study as He builds his temple in Jesus Christ, who is the great temple-builder. He builds His temple in Christ's dying the accursed death on the cross and in raising him again the third day from the dead (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61; 27:40; Acts 6:14). Thus we do cling to the pattern of sound doctrine when we thus consider the Biblical description of the office of the angels.

Surely the truth of the exaltedness of the Christ over all things angelic hosts is clearly set forth in Hebrews 1:3-14. Nowhere in all the Old Testament Scriptures is such glory and honor ascribed to the angels, be they Cherubim or Seraphim, as is accorded to the Son of God, whose throne is forever and ever. To no angel has it ever been said: "thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," (Heb. 1:5; Ps. 2:7). No angel became flesh in order to suffer and die and to conquer death and hell for all the elect saints of God. There is a great distance between the glory given to the eternal Son, and the glory which of the Cherubim. Indeed they are called the Cherubim of glory in Hebrews 9:5. They are not even *sharers* in the glory of grace revealed in the mercy-seat within the veil; they are *protectors* of this holiness.

When we read of "glory," this seems to refer to the majesty of Jehovah God. This heavenly majesty of God is signified in the ark of the mercy-seat. Where these Cherubim appear we see a revelation of God's throne in His relationship to God's church and toward all things in heaven and in hell.

We ought to notice the following line of revelational development.

The first manifestation of the Cherubim in history is already a part, a beginning of the history of the salvation. It is already interwoven with the strands of what the Dutch call "Heilsgeschiedenis". It is part and parcel of the work of him who is the Alpha and the Omega of our salvation in Christ, the Lamb. Wherefore these Cherubim are not placed *within* the garden of Eden itself, but they are placed outside at the east gate of the garden of Eden. They are there to prevent anyone to attempt to reverse the history of salvation; no one may ever attempt to return to the tree of life. The only way to return to God is through the blood of atonement. And that means justice must be satisfied, and the way into the holy place must be openly manifested first on the cross. Here the veil will be rent forever, so that no Cherubim will ever be mandated to keep the way of the tree of life in the heavenly paradise where God will forever tabernacle with men.

There is a "not yet" in history of salvation. All our salvation has been predetermined by the Lord. God does proclaim the end from the beginning when he gives His promise to Adam and Eve concerning the wonderful triumph of the Seed of the woman over the seed of the Serpent. But all is not yet fulfilled. God never tells everything, but when he tells us as much as we need to know He never deceives us, nor confuses us. In the "not yet" of God there is the promise of certain fulfilment.

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There is a sure basis for a living, eternal hope in this "not yet" of fulfillment.

Permit us to point out three stages in this gradual unfolding of this promised salvation.

1. There were the cherubim spoken of here in Genesis 3:24. Here we do not yet see them hovering over the mercy-seat.

2. There were the two cherubim, silent witnesses of the typical, Old Testament sacrifices in the tabernacle of Moses and in Solomon's temple services on the great day of atonement, when the blood of the sacrifices were sprinkled upon the mercy-seat (Lev. 16:15-19).

3. There were also the Cherubim (living creatures) spoken of as they symbolize the entering in of the glory of the LORD into a temple yet

to be built. This temple was already a parabolic indication of a better temple to come. In this temple nothing impure would ever be anymore. This is really the temple which is built by Christ, and into this temple the believers both of the Jews and of the Gentiles would enter to dwell forever more. No Cherubim will deter or forbid the entrance of any of the blood-washed sinners. No flaming fire shall devour those who are to be constituted a holy temple in the Lord (Ez. 43:6-9).

The east gate shall be the entrance of the glory of Jehovah into the temple. And the glory of the LORD will fill the house of God forever. Of this house God says, "Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever," (Ezekiel 43:7).

Here the house of Israel shall no more defile the Lord's holy name, neither will they nor their kings

defile God's house by their whoredoms. Here they will put away their whoredoms forever.

Yes, Jehovah shall dwell with them forever in the glory of his grace.

Truly it shall be said: Jehovah is there (Ezekiel 48:35). □

## Report of Classis

### CLASSIS WEST

September 3, 1987

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Pella, Iowa on September 2. Fourteen elders and twelve ministers represented the churches of the West. Rev. R. Moore opened the meeting with a devotional speech on Psalm 127:1: "Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Rev. C. Terpstra presided over the Classis. Elder W. Linker (Lacombe), Elder J. Tolsma (Lynden), and Elder J. Wierenga (Lacombe) were present at

Classis as delegates for the first time and signed the Formula of Subscription.

In its shortest meeting in many years, if not in all the history of Classis West, Classis conducted business that was strictly routine. A classical appointment schedule was adopted for Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church of Lacombe, Alberta: [Sept. 6, 13, 20 - Lanting]; Sept. 27, Oct. 4 - De Vries; Oct. 11, 18 - Cammenga; Oct. 25, Nov. 1 - Koole; Nov. 8, 15 - Engelsma; Dec. 6, 13 - Terpstra; Jan. 10, 17 - Dykstra; Jan. 24, 31 - Hanko; Feb. 14, 21 - Haak.

Classis welcomed the newly organized Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church of Lacombe, Alberta, Canada, present at Classis for the first time.

Classis will meet next in Redlands, California on March 2, 1988, the Lord willing. □

Rev. David J. Engelsma,  
Stated Clerk

### CLASSIS EAST

September 9, 1987

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 9, 1987 at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. J. Slopsema presided over this session.

The business of classis was, for the most part, routine and adjournment was before noon.

Classis did receive a protest from a brother against a decision taken regarding his protest to the May,



1987 classis. Classis declared the protest not to be legally before it on the ground that the protest violated Article 31 of the Church Order. In essence the protest was the same as that submitted to classis earlier. The brother was informed that if he was not satisfied with the decision of the May, 1987 classis, an appeal should be made to Synod of 1988.

Holland requested classical appointments. The following schedule was adopted: September 20: Kortering, September 27: Woudenberg, October 4: Gritters, October 11: Key, October 18: Bekkering, November 1: Joostens, November 8: Kamps, November 15: Slopsema, November 29: Woudenberg, December 6: Gritters, December 13: Key, December

27: Bekkering, January 3: Kamps, January 10: Van Baren. Rev. G. Van Baren was appointed as moderator for the Holland church.

Expenses for this classis amounted to \$836.11. Classis will meet next at First Church on January 13, 1988. □

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon Huiskens,  
Stated Clerk

## News From Our Churches

Ben Wigger

October 1, 1987

The writer of this profile of First Church in Grand Rapids is Mr. John M. Faber of "see you in church" fame. You readers will probably enjoy something from a long-time writer for this rubric.

Our history goes way back to 1924 when the common grace question was before the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, which in 1926 resulted in our beginning as a Protestant Reformed Church. When Rev. Hoeksema left his old church he led some 300 families with him. Ninety-two families remained with the Eastern Avenue Church. Characteristically, from then on they were called "The Ninety-Two-ers." It was decided by the court that we must vacate the building on Eastern Avenue because it belonged to the denomination.

We met temporarily in the Franklin Community Building across the street from our new building site, but soon began worshipping in the St.

Cecilia Building downtown. What a sight that was every Sunday to see hundreds of family members traipsing downtown each morning and evening! Walking? Of course. Hardly any family owned a car then.

When the new church was a-building, the basement was first prepared, so that we could worship there, for a rent saving. That basement had a flat cement floor with many square pillars supporting the superstructure. These pillars blocked the view of two or three persons, each, so that any sleeper could hide from the view of the minister. But what a great nuisance for the wide-awake worshipper!

When the new church was finished and church-going was normal again, the congregation grew steadily. At one time we had 370 Sunday School children with 26 teachers and 2 helpers! We sent 155 of our young men to the armed service in 1945; and in that year our two ministers conducted 27 funerals. We kept our pastors for long periods: Rev. H. Hoeksema for 45 years, Rev. R. Veldman for 5 years, Rev. H. De Wolf for 9 years, Rev. C. Hanko for 16 years, Rev. G. Van Baren for 12 years. Our present pastor, Rev. Joostens, is now serving his ninth year.

We weathered another congregational split in 1953. And, as usual in

any split based on a doctrinal issue, the members who stay are not all "choosers" as much as "followers." That became evident when many of the former "followers" of Rev. Hoeksema became "rejectors" in '53. This time the doctrinal issue was on the little word "if," which introduced the conditional theology. One minister and two-thirds of the people left us and we, the one-third, met in Christian High School auditorium until we learned that we could return to Franklin and Fuller again. To get an idea how this affected our church rolls: we dropped from 487 families to 170; 1,912 souls shrank to 587. The veteran Rev. H.H. weathered this storm also with the conscientious help of Rev. Hanko. After Rev. Hanko's taking a charge in California, we were vacant for a while. After Rev. Hoeksema's translation into his heavenly rest, the Rev. Van Baren came over to help us out of a slough of despondency and inner strife. By this time we no longer had Dutch services. Can you imagine that for years in our early history we had two English and two Dutch services each Lord's Day?

A worthwhile project which began many years ago, and is still presented each Sunday afternoon, is the radio broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour, which we share with all our people and many outsiders.

*Ben Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*



# THE STANDARD BEARER

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## SECOND CLASS

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Even in the turmoil of '53 we were able to "put it on the air." The program was originally "live" in the church auditorium. One memorable time when a visiting minister from the Netherlands was preaching the afternoon sermon, he was so long-winded that we were forced to carry the planks for the choir platform down the aisle while he was orating. We set up the stand, the choir members posed thereon, the director with baton raised; and at the Dutch "amen" the choir came on the air with its "Thou, O God, art God Alone" at exactly 4 pm!

The declining neighborhood forced us to sell our church, and while waiting for a new church, we again met in St. Cecilia Building downtown. No teeming sidewalks this time; only a full parking lot.

Our present constituency? Many senior citizens (some in nursing homes, but others in retirement apartments); architects, bankers, grocers, office workers; working mothers in teaching, in business offices, and, last but not least, in child rearing!

Now we are worshiping in a new edifice on Michigan Avenue, near the intersection of I 196 and the East Beltline. The vaulted roof seems to hold up pretty well under the burden of debt resting upon it. The basement is under the whole building, folding partitions providing classrooms for Sunday School, catechism, and society meetings. That leaves enough room for a huge room suitable for congregational meetings and banqueting. The consistory room is square and roomy, with air-conditioning, as is also the nursery which has proved to be an extremely useful adjunct in the floor plan. An elevator was installed, according to law, and is very useful to our seniors who park their cars on

the lower level . . . but why go on? Why don't you pay us a visit so we can . . . see you in church.

-J.M.F.

In other news: Rev. Dale Kuiper has accepted the call extended to him from our church in Lacombe, Canada.

Rev. Jason Kortering has declined the call extended to him from First Church in Grand Rapids to serve as a missionary to the saints of Jamaica.

And lastly Prof. R. Decker has been extended a call to be the pastor of our congregation in Holland.

Rev. R. Cammenga from Loveland writes that this year's Young Peoples Convention was a great success. It was close to a record as far as size. Nearly 300 young people attended from across the country, Canada, and even Great Britain.

Tapes of the three convention speeches are available. Cost is \$4.00. The tapes can be ordered by writing to the address of the church.

Convocation exercises for the seminary were held September 9 at Southwest Church. Prof. Decker spoke on "Committing the Truth to Faithful Men". Prof. Hoeksema introduced the students, one in seminary and six in pre-seminary, and the seminary building was open afterward for anyone interested in browsing. □

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

October 10, 1987 D.V., will mark the 35th wedding anniversary of our parents, MR. AND MRS. LOUIS REGNERUS, SR. We rejoice with them in their thanksgiving to God for the years together that He has given them and join them in their prayer that God bless their marriage in the years to come.

"... for the Lord thy God is with thee withersoever thou goest." (Joshua 1:9b)

Ed and Kathy Vander Meulen  
Ryan and Nancy Regnerus  
Homer and Evelyn De Jong  
Bill and Elaine Regnerus  
Joe and Marcia Van Baren  
Louis and Cheryl Regnerus  
Jim and Brenda Regnerus  
Dave Regnerus  
and 15 grandchildren

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Southwest Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society wish to express their sympathy to their President, Dr. Roderick Kreuzer, and to his wife, Yvonne, in the death of his mother, MRS. GERTRUDE KREUZER.

"Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm 73:23, 24)

Al De Young, Vice Pres.  
Joanne Bult, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary Martha Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands, California, expresses its Christian sympathy to Jeanne Jabaay, Lori Jabaay and Janine Meelker in the death of their sister and aunt, ADRIANNA HOFSTEE.

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 53:4)

Rev. Koole, Pres.  
Neva Feenstra, Vice All.

### NOTICE!!!

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, Walker, MI, is in need of an Administrator/Teacher for the 1988-'89 school year. Please contact Gordon Terpstra, (616) 453-1364. His address is 600 Kenowa Ave., S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504.