

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

THE STANDARD BEARER

There are times when the child of God feels defeated.

He feels defeated when he struggles against a terminal illness or crippling disabilities, when he loses a loved one in death, when his marriage is troubled or fails, when his home is full of dissension, when he loses his job....

Who hasn't at one time or another felt utter defeat and despair?

Especially then do we need to hear this word of God.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

See: Meditation, p. 314

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Meditation

James D. Slopsema

More Than Conquerors

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:37-39

James D. Slopsema is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.

There are times when the child of God feels defeated.

He feels defeated when he struggles against a terminal illness or crippling disabilities, when he loses a loved one in death, when his marriage is troubled or fails, when his home is full of dissension, when he loses his job . . .

Who hasn't at one time or another felt utter defeat and despair?

Especially then do we need to hear this word of God.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

There is no defeat for the children of God. There is only victory — glorious, unsurpassing victory.

This is true because nothing is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death, not life, not angels, not principalities, not any other creature.

THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August. Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc. Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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We face many evils in life.

These evils are described for us from various viewpoints in a rather lengthy list. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature . . .

First to be mentioned are death and life. This refers to all the evils we must face in both death and life. In life there are all sorts of evils — sickness and disease, pain and suffering, trouble and sorrow. And at the end of life there is death, a most horrible evil.

Mention is made of angels and principalities and powers. This refers to the world of fallen angels. Principalities refer to the chief of the fallen angels. Powers emphasizes the power the realm of fallen angels possesses. The world of fallen angels, otherwise known to us as devils, are very instrumental in bringing upon us great evils. We know, of course, that ultimately suffering is from God. Nonetheless, the world of fallen angels is directly involved in the miseries we experience. Think of the efforts of Satan, with God's permission, to afflict Job. So also do the powers and principalities of this world bring evil and suffering to each one of us to work our destruction.

Then there are things present and things to come. At present every child of God experiences evils and sufferings at the hand of the powers of darkness. And that will continue to be the case in the future. The demonic hosts will never cease to assail the church.

Mention is made of heights and depths. This calls our attention to any evil that may come from the heavens above or the earth beneath.

This list is concluded with an all-comprehensive expression, any other creature. This refers to any other creature that may possibly bring evil or suffering upon us. This includes creatures from the realm of nature. It includes evil men who seek your hurt and ruin. It includes any other creature in God's world that can bring suffering to us.

* * * * *

In all these things we are more than conquerors.

It doesn't always appear that way, does it?

We often feel defeated as we face the evils of life and death.

How easily the aged saint feels defeated when he finds that he is weak and feeble, no longer able to do the things that at one time he handled with ease. How hopeless the saint feels when he struggles with a terminal illness or a crippling disease. How we despair when we lose a loved one. How quickly we conclude defeat when there is trouble in our home, trouble in our marriage, trouble with our children, trouble with our finances.

Contrary to what may be our experience, the Word of God proclaims boldly and confidently that in all these things we are more than conquerors.

A conqueror is a victor. He is one who has faced the enemy and has overcome him. This is what the child of God is in the midst of the evils of life and death. Come what may, he is not the vanquished but the victor.

And he is more than a conqueror. He is above even a conqueror. One who is merely a conqueror is one who has met his enemy and conquered him. He may, however, at some future date be conquered by yet another. This is not true, however, of the child of God. He is more than a conqueror. He has the victory over his enemies and he will always be the victor.

Nothing can defeat him. In his life and at the time of death he will face many enemies. But he will always be the conqueror, never the vanquished!

* * * * *

We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

The Scriptures here speak of the love of Christ. Mention is also made of the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He that loved us, therefore, is God.

He has shown that love to us in Christ Jesus. He loved us in that he spared not His own Son but delivered Him up to the cross for our salvation. He loved us in that He raised up Christ from the dead and seated Christ at His own right hand where Christ makes continual intercession for us. He loves us in that He freely gives us all things through the intercession of His Son. In Christ we receive from God all the blessings of salvation. We have the forgiveness of our sins. We enjoy a new life of friendship and fellowship with the living God. We have the hope of life eternal. How rich is God's love to us in Christ Jesus our Lord!

We are more than conquerors as we face the evils of life exactly because nothing can separate us from this love of God and from the salvation His love provides us.

How horrible a defeat it would be should anything be able to turn away God's love from us. What a horrible defeat should poverty or sickness or physical infirmity or trouble in our homes or even our sin turn God away from us in disgust so that He no longer loves us, but hates us. Or should the sufferings of this present life somehow make it impossible for God's love to reach us so that we lose His salvation, we would suffer a defeat the likes of which mankind has never known.

But God assures us that this will never happen. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is Christ Jesus.

No matter what may come, God will always love us. When we become poor, or sick unto death, or old and feeble, our friends and acquaintances may forsake us. When we come upon hard times, there may be those whose love for us flickers and dies. But God's love will not. God will continue to love us regardless of what may befall us. No matter how lowly our situation, God will love us. No matter how desperate our circumstances, we will have God's love. This is because God's love for us is an eternal love, not based on anything desirable in us or on what we can possibly do for Him.

Besides this, nothing is able to separate us from the salvation God has provided in His love through Jesus Christ.

The devil would like to rob us of our salvation. To that end he sends the evils we experience in life. He sends sickness and disease. He sends poverty and hard times. If possible, he sends strife into our homes. And it is all designed to turn us away from God in despair so that ultimately we lose our salvation and perish in hell.

But that will never be. For God in His love has sealed our salvation in the blood of the cross. And through the intercession of His Son, He ever preserves us in the face of the evils of life and death. Oh, we indeed may struggle. There may be times when

we even despair. But through Jesus Christ, God ever preserves us. In fact, God even uses our sufferings to bring us closer to Him so that we enjoy His friendship and fellowship as never before.

Indeed we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

For always we have God's love. And always we have the salvation of God's love. And let us not forget that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the joys of salvation which God provides us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let us ever live in the consciousness and joy of his victory. □

Editorial

Revolution, Not Reformation

In *The Outlook* (April, '88, pp. 13, 14) the Rev. Jelle Tuininga, a Christian Reformed minister in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, writes under the title, "Obey God Rather Than Men" — a Scriptural injunction, of course, with which no one may disagree. We certainly must obey God rather than men if and when we are confronted by such a choice.

In the article the Rev. Tuininga leaves the impression that he is very disturbed, and even angry.

He also leaves the impression that he feels rather frustrated —

frustrated partly because those whom he classifies as "liberals" in the Christian Reformed Church are, to use his figure, "in the driver's seat," while the "conservatives" are "back-seat drivers" and are "only annoying nuisances."

And in his anger and frustration the Rev. Tuininga, it seems to me, is advocating revolution and rebellion, not reformation.

And while reformation is indeed a matter of obeying God, and usually involves obeying God *rather than men*, revolution and

rebellion constitute disobedience to God.

Let us look at the matter in a little more detail.

Mr. Tuininga begins as follows:

The liberals (not defined, HCH) in the CRC are becoming very bold the last number of years — almost ruthless one could say. And they have no intention of looking back. They are in the driver's seat (even though numerically they are still a minority in the CRC). We have an article in the Church Order (29) which says that decisions of major assemblies are not settled and binding if they conflict with God's Word or the Church Order. No problem: we change the C.O. to fit the new situation (women in office). No matter if that's putting the cart before the horse. And the Bible — well, that's all a matter of interpretation. Who really knows what it says (or means)?

Now, in the first place, Article 29 of the Christian Reformed Church Order (a revision of our well-known Article 31) does not say what Tuininga claims. It says rather that "The decisions of the assemblies shall be considered settled and binding, *unless it is proved* that they conflict with the Word of God or that Church Order." This obviously involves a process of protest and appeal. And in the second place, there is nothing wrong as such with changing the Church Order, provided this is done in the orderly way. In fact, provision is made for this in Article 96: "This Church Order, having been adopted by common consent, shall be faithfully observed, and any revision thereof shall be made only by synod." In the third place, if what the Rev. Tuininga writes about the attitude toward the Bible is really true — and notice that he is not merely talking about the "liberals" but about decisions of major assemblies which are supposedly controlled by "liberals" — then he is making a very, very serious charge against the synod(s) of his own denomination. And he is certainly obligated either to make this a pending issue before the ecclesiastical

assemblies and, if necessary, to leave. As long as he does nothing, he is co-responsible.

The Rev. Tuininga's complaints in this article focus on two matters: 1) The matter of women in office. 2) The matter of Prof. Howard Van Till's *The Fourth Day* and its alleged denial that Genesis is history. In connection with the former, Tuininga's complaints seem to be twofold. He complains about the synodical maneuvers with respect to this matter, and predicts that eventually the rules will be changed and the door will be officially opened to women elders and ministers. But he also complains about the fact that some churches already ordain women elders and have allowed women to preach in their pulpits. As to the matter of Prof. Van Till's book, he complains — and I agree — that it is a denial of Genesis and that it is contrary to the creeds and a violation of the Formula of Subscription. It should be remembered, however, that this matter has not yet been adjudicated by synod, though the Calvin Board of Trustees has cleared Van Till and others.

Tuininga then complains about the inactivity of those whom he calls conservatives:

Meanwhile the conservatives (I know some people don't like the words "liberal" and "conservative," but they are the best we have and everybody knows what we mean and everybody knows the what we have by them) are not bold but timid. They are sitting in the back seat. And back-seat drivers are only annoying nuisances. Meanwhile the car keeps going where they'd rather not have it go.

Now that is quite a characterization of "conservatives" — and I suppose the Rev. Tuininga includes himself among them. And although I don't like the comparison of a church or a denomination of churches with a car — and it certainly is not a Biblical figure — in a way the figure, I think, is rather appropriate; and it certainly is rather self-demeaning. But let that be for a

moment. What is important, I think, in this paragraph is the implication that the "conservatives" are "timid." I am inclined to agree. Also important is the implication that the "car" (the CRC denomination) is not being driven by the "conservatives."

But what is especially important is the easy way in which the Rev. Tuininga passes over the question what constitutes a conservative. He blithely states that "everyone knows what we mean by" the words "liberal" and "conservative." I used to think that I knew. But as the years have passed and what I thought were "conservatives" year after year have allowed the ecclesiastical car to go where they would rather not have it go, and have also remained in the car, so to speak, I have become confused as to what "conservatives" and "conservatism" are. In a later editorial I propose to address that matter and to ask some pertinent and concrete questions. This is the more important because the Rev. Tuininga claimed earlier in his article that the "liberals," though in the driver's seat, "are still a minority." Now that all depends, of course, on how he defines "liberal" and "conservative." But about this later.

Now comes the Rev. Tuininga's rebellious proposal:

I make a proposal: It's time the conservatives get some boldness too. It's time they take the gloves off too. It's time they fight fire with fire; that they meet the liberals on their own ground with their own weapons. It won't do to be "nice" and inoffensive and to meekly obey all the rules. No, it won't. And the sooner the conservatives realize this, the better it is. If Luther and Calvin and the other Reformers had kept on being nice and "paying the quotas," we'd still be in the Roman Catholic church today. There comes a time when we must obey God rather than men, and that time is NOW. No dilly-dallying around.

Now I have to smile a bit about the facile way in which the Rev. Tuininga mixes his metaphors — from car-driving, to boxing, to fire-fighting, to warfare. But let that be. He seems to be a bit agitated and frustrated; and I can understand this.

But I call your attention to the following facts:

1. Tuininga is proposing disobedience to “the rules.” Not an orderly changing of the rules does he propose. Nor the orderly ecclesiastical process of protest and appeal does he propose. But the breaking of the rules, the law, in his denomination. This is rebellion, not reformation.

2. He justifies this because the liberals also do it. He suggests meeting the liberals on their own ground and with their own weapons. This is a concrete application of the false principle that two wrongs make a right.

3. He appeals to the alleged example of Luther and Calvin — as if either their battle or their method involved the question of “paying quotas” or being “nice.” Let us use the example of Luther. Did he simply rebel about something insignificant? Not at all. He took his stand on the truth, on the basis of the Word of God. He boldly proclaimed that truth and taught it. But he went the orderly way, all the way to the Diet of Worms. There he openly took his position on the basis of Holy Scripture. His teachings were condemned. It was demanded of him that he recant. He refused in his famous “Here I stand” declaration. And he allowed himself to be put under the ban and excommunicated. Such is the path of reformation. Or if you want another example, think of Hendrik De Cock and the consistory and congregation of Ulrum at the

time of the Secession of 1834. Or, to come a little nearer to home, think of Hoeksema and Danhof and Ophoff and their consistories in 1924.

4. What the Rev. Tuininga is proposing is not a matter of obeying God rather than men. He is proposing rebellion; and rebellion is disobedience to God. Besides, why is the time, as he says, “NOW?” Is not the time for obeying God rather than men *always* and at every occasion when that is the issue? Why was it not on the numerous other occasions when Tuininga’s denomination departed from the truth of the Word of God?

The Rev. Tuininga has some concrete suggestions for action in his article also. About these and the matter of a definition of “conservative” I will comment later. □

HCH

The Day of Shadows

John A. Heys

A Very Good Shadow

When one walks around a foundation that has been laid for a building that is under construction, that foundation will not tell whether the building will be a hotel, warehouse, office building, hospital, factory or any other large building. It will not tell us how many stories the building will have, or whether the outside walls of the building will be made of wood or stone. But that foundation will tell us how long and wide the building will be,

and that someone wants a building, and wants it right there on that spot.

As presented last time, the heavens and earth which God created in the beginning likewise did not give us all the details of the new heaven and earth which comes when Christ appears on the clouds of heaven at the end of time, and of which the earth He created in the beginning of time was a shadow. That first creation does reveal some truths

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about the coming kingdom of heaven. But as a shadow, that first beautiful creation did not give us all the details about the coming kingdom of Christ.

What is more, the fall of man did not make it necessary for God to begin to repair and improve that creation to bring into being the kingdom of heaven. No one, absolutely no one spoils the work of the almighty God. He has every creature completely and constantly under His perfect control. And though it is true, as we read in Genesis 1:31, that God saw that everything that He had made was "very good", this does not mean that Satan spoiled things for God and made Him do some new and extra work. Satan is completely under God's control and is a tool which God uses to realize His own eternal and unchangeable purpose. What Genesis 1:31 means is that God saw that a very good foundation was laid, and a very good shadow was there, that speaks of what He intends to bring forth in and through Christ. Satan did not frustrate God. He did not spoil God's work. He, Satan, wanted to do that and thought that he had succeeded; but unwillingly, yet very really, he served God in the realization of that of which the first creation was a shadow.

Before He created the heavens and the earth and all that they contain, God had in mind that of which we read in Isaiah 65:17-25. There we read: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the

voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them The wolf and lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

Plainly God is speaking here of the new Jerusalem, that is, the new creation which He will bring forth in the day Christ returns. He is speaking of that which is also presented to us in Revelation 21:1-4. There we are told, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

THAT is what God had in mind when He created the world in which we live. And He used Satan and all the heavenly and earthly creatures which He brought forth to serve the realization of that new creation. That Satan succeeded in his attempt to turn man away from God and be a covenant breaker might seem to be a frustration of God's will

by Satan. But look at the cross of Christ and you will see that, when to man it looks as though Satan triumphed, this is not true. There God used him for our salvation. And the same thing is true of the wicked work of Satan in leading Adam into the sin that brought guilt upon the whole human race. That was necessary for the coming of Christ to lift us above the shadow — glory of the garden of Eden and bring us into that new Jerusalem presented in Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21.

We do well to take hold also of the fact that man as he came forth from the hand of God on the sixth day of creation week was a shadow of what we will be in the new creation. God created man in His own image. God made man to be a thinking, willing creature who could hear God speak, could speak unto God, enjoy His love, and could love Him. No other earthly creature could do that. He was created a little lower than the angels in heaven (Hebrews 2:7); but he was created in a covenant relationship with God. A relationship of friendship and fellowship was realized when man was created in the image of God. This caused man to be a shadow of that more intimate fellowship of God's covenant of which we read a moment ago in Revelation 21:3. God will tabernacle, that is, dwell with us through Christ, in a much closer and richer fellowship in that new creation.

Do we not read in Revelation 21:3 that God will dwell with us and be our God? Of course He is the God of all creatures. But when He is our God because His tabernacle is with us, a far more intimate fellowship, a much richer blessedness with Him will be ours. Then fully we will taste

and see that God is good. For that His tabernacle is with us means that God is with us not simply in His providence and in a physical way but in His love and in a blessedness that is higher than what we had in the garden of Eden, even as heaven is so much higher than the earth.

Psalm 25:14 is so interesting and comforting. There we read: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." Being a Hebrew parallelism, the statement that God's secret is with those that fear Him means the same thing as the statement that He will show them His covenant. Showing His covenant means having His secret with us. Now the word secret suggests a relationship of friendship. The closer the friend is to you, the more ready you are to commune with that friend and tell him secrets you keep from all others. No one shares secrets with enemies.

However, the Hebrew word here translated secret means a circle of persons sitting together. It can be translated as a consensus divan, that is, a couch, or better still, here in Psalm 25:14, as a loveseat where we sit with God and have a communion of rich love with Him. That is the idea of God's covenant as we read of it so often in Scripture. It is a relationship of friendship and fellowship between God and His elect children, a very intimate and close fellowship much richer than the shadow thereof which existed between God and Adam before he fell into sin.

All this God had in mind before He created Adam, in fact before He created the heavens and the earth and all that they contain. It was with a view to this rich, much more intimate relationship between God and

man that He made man in His own image. He saw that all that He had made was "very good", because it could all serve to bring forth this indescribably blessed life with God in the sinless world that is coming in the day of Christ.

Consider the fact that man was created *able not to sin*. But according to God's counsel, which had the intimate covenant life with Him in mind, man fell and became *not able not to sin*. And all this took place with a view to lifting man in Christ and through His cross, resurrection, and ascension up into heaven so that man would become *not able to sin*, and in that perfect state have a fellowship with God that is closer and richer than that which the angels know. Man was created in God's image and was high above all earthly creatures. But God's plan was to lift him higher in His Son. He was created as God's friend-servant, and that was a glorious and blessed state for a creature. But God had in mind making man His sons and daughters through His only begotten Son. Friends and servants do not have the same intimacy and freedoms in your home that your sons and daughters enjoy. And we are promised this richer, more wonderful life in the new Jerusalem. Living with His Son, Who came in our flesh and lifted it to heavenly glory, we shall then have a close, most blessed fellowship with God. And of that, Adam's and Eve's fellowship with God in the garden of Eden was only a shadow.

What we must take hold of is the fact that God *formed* man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And this we read as the background of God *calling* all the other creatures into being. Follow the theistic evolutionistic philosophy and say that Genesis

1-11 is just a story and not historical fact. (And why stop there? What in Scripture gives us the right to stop there and call just that fiction?) But as we began to say, insist that Genesis 1-11 is fiction and not fact. Why must we take other parts of Scripture, that are just as unique, as historical fact?

If the first part of the Old Testament is only a story of what happened, may we not insist that the New Testament also begins with a story? By some evolutionistic process a virgin brings forth a son. Why call that creation of man only a story, while the far more awesome birth of the Son of God in our flesh through a virgin birth is considered historical fact? If Genesis has eleven chapters that are fictitious, may we not say that Matthew 1 and Luke 1, 2 are also fiction?

And what about Eve? Somewhere in the sixth period of billions of years they say a male human being came into existence. Did it take another billion of years for him to bring forth a female human being? Poor Adam! He was all alone for a billion years. Well, anyway, some of those billion years he spent in sleep (Genesis 2:21). But how could he live that long without eating or drinking? And notice that, according to this story, the animal world did not bring forth a body so different from the male body; but it came out of a male's body. God took a rib of Adam and out of it He made Eve. Are we to believe that this explains how Adam came into being? God used a rib of a beast to make man over a period of billions of years?

Why did not God, Who has perfect control of speech and language, not tell us in a much clearer way that we came out of the animal world? Why does He not use that clearer word *evolve*,

if that is the way He brought man into being? He surely knew that word as well as the words *call* and *breathe*. Why does He have to tell us that Adam slept while Eve was being formed? After all, then, it must have been a female beast that brought forth Eve, even as a male beast in an evolutionistic process brought forth Adam.

No, let the theistic evolutionist tell us whether and why that evolutionistic process has now ended. Or do they believe that such an evolutionistic process will raise man to heavenly glory?

Do they believe that man will still evolve into a god? The anti-christ, according to II Thessalonians 2:4, will call himself God. Does that mean that the evolutionistic process is still working and that Paul teaches us here that man will evolve into becoming a god?

Rather take hold of this wonderful truth that even as God formed man out of the dust of the ground, creating him in His own image, and thus laying a very good foundation for the rich, blessed covenant life we are going to have with Him, He will in a moment (not over billions of

years) raise His elect through His Son, and on the basis of His cross bring us with body and soul into the covenant blessedness of which Adam's life in the garden of Eden was a shadow. What we saw in that garden was caused by what we are going to be, and was eternally unchangeably real in God's heart and mind. Man did not evolve out of the animal world. He did fall into a spiritual condition far worse than the beast of the field. But God brings us to a higher glory than that wherein He created man by the cross and Spirit of His Son. □

Walking in the Light

Herman C. Hanko

Euthanasia

In our last article we talked about the great evils of euthanasia as it is increasingly being practiced in this country and abroad. In this article we want to attempt to see some light in the many problems which nevertheless arise, and with

which the child of God is confronted in various ways by this perplexing problem.

The problems really arise out of the advances of medical technology, which has made it possible to sustain or prolong life artificially. That is, various machines are now commonly used which can keep a person alive when, without them, he would die. Is the believer required, under all circumstances and in every situation, to make use of these machines? If not, when may he or she say no?

Before I get to some specific guidelines which I believe are important to consider, a few general remarks are not out of place.

In the first place, the problem is one which will soon solve

itself, I think, for the people of God. I mean that we live increasingly near the end of the ages. Christ gives many and clear signs that history, according to the purpose of God, is coming to its conclusion. Scripture tells us that before the Lord returns, Anti-christ will reign, and during his reign the one who does not have the mark of the beast will be able neither to buy nor sell. Quite obviously, one who is faithful to his Lord and will not worship the beast will also be cut off from all medical care. He will not have to face the problem of whether or not to be put on a life-support system. Those days may not be so very far distant. Already it is true that not all medical treatment is available to everyone, simply because of the staggering

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costs which are involved, and the inability of some to pay these costs — especially if they have no medical insurance.

It is well to remember also in this connection that the costs of some medical treatment lie even beyond the resources of the church through her diaconate. If such is indeed the case, it is clear that God has, in His own wisdom, made treatment impossible; and in that too we must be content.

In the second place, in order to consider this whole question in the light of Scripture, it is important to keep Scripture's teaching concerning living and dying before our minds. I fear sometimes that believers take the position that life in this world is so overwhelmingly precious that it must be preserved at all costs. This is surely true of wicked men. When I had opportunity to read what the newspapers said a while ago about a man who had a mechanical heart installed, I was struck by the great fear of death which clamps on the hearts of the wicked with a vise-like grip. They will, in many instances, do anything at all to avoid dying. But this is not true of the believer. Paul's words to the Philippians are decisive here: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (1:21-24). The apostle preferred to die so that he could be with Christ. The one thing which kept him fastened somewhat to this earth was the need for him which the Philippians had: i.e., his work and calling which he had received of the Lord. And so, for him to live was

Christ; but to die was gain. The one reason why we might want to stay in the world is our calling which God has given to us. But death has its attractions nonetheless, for that means to be with Christ. Thus, the motto of the Christian can never be: Life here at all costs.

In the third place, I am personally convinced that no rigid rules can be drawn up which every believer is in conscience bound to follow. God rarely treats us that way in any case. And that is surely not the way God works in this problem. I suppose, from a certain point of view, it might seem nice to have hard and fast rules which cover every situation in life and which we need only consult to know always what to do. But this is not really all that nice. And, anyway, being the ornery creatures that we are, we would break the rules at every opportunity. All this means that we are, in some respects, in the area of Christian liberty. It is an area in which the child of God must make decisions himself before God's face and with good conscience. And those decisions have to be made on the basis of the broad principles of Scripture and the varied circumstances of life.

Having said these things, let us turn then to a few guidelines which we may safely follow.

In the first place, a child of God need not under all circumstances make use of every available treatment and every available life-support machine which medical science places at his disposal. It is true, of course, that all the advances in the field of medicine come about under the providence of God, and thus also for the sake of God's people. They are means which God provides. It is also true that under normal circumstances we have the right not only to make use of these means which God provides,

but also the obligation. A parent who will not bring his child to the doctor when the child is very ill does wrong. But it does not follow from this that the child of God is *always* and *under all circumstances* obligated to make use of *every* treatment and every machine which science invents. An old man of ninety may decide in good conscience before God to forego chemo-therapy to treat a recently discovered cancer, even though treatment may, in the doctor's opinion, stop the spread of and perhaps even eradicate the cancerous growth. Even a young man may decide to forego treatment of his disease if the doctors tell him that the treatment will be very painful, will perhaps not do any good, and if it should do any good, will only prolong his life for nine months. We are not obligated before God to make use always of every means available.

In the second place, some distinctions have to be made. Sometimes a distinction is made between *active* and *passive* euthanasia. I think I mentioned this distinction in an earlier article, but to refresh our minds: active euthanasia means active killing — giving something to someone which will put that person to death. Passive euthanasia means withholding from someone what he needs so that the ill person will die. The former is usually (though not always) condemned; the latter is approved. I personally do not care much for the distinction, and think it dangerous. After all, passive euthanasia can include withholding food and drink from a seriously and terminally ill patient. It can include putting such a helpless patient in a cold room without bedclothes (as has happened sometimes in hospitals). The distinction is one we ought not to use. Not to withhold from a person anything that person

needs in the way of normal care and to make that person comfortable is always and under all circumstances our obligation. Anything else is also murder.

In the third place, the use of extensive treatment or unusual methods of prolonging life is to be decided on the basis of the circumstances under which a person finds himself. It ought to be obvious to all that a mother who has to have by-pass surgery which will correct a serious illness, but who can look forward to being helped by the surgery will be much more inclined to use a heart-lung machine and a respirator than an old man who has suffered a severe stroke and who can live in the future only on such equipment. In the former case such use of machinery is temporary; in the latter case, permanent — i.e., in the best judgment of the medical profession, recognizing all the while that doctors are also often wrong.

All the circumstances have to be taken into account. The station and calling in life in which God has placed someone; his obligations and responsibilities; his age and general health; the prognosis after treatment, etc., etc. God reveals His will in these matters only through life's circumstances.

In the fourth place, generally speaking, unusual treatments and methods must be considered as good to use in the recovery from or control of disease, not necessarily in merely prolonging life. Of course, even here there are other factors that enter in which make this only a general rule. One who has a disease which is incurable, but who can live indefinitely through constant treatment (as, e.g., a diabetic) will surely make use of the means God provides. Even a person who has an incurable disease

who will live two weeks without treatment, but two years with treatment, will give serious thought to making use of the means — especially if he or she is busy and active in a home. But mere prolongation of life under any circumstances and at any cost is surely not our calling before God.

In the fifth place, I am personally convinced that the final decision whether to have treatment, whether to make use of unusual methods of keeping one alive, is a decision which rests with the individual himself. He must make that decision for himself. He must answer before God for what he decides. And he is the only one who can weigh carefully all the considerations that finally make known to him what the will of God is.

This must not, however, be construed as if I favor so-called living wills. These are dangerous and ought not to be made. We cannot tell what God has in store for us in the future, nor how we will look at things in years to come. God reveals His will for us step by step in the pathway of life, and we must be content to be led by the hand of our heavenly Father, trusting that He will make clear to us His way for us in any given circumstances in which He is pleased to place us.

One might object that there are times when an individual cannot make such a decision himself. Perhaps he is in a car accident and is brought unconscious to the hospital. Perhaps he suffers a serious stroke and is unconscious. In these cases, it is usually possible and good that one very close to the person make the necessary decisions. A wife can make them for her husband, and a husband for his wife; parents can make them for their children, and children for their parents. But beyond this it is not good to go. If no one close is

present to make the decision, then all must be done to care for the patient to the very best of the ability of those who are responsible. No one may lightly take another's life in his hands and make decisions concerning that life.

Finally, there is always the problem of what to do when a person is on life-support machinery, but continues for days and weeks without any signs of life. May anyone, so to speak, order the plug to be pulled? There are problems here which are difficult to answer. One such problem is clearly: When is a person dead? Years ago doctors said a person was dead when his heart stopped beating. That is no longer true. Now doctors speak of "brain-death;" i.e., the brain shows no more signs of activity of any kind. If a machine did not keep the heart beating and if a machine did not do the breathing for a person, he would no longer have a heart-beat and lung activity. Is the person dead? Has that person, if a child of God, gone to glory even while the machines keep up the work? I do not know. We stand before the mystery of death. Again, none but the very closest of relatives can make a decision in a case like this. No one else may presume to do so. And surely the rule applies: When in doubt, don't.

It seems as if these perplexing problems are only going to increase as life goes on, as we near the end, and as medicine continues its rather spectacular and breath-taking advances. It is well for the believer to keep firmly in his heart the words of Paul: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." If he does this, he will always make the right decision too, for he will make it before the face of God. □

All Around Us
Gise J. Van Baren

The Press' Account Of The Calvin Creation Debate

Editorial comment about the creation debate at Calvin College I will leave to others. It is of interest, however, to note the reaction and comments of some as presented in the press. In the *Detroit Free Press*, Feb. 13, 1988, we were informed on the front page:

Three Calvin College professors who questioned the literal truth of the Bible's creation story were spared possible disciplinary action Friday in a report issued after a year-long investigation of them by trustees of the school.

The report said physics professor Howard Van Till and geology professors Davis Young and Clarence Menninga had not violated doctrine of the Christian Reformed Church in their teaching and writing. The church owns the school, and tenured professors sign pledges to abide by church doctrine.

But the report approved by the trustees, while praising the men for their scholarship, reminded them of the limits imposed by doctrine, and said Van Till in particular had come close to breaching those limits.

The trustees' seven-page report attempted to strike a balance between academic freedom and conservative criticism of the professors. But one of the critics whose complaints sparked the inquiry labeled it "a whitewash."

Lester DeKoster, former head librarian at Calvin, said all three have violated church doctrine by teaching that the world was not created in six days, as described in Genesis, and that evolution may have played a role in the creation of Adam, the first man. "If the board wishes to retain the full confidence of its full constituency then it cannot condone the positions of these three men, DeKoster said, "and the consequence now will be that they will have further eroded the confidence of the so-called conservatives in the church."

The Grand Rapids Press, Feb. 12, 1988, reported on its front page:

Calvin College's Board of Trustees approved a report Thursday night that was "very critical" of three science professors accused of teaching a form of evolution that conflicted with a literal interpretation of the Bible.

But the report called for no sanctions against Clarence Menninga, Howard Van Till and Davis Young.

A statement issued by the college today said their teachings "fall within the limits set by the Christian Reformed Church's guidelines for how to interpret the Bible."

At the same time, the report reminded the professors of the "limitations" that those guidelines place on the Bible's interpretation . . .

The following day, Feb. 13, 1988, the Grand Rapids Press presented another front page report of the event:

The age of the earth — and whether Adam and Eve were the first humans to walk it — weren't the biggest concerns facing Calvin College students John LaGrand and Chris Vander Ark Friday.

What mattered to them was that the college's governing board absolved three popular science professors of charges they are teaching a form of evolution that is opposed to the doctrines and creeds of the Christian Reformed Church.

Like many on the campus of the CRC's denominational school, LaGrand and Vander Ark breathed a sigh of relief when the board announced its support for the three scientists . . .

"We took the board's action as really good news," said Vander Ark, a 21-year-old English major at the CRC's denominational college.

"The investigation had threatened to make Calvin look like an inhibited, extremely conservative Christian college," added LaGrand, associate editor of The Chimes, the college's newspaper.

"These professors deserve all the support and respect they can get," he said. "The board handled this matter very well. They were definitely concerned with justice."

At issue were the writings and teachings of the professors, all of whom hailed the report for supporting them in their research.

"By their recognizing the need for academic freedom . . . and by their encouraging us to perform our scholarship with intellectual integrity, the Board of Trustees have become the real heroes in this story," said Van Till.

Well, I suppose one ought to say, "Three cheers for the 'real heroes'!" But not all in the CRC believe they deserve that kind of praise. The Grand Valley Advance, Mar. 15, 1988, presented also a page account of this debacle:

Gise J. Van Baren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

... Pastors Randall Lankheet, of Jamestown CRC, and Robert Heerema, of Wyoming Park CRC, say Van Till challenges the belief in a real, historical Adam and the belief in Genesis as a literal history. Contrary to the findings of the study committee, they say, Van Till has stepped outside of the doctrines of the church in even raising such questions

Lankheet and Heerema, who have both had private discussions with Van Till since last April, say the Calvin professor and the study committee failed to stand firmly behind the belief in a real, historical Adam.

Study committee members Rev. James Vander Laan, of Kalamazoo, and Rev. Henry Vanden Heuvel, of Zeeland, however, insist that they and Van Till are in line with church doctrines that say a real, historical Adam is essential to the Christian faith.

"This is exactly the problem — that many people feel these (professors) deny the existence of Adam — but this is not the case," says Vanden Heuvel. "The fact of Christ depends upon the fact of Adam; the two stand or fall together."

Van Till suggests that church theologians need to consider the following evidence from science:

- The universe is 15 billion years old, and the Earth is 4 billion years old.

- Life has existed on Earth for about three and a half billion years.

- The human race is genealogically related to the rest of God's creatures.

While Van Till writes on the question of whether Genesis is literal or figurative history, he says he has not taught or written anything about the question of whether there was a real Adam.

Van Till says there is "no merit" in publicly discussing his personal beliefs on the matter, but he does think the CRC community should be discussing the question.

One might well ask: "Why does Van Till not want to discuss publicly his view on Adam?"

Other expressions of concern have arisen. In the *Christian Renewal*, Feb. 29, 1988, we read:

... What this statement in effect does is pat the three professors on the head while at the same time issuing a mild slap on the wrist warning them to be more careful next time.

The implication of this decision should be seriously considered by all members of the CRC. In the next and future issues, *Christian Renewal* will offer commentary and analysis of the study committee report and of the monumental decision

by the Board of Trustees. This is a sad day for the CRC.

As could almost be expected, some had a heyday out of this whole affair. Our own local critic, John Douglas, stated in the *Grand Rapids Press*, Feb. 17, 1988:

I was going to do a full column on the recent investigation at Calvin College but have decided the whole thing is so pitiful that I should just leave it alone with a small comment.

I think it's weird that on one hand the president of Calvin College is talking about attracting non-Christian Reformed students and at the same time the college is holding investigations to see if its science teachers are teaching stuff that contradicts the Bible — something I would think would be near impossible for a science teacher to avoid.

Of course, it's Calvin College's right to teach anything it wants and I would be the last to deny them that right. All I can say is "Good luck, Calvin College" as you stroll through the Dark Ages.

And the *Grand Rapids Press* religion editor had his moment of fun too at Calvin's expense. He "interviewed" a monkey at the zoo:

"Well," I said, sliding closer, "I was hoping to get another angle on the Calvin College creation/evolution story."

"The what?"

I sketched the details.

Some conservative members of the Christian Reformed Church were upset because three science professors were teaching the earth wasn't created in seven days about 4,000 years ago, as the Bible says.

They were also upset because the men seemed to be giving weight to the argument that humans may have evolved from apes.

The animal's head snapped back, alarmed. "Give me that again," it said.

In the cage, the monkeys had stopped playing.

"Well, the theory is that man came from apes. You never heard of evolution?"

The monkey hopped off the bench. "No, never. Who came up with this anyway?"

"A man called Darwin."

"Is he from Calvin?" the animal wondered.

"No, he died a hundred years ago."

The animal leaned against the monkey house. A few of its friends had gathered behind the glass.

"Tell me again. You say these guys from Calvin think man came from us, monkeys?"

Yeah. That's about it. And I just wanted its comments; I wanted the monkey's side of the story.

The animal frowned. "I think the idea's stupid."

"Why?"

The animal pointed at me. "Take a look. You're nearly bald; you've got bad teeth. You wear funny clothes."

The whole event is not, of course, funny. The Board of Trustees have taken a stand, evidently unanimously. There was no evidence of any minority report. There is evidence of unhappiness with the Board's decision, including that shown in a full page ad in the *Grand Rapids Press*, Mar. 12, 1988, placed there by Mr. Leo Peters. Yet the objectors face the real problem: is not the teaching of these three men in line with the "Report 44" of the CRC?

Sadly, when there is evidence that some evolutionists are beginning to doubt their own teachings, now some at Calvin are ready to espouse it. □

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Decency and Order

Ronald L. Cammenga

Decisions Pertaining To Article 4

To Article 4 of the *Church Order*, which deals with the lawful calling of ministers of the gospel, four decisions have been appended by our Protestant Reformed Churches. These four decisions concern the method of the election of a minister, the duties of the classical counselor or moderator, and the peremptory and praeparatoir examination of candidates.

ELECTION OF A MINISTER

The election of a minister of the Word shall be conducted in the following manner:

1. The consistory shall make a nomination consisting usually of a trio of eligible ministers or candidates.
2. The nomination shall be submitted to the approbation of the congregation and unto that end publicly announced to her on two successive Sundays.

3. From the nomination the male members assembled on a congregational meeting which has been announced on two successive Sundays shall elect by secret ballot. The majority of votes cast shall be decisive. No members under censure nor adult baptized members have the right to vote. Blank votes must be subtracted from the total votes cast, to decide the number of legal votes cast in order to determine how many votes a candidate must receive to have the majority which is required to his election.

This decision appended to Article 4 specifies that in the Protestant Reformed Churches the election of a minister shall take place according to the second method mentioned in Article 4. The election of the minister to be called is not to be made by the consistory, but by the congregation, from a slate of suitable nominees presented by the consistory. This nomination consists usually, but not invariably, of a trio of eligible ministers or candidates. This trio is to be announced for the approbation of the congregation on at least two successive Sundays.

This decision also specifies who are permitted to vote at the congregational meetings. Those who may vote at the congregational meetings are those male confessing members who are in

good and regular standing in the congregation.

Certain groups are excluded from participating in the congregational meetings. It is not permitted that women vote in the congregational meetings of the church. There are good reasons for this. For one thing, to vote in the congregational meetings is to participate in the rule of the church. The Scriptures expressly forbid rule in the church to women (I Tim. 2:11, 12; I Cor. 14:34, 35). In addition, it may be argued that the right to vote in the matter of those who hold office carries with it the right to hold office, which the Scriptures also expressly forbid to the woman.

One of the departures from the *Church Order* by Reformed churches in recent years concerns this matter of participation by the women in the congregational meetings. The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church of 1957 decided that "women may participate in congregational meetings with the right to vote subject to the rules that govern the participation of men. The question as to whether and when the women members of any church shall be invited to participate in the activities of its congregational meetings is left to the judgment of each consistory." The Synod of 1972 reaffirmed the decision of 1957: "Synod reaf-

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firms that it is the right of women members, as full members of Christ and his church and sharers in the office of believers, to participate in and vote at congregational meetings on a level of equality with men."

This is a departure from the policy and practice of the Reformed churches of the past. The granting of women the right to vote at the congregational meetings has paved the way for the clamor of our day that the offices be opened up to the women.

Besides women, this decision also prohibits two other groups from participating in the congregational meetings. Baptized members are forbidden to vote in congregational meetings. And those under censure (discipline) may not participate in the congregational meetings. Censure involves the revocation of the privileges of church membership, one of which is voting.

This decision also establishes certain regulations for the actual election. An election shall be decided by a simple majority, not two-thirds or three-fourths. That majority shall be based on the total number of ballots actually cast.

CLASSICAL COUNSELOR OR MODERATOR

Advice to classis and counselor. The following usage obtains:

1. That a counselor shall be designated for a vacant congregation to serve her with advice in case of difficulty, and to represent the classis in the process of the election.
2. That the nomination made by the consistory be submitted to the counselor for approval, who must see to it that the nomination does not conflict with the ecclesiastical regulations pertaining thereto. Further, that without this approbation being obtained the election cannot proceed.

3. That the congregational meeting upon which the election takes place shall be presided over, if at all possible, by the counselor. Likewise, the calling issued by the consistory, the composition of the call-letter, and the signing thereof by all the consistory members, shall be under his supervision.

4. That also the counselor himself shall sign the call-letter as token of his approbation in name of the classis.

Every vacant congregation is to have appointed for it a classical counselor or moderator. This moderator is to be appointed by the classis itself, or, if classis is not in session, by the classical committee. This moderator is usually the minister from the nearest neighboring congregation.

The special duty of the moderator is "... to represent the classis in the process of the election . . ." of a new minister. He is to approve the nominations made by the consistory to the congregation. It is best that this approval be in writing and not just over the telephone. If possible, the moderator is to preside over the congregational meeting at which the election takes place. He is to see that the details of the call-letter are in order and that he himself signs the call-letter. Usually the moderator also has charge of the installation service when the call of the congregation is accepted.

In addition to his involvement in the election of a new minister, a moderator may serve in other capacities. The decision provides for his serving the congregation and consistory "... with advice in case of difficulty . . ." He may also install new elders and deacons, administer the sacraments, conduct weddings and funerals, etc.

PEREMPTOIR EXAMINATION

Peremptoir examination of candidates:

1. Examination shall be conducted in:
 - a. Dogmatics.
 - b. Practical qualifications, among which the following:
 - (1) Personal spirituality.
 - (2) Motives for seeking the office of minister.
 - (3) Evidence of insight into pastoral practical labors.
 - c. Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures treating specifically of:
 - (1) The nature of Holy Scripture.
 - (2) The contents of Holy Scripture.
 - d. Knowledge of the confessions:
 - (1) Meaning and purpose of the confessions.
 - (2) The contents of the confessions.
 - (3) The application of the confessions to our life.
 - e. Controversy.
 - f. Specimen of preaching:
 - (1) Preaching before the congregation in the presence of classis.
 - (2) Critical discussion of the sermon preached.
2. Further usage prevailing is as follows:
 - a. Voting by secret ballot regarding his admittance.
 - b. In case of a favorable outcome the applicant shall sign the formula of subscription.
 - c. Finally, that he be provided with written proof signed by president and clerk wherein classis declares that it judges him qualified for the ministry of the Word.

This decision concerns the classical examination, also called the decisive examination, the examination by which one is actually admitted to the ministry. Early in the history of the Reformed churches the necessity of examination of those seeking admittance

into the office of the ministry became apparent. Many who sought admittance had little or no formal training. Many were entirely lacking in the necessary gifts for the office. An examination was necessary, that the churches might determine whether or not those aspiring to the office possessed the necessary gifts for the office. The first general synod of the Reformed Churches of Holland, the Synod of Wesel, 1568, instituted such an examination.

Initially this was the only examination to which candidates were subjected. At first the classis itself conducted the examination. In time the responsibility for the examination was given over to the universities. After the Arminian controversy, the classis once again assumed the direct responsibility for the examination.

Some noteworthy points ought to be made with respect to this decision.

First, the candidate to be examined ought to produce at the classis the following: 1) his certificate of membership from the congregation of which he is a member; 2) his diploma from the theological school; 3) the call-letter from the calling church.

Secondly, the decision states that the specimen sermon is to be preached "... before the congregation in the presence of classis." This implies that the candidate shall preach at an official worship service called by the consistory that is hosting the classis. This is not consistently done in our churches.

Thirdly, the contents of the peremptoir examination as outlined by the decision appended to Article 4 points to improvements that could be made in the curriculum of our theological school. The peremptoir examination calls for candidates to be ex-

amined in the knowledge of the confessions. At present only one semester is devoted to all three of our confessions. This course is called "Reformed Symbols." One semester simply does not do justice to a study of the creeds by the seminary student. At the very least a semester ought to be devoted to each of our three creeds. Also the candidate is to be examined in controversy, or apologetics. Presently this is not even a course taught in our seminary. If apologetics is part of the peremptoir examination, it certainly ought to be part of the curriculum of the seminary.

Finally, voting on the examination is to be by secret ballot. This brings up a matter of proper procedure. The general rule in ecclesiastical assemblies ought always to be that voting is by secret ballot when the vote involves persons. It is understood that a simple majority is necessary for the candidate to pass the peremptoir examination.

PRAEPARATOIR EXAMINATION

Candidates:

1. To the final theological school examination there has been added a praeparatoir examination, which is conducted by the synod.
2. Candidates may not be called within one month after this praeparatoir examination.
3. For the consideration of calls received, the candidate is allowed the time of six weeks.
4. In case the candidate should not give satisfaction in the peremptoir examination, and the congregation nevertheless continues to desire him, he shall at the following classis be given opportunity for re-examination in those branches in which he appeared unsatisfactory.

This decision prescribes the praeparatoir or synodical examination. This is an oral examination before the synod that is conducted by the faculty of the

theological school. For this examination candidates must be recommended by the faculty and by the Theological School Committee. In practice in our churches this has become the more decisive examination. It is a much more thorough examination than the classical examination.

The contents of the praeparatoir or synodical examination are as follows:

1. Specimen sermon.
2. Introduction to Dogmatics and Dogmatics proper.
 - a. Theology.
 - b. Anthropology.
 - c. Christology.
 - d. Soteriology.
 - e. Ecclesiology.
 - f. Eschatology.
3. Old Testament History.
4. New Testament History.
5. Church Polity.
6. Church History.
7. Practica.
8. In addition, students are required to fulfill written assignments in translating, parsing, and exegeting Hebrew and Greek, the Biblical languages.

From time to time the question is raised whether it is really necessary for prospective ministers to sustain two examinations prior to ordination. Rev. G.M. Ophoff comments on this matter:

In a communion of churches with a seminary of its own and under its sole and strict control, the peremptory examination is superfluous. It is obviously unnecessary. Further, if the synod decides that an aspirant is qualified for the office, a classis cannot decide otherwise without militating against Article 31 (D.K.O.), for according to this article whatever a major assembly agrees upon by a majority of votes shall be considered settled and binding unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order. Finally, it must be considered strange that an aspirant should be examined with a view to determining his fitness for the office after he has received a call. Examinations for this purpose should precede and not follow the call.

In favor, however, of retaining both examinations are the following considerations. First, there is a decided difference of emphasis in the two examinations. The emphasis of the *praeparatoir* examination is on the knowledge and grasp of the Reformed faith of the candidate. The emphasis of the *peremptoir* examination is on the personal gifts and qualifications necessary for the office of the ministry. Secondly, even though admittedly there is some overlapping and some repetition in the two examinations, having two examinations introduces an added safeguard against unqualified persons entering the ministry.

One practical consideration is whether the classical examination ought not to be made more

important and substantive than it currently is in our churches. In practice, the synodical exam has supplanted the classical examination as the more decisive examination.

This decision also establishes certain guidelines for the calling of candidates. It prescribes that they may not be called in less than a month after their synodical examination. The purpose of this is to give all the vacant churches an equal opportunity to acquaint themselves with and call a candidate. In our small denomination this is usually not necessary. Most of the churches are familiar with the candidates.

Candidates are also given six weeks to consider calls. Ministers usually receive three weeks to consider calls. This provision,

once again, allows all the vacant congregations the opportunity to extend calls to the available candidates. Although a candidate may take six weeks in the consideration of a call, this is not required of him.

Finally, this decision provides for the possibility of the re-examination of a candidate who has not satisfactorily sustained a certain part of this *peremptoir* (classical) examination. This could be done only if, notwithstanding his failure of a part of the exam, the congregation who originally called him still desires him to be their minister. This implies that this matter would have to be voted on at a congregational meeting. Such re-examination would have to be done at the next meeting of the classis. □

In His Fear
Arie den Hartog

Distinctive Traits of True Godliness — Godly Humility

Sincere and godly humility is certainly among the chief traits of godliness. There are few exhortations that we find more often in Scripture than exhortations to humility. The inspired apostle Peter exhorts us; "Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time," I Peter 5:5-6.

Pride is the chief of all sins. Pride has its origin with the devil himself. It is, of course, true that all sin has its origin with the devil. Pride is mentioned in particular in Scripture as a devilish sin. It was the devil who first exalted himself against God, wickedly and foolishly seeking to be greater than and independent from God. He brought down the whole world into the awful sin of pride with the lie: "ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil."

Arie den Hartog is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisconsin.

That the whole world is given over to the great evil of pride is evident on every hand. Man is vain in his own imagination. He imagines himself to be wise, but he is in fact the greatest of fools. He rejects the one only true God, the Lord of heaven and earth, and fashions idol gods after his own imagination. In wicked pride man imagines that he is the lord and master of his own soul. He imagines that he can determine for himself what is good and what is evil. He goes about calling the good evil and the evil good. He has filled the world with violence and wickedness and yet boasts of his own wisdom and greatness. He mocks at the idea of the judgment of God. He does everything in his power to exclude all remembrance of God and of His holy law from his own life and from the world in which he lives. He praises those who will join him in his great wickedness, and in anger opposes those who have the audacity to challenge his opinions and judge his life-style. Every day the media reveals more shocking instances of the wicked pride of modern man. With great human philosophy he has sought to reason away all ideas of God. He boasts of the greatness and goodness of man. He glories in the great achievements of modern science and technology, and refuses to give praise to God, Who made the world and all that is in it. Scripture is full of severe warnings of the coming judgment of the holy God on all the proud wickedness of men. God will come utterly to debase and humiliate wicked man. He will come to turn all his boasted glory into shame. Already at the time of the death of proud man, God comes to turn him to the dust and to declare his nothingness in His sight. But God

will come with a far more dreadful judgment upon the proud ungodly world in the great day of His glorious appearance.

That the modern day church is no different and no better than the wicked world is obvious. Modern theology and modern day Christianity is characterized by proud wickedness. It is the outgrowth of the proud heresies of Pelagianism and Arminianism. It rejects the great truths of the sovereignty and holiness of God. It boasts of the great goodness of the natural man. It glories in its own great achievements, its super-churches and world-wide evangelistic campaigns. It tolerates in her midst some of the grossest wickedness. It refuses to separate itself from the world for fear of ridicule and mockery from the world. It would rather be "wise" with the wisdom of the world, the wisdom of modern day philosophy and psychology, rather than the wisdom of the truth and righteousness of God. Therefore much of it is an abomination before the Lord.

The writer of Proverbs states that the "proud look" is the first of the seven things which God hates, and which are an abomination unto Him. (See Proverbs 6.) Those who are proud are the enemies of the all-glorious, absolutely sovereign, and infinitely great Lord of heaven and earth. To be proud is to oppose and deny God. It is to ascribe the glory that belongs alone to God to wicked and sinful man.

Humility has to do with our relationship to God. All true virtue involves the attitude and stance which man takes in relationship to God. There is a boasted human humility. This is a humility that man glories in and exalts. But when wicked man rejects God, he cannot be and is not truly humble.

To be truly humble, we must first of all have a right attitude

towards God. Modern day Christianity in rejecting the great truths concerning the nature and being of God can only be proud and wicked. True humility comes from a profound knowledge and sense of the infinite greatness, absolute sovereignty, and perfect holiness of God. True godly humility is a virtue that is born out of fear and reverence for God. The truly humble man stands in awe of the greatness and holiness of God. He is conscious of his own smallness and nothingness in the sight of God. True godly humility involves the knowledge of our complete and absolute dependence upon God. The humble man realizes that it is indeed true that without God he can do nothing at all. He does not boast of his own free will and good works. He knows that even his very life and breath and all things are from God. Without God he cannot even so much as move.

Godly humility is born out of a right knowledge of what man is in God's sight. It is impossible to be truly humble before God if one refuses to acknowledge the truth of man's total depravity. The saints of God who in the history of the church displayed true godly humility were those who knew themselves as miserable wretched sinners in God's sight. They confessed that they were vile in their nature and abhorrent in God's sight. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches true godly humility when it emphasizes that the very first thing which the Christian must know is how great his sin and misery is. Modern day catechisms which are used to instruct children and new converts in the church no longer begin that way. Rather, chapter one in modern day catechisms speak of the basic goodness of man and how worthy he is in the sight of God. Chapter two speaks of the great

things that the modern day Christian can do "for God." That is a proud theology that can only bring forth a generation of proud Christians.

Godly humility is born out of the true knowledge of our salvation. The humble child of God acknowledges that salvation is of the sovereign grace of God. The great doctrines of predestination and of justification and salvation by grace alone are the only doctrines that will make a man truly humble before God. Knowing these truths gives man abundant reason for humility. Knowing these truths spiritually and sincerely will cause the child of God humbly to render all praise and adoration to God.

God has given the truth of His Word that alone will make us humble. We as Reformed Christians ought above all to be humble. If we do not walk in true godly humility, then we deny the very heart of the doctrine we confess.

But humility of course is not merely a matter of knowing the truth formally. It is possible for a man to know the truth and to be very proud. First of all God Himself must humble us by the work of His grace. All the traits of true godliness are those which God Himself must work in the hearts of His born again children as He fashions them by the operation of His Holy Spirit according to His own image.

Pride takes on many different forms. It can rear its ugly head again and again, also in the lives of Christians. It is possible to be proud that we are the elect people of God, and imagine that because we are elect, therefore

we are better than others in the world. This is a most dreadful perversion of the truth of election, because election exactly teaches the opposite. It teaches us that God chose His people from before the foundations of the world without any regard for any good that we have done. It teaches us that God loves us though we ourselves are totally unworthy of the love of God. True humility means that the child of God with the great apostle Paul confesses himself to be the chief of all sinners and the least of all saints of God.

It is possible that we can be proud about the truth. Again that involves a most dreadful contradiction. Nevertheless, the sin of pride is such that it can manifest itself in this form. We can easily become proud that we have the truth. But then we entirely forget that all the truth we have is from God. By the grace of God alone we are what we are. It is not because of our own wisdom that we know the truth of God. All that we know is only because of the Spirit of wisdom which God has given us. And we still know so little. We have so much to learn. God still must teach us so many things. We have so little understanding and often we are so very foolish. We are still so very much dependent upon God to be taught the way of wisdom and truth.

We must manifest a practical godly humility as we live in this proud and wicked world. Our whole conversation and life must display our humble dependence upon God. When we present the truth of God, we must always do that with meekness and fear, always on guard lest tones of pride and self confidence spoil our testimony. We must always be steadfast in the truth. But we must not imagine that we are always right, and be ready to humbly acknowledge when we

are wrong. We always have to be so very careful when we speak of ourselves. It is so easy for us to boast and to glory in ourselves both when we speak of things natural and things spiritual with respect to ourselves. The truly humble man is the one who always gives glory and praise to God alone. How often we fail in our lives to do that. True humility means that we will often be on our knees confessing our own great sin and weakness. True humility means that we count ourselves as nothing. Therefore we are not easily offended when we are judged and accused by the world. We know that we are sinners, and that we have nothing to glory in ourselves.

Humility must characterize the whole of our attitude and dealings with our fellow man. Much more, of course, could be written about this. Since our space is already more than up let us close with reference to what Paul says in Philippians 2:3 "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." What a great exhortation that is! □

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Bible Study Guide

Jason L. Kortering

Deuteronomy — Exhorted Unto Obedience (conclusion)

We have come to the concluding part of the book of Deuteronomy, which contains the last words of Moses and the record of his death (31:1-34:12). We are up to chapter 32 with our outline.

In chapter 31:19, God instructed Moses to write a song which would witness to the people of Israel concerning God's faithfulness to them. We now have this song that Moses wrote. In the introduction, Moses expresses the purpose of this song, to ascribe greatness to God (32:1-3). This is followed by the theme of the song, the faithfulness of Jehovah, the Rock, in His dealing with them (32:4-6). This is proven by reminding Israel of God's past care for them (32:7-14) even though Israel was unworthy by provoking Jehovah with strange gods (32:15-18). Again

God warns Israel that He will deliver her into the hands of her enemies, and captivity will be her portion (32:19-33). God will, however, show mercy upon His people and avenge their blood among the nations (32:34-43). Moses now came and instructed the congregation to remember their past history and to commit this song to memory for, "it is your life and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it," (32:44-47). God then instructs Moses to climb Mt. Nebo in the land of Moab and die in that mountain because of his sin at the waters of Meribah. "Ye shall see the land before thee, but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel," (32:28-52). An account follows of the blessing which Moses gave the children of Israel prior to his death, (added by someone else who also wrote the subsequent account of his death). It has an introduction in which Moses pictures God coming from Mt. Sinai with ten thousands of His saints (33:1-5). Specific blessing is given to each of the tribes (33:6-25), and a conclusion is given, "There is none like the God of Jeshurun who rideth upon the heavens. The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting

arms," (33:26-29). Mention is made of Moses' going up into the mountain and beholding the promised land in the distance. There he died and was buried, but no one knoweth his sepulchre unto this day (34:1-6). He was a hundred and twenty years, his eyes were not dim nor his natural forces abated (34:7). Israel wept for Moses thirty days, after which Joshua the son of Nun assumed leadership in the spirit and wisdom of Moses, though none that followed Moses could compare to his leadership nor perform the wonders which God did through him (34:8-12).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does Deuteronomy differ from the other four books of the Pentateuch? Why is it called "the second law"?

2. The words of Deuteronomy are Moses' summary of God's law, rehearsed in the ears of the people. Why was this necessary at this point in history? Does this method of accounting contradict Biblical inspiration?

3. Why do you think Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy? See Matt. 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. What is the relationship between Christ and the fulfillment of the law?

4. Go over the outline of the first four chapters of Deuteronomy and list instances in

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which Israel demonstrated that they were not worthy to enter into the land of Canaan. How does this prove the need for a Savior?

5. The main content of this book is the rehearsal of the laws which God gave at Sinai, chapters 4:43-26:19. Consider the following:

a. Read through the outline and make special note of their significance for the children which were in Israel. Why was this?

b. Show that repeated emphasis was laid upon the need for Israel to keep God's command if they expected God to bless them. Explain this emphasis and how it relates to the New Testament church.

c. Explain the significance of Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim and their relationship to the law of God for us. (See chapter 11 and 27.)

d. How was the institution of marriage protected? Give examples from the laws recorded here.

e. How were the poor and underprivileged to be cared for in Israel? Are there principles for us that can be applied to the church of the New Testament?

f. Why did God make so many laws that seem to touch every aspect of the life of Israel? Wasn't this like making laws upon laws which Jesus warned was the way of the Pharisees? How would this be different in the church today?

6. Are there indications of the future blessing of God upon Israel in this book? Point them out and explain their significance.

7. According to Deuteronomy 34:6, God buried Moses' body and no one knows of his sepulchre. We also read in Jude vs. 9 that Michael contended with the devil over the body of Moses. How can this be explained?

8. What was Moses' role in the event of the transfiguration of Jesus recorded in the New Testament gospels? Why was he there along with Elijah?

JOSHUA — RECEIVING THE PROMISED LAND (1)

The Book of Joshua follows chronologically upon the events recorded in the Pentateuch. We have seen that the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy deal with the history of Israel that takes them to the very edge of the land of Canaan. They have endured the forty years of the wilderness sojourn, and Moses has been replaced by Joshua as the leader. They are ready to cross the Jordan River.

THE FORMER PROPHETS

Having said this, we should acquaint ourselves with the fact that the Book of Joshua is listed in the Old Testament Hebrew Bible under the second division as "The Former Prophets". We stated before that the entire Old Testament is divided into three main divisions, the Pentateuch, the prophets distinguished as former and latter, and the writings. The former prophets include Joshua, Judges, and both books of Samuel and Kings. The latter prophets include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve (the rest of the prophets).

Quite naturally we ask: why is Joshua listed under such a division — former prophets? In many study Bibles we find a different division of the books of the Old Testament. Most of them place Joshua, along with other books, under the heading of "historical books". Quite obviously the content of much of these books is historical. Why in the oldest division is Joshua called a former prophet?

Two schools of thought emerge in an attempt to answer this question. On the one hand,

some suggest that the reason is that the authors themselves were prophets. E.J. Young writes in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, "The second division of the Old Testament canon is called *The Prophets*, not primarily because of the prophetic contents of the books, but because the authors occupied the prophetic office." On the other hand, authors suggest that the reason for their being considered prophets lies in the message itself. Keil and Delitzsch write in their commentary: "These four historical writings (the former prophets) have been very justly called *prophetic books of history*; not, however because they all, but more especially the books of Samuel and the Kings, give very full accounts of the labors of the prophets in Israel, nor merely because, according to the early Jewish tradition, they were written by prophets; but rather because they describe the history of the Old Testament covenant nation and the kingdom of God in the light of the divine plan of salvation, setting forth the divine revelation, as it was accomplished in the historical development of Israel, or showing how the Almighty God and Lord of the whole earth continued as King of Israel uninterruptedly to fulfill the covenant of grace which He had concluded with the fathers and had set up at Sinai and built up His Kingdom, by leading the people whom He had chosen as His own possession, notwithstanding all the opposition of their sinful nature, further and further onwards towards the goal of their divine calling, and thus preparing the way for the salvation of the whole world."

If we ask which position seems the correct one, the following should be considered.

1. The authors of the "former prophets" are not clearly established. If they are called prophets on the basis of their authors being in the prophetic office, then their authenticity may well be questioned, for their authors are not even known, much less established as being prophets.

2. The content of the books is mostly history. The history is of the nation of Israel as it assumed residence in the land of Canaan. It is intimately connected with the preceding history and forms a basis for that which follows.

This leads us to take note of the fact that this is prophetic history. Canaan is a type of heaven and the receiving of Canaan by Israel is prophetic of the church's receiving heaven at the end of the ages. In the center of all this history is the coming of the Christ, the Messiah.

3. If we consider these books the former prophets and the ones to follow the latter prophets, then we can also understand why Jesus Himself referred to the Old Testament writings as the "law

and the prophets", Matt. 22:40. They constituted the majority of writings of the entire Old Testament.

There is a close connection then between the laws of Deuteronomy and the message of Joshua. As God delivered Israel out of the house of bondage, and preserved them throughout their wilderness stay, so now He gives to them the rest He promised. Their inheritance is sure and steadfast, for it is God's wonder work alone. That God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. □

Book Review

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 6, Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor; Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing Co., Cloth, \$30.95, 1088 pp. [reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

This is a volume of an attractively published set from Zondervan's Regency Reference Library. The set, when completed, will consist of twelve large volumes, covering all of Scripture. At present Volumes 2 and 3 (Genesis through II Samuel) and Volume 5 (Psalms through Son of Solomon) are not yet published.

Volume 6 is a commentary on Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel by four different authors.

On the plus side with respect to this commentary is the fact that the authors are committed to the divine inspiration, complete trustworthiness, and full authority of the Bible. Also on the plus side is the fact that this commentary is not encumbered with meaningless and unreadable references to

the original languages, but is intelligible for a general readership. Where there are references to the original, these are both transliterated and translated.

On the minus side is the fact that the commentary is rather brief and scant.

But for quick reference and for suggestions as to the meaning of the text as well as for the general direction in which the interpretation should head, there is value. In the nature of the case one cannot expect too much from a thousand pages on these four prophetic books.

The Bible version followed in the entire set is the New International Version; but there are references to other translations as well as to the original languages. □

News From Our Churches

Ben Wigger

April 15, 1988

At a congregational meeting held in mid-March, the saints at the First P.R.C. in Holland, Michigan extended a call to Rev. Jason Kortering, pastor of the Grandville P.R.C. in Grandville, Michigan, to become their minister.

Pastor Wayne Bekkering of our Faith P.R.C. in Jenison, Michigan has suffered a set-back and is now under professional care for his psychological problems and depression. Let us remember this servant of God in our prayers, as well as his family and congregation. The ministers of Classis East share in the preaching duties for the Faith congregation. Despite their efforts, Faith has had at least one reading service recently — something that does not happen in the West Michigan area very often. This arrangement will continue until such time as the Lord restores our brother to the pulpit.

Many of our church bulletins reported recently that missionary-pastor Steven Houck had a recurrence of chest pains and had

undergone further tests. It was thought at that time that the blockage in his arteries continued to develop, and that surgery might be necessary soon. Since that time I have heard from several of you that Rev. Houck has received further examination which shows that by-pass surgery will not be required at the present time. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms," De. 33:27.

After March 25, Rev. R. Miersma's address will be 21 Main Road, Wainuiomata, New Zealand. His phone number is the same as before. But if you call, make sure it's important. The cost is about \$25.00 for 3 minutes.

I thank Rev. Heys for the following report on his trip to New Zealand.

"While in New Zealand I preached five times. Installed Rev. Miersma February 14 after a sermon on I Peter 5:2, 3. This was in a Lutheran church in Nae Nae where the Wellington P.R.C. meets. On February 21 I preached twice in Tai Tapu for the Watson family. They live on the South Island some 200 to 300 miles south of Wellington. They are members of the Wellington congregation, but they cannot go there very often and must listen to tapes of sermons preached in our churches. On Friday evening, February 26, I preached in the home of Mr. and Mrs. J.P. de

Klerk who live in Ashhurst, which is a good two-hour drive north of Wellington. They invited friends and neighbors to the service, and there were 17 people there that night. One lady came from almost an hour's drive on the winding mountain roads. February 28 I preached during the evening service once again in Nae Nae. That Thursday we left for home.

"We intended to go to Modesto, California on Sunday to hear Rev. Houck there in our mission field. He had returned Saturday from the hospital and was in a weak condition. I offered to preach there and was given the privilege; and they did not need to listen to a sermon on tape."

Before we go any farther, we should get caught up on some late news from the First P.R.C. of Edmonton, Alberta. On January 25 a special congregational meeting was held. The congregation decided to bid on a piece of property for a church building. Their bid, along with others, was opened publicly about ten days later. Edmonton's bid was the only one which would have met the current zoning requirements and intended purpose of the property. Unfortunately there were other bids which were considerably larger than Edmonton's, all for business ventures, which would require rezoning. Edmonton's bid was not accepted.

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

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The latest publication of the Evangelism Committee of the South Holland P.R.C. in South Holland, Illinois is now available, "The Church Today and the Reformation Church: A Comparison". This is an extensive revision and thorough re-working of a previous pamphlet by the same name. The author is Rev. D. Engelsma. It subjects the present-day Protestant Church to searching examination, by the standard of the faith raised up anew by the Lord Jesus at the Reformation.

This pamphlet has been enhanced with a new cover and with a symbol of a ship braving heavy seas. It also has easier-to-read print and an up-to-date listing of other pamphlets and tapes on its back pages. Want a free copy? Just write to: South Holland Evangelism Committee, 16511 South Park Ave., South Holland, Ill. 60473 and ask for one.

The Consistory of the Lynden P.R.C. in Lynden, Washington, in harmony with the congregation's recent decision to look at the possibility of building on their current property, has authorized the New Church Building Committee to meet with three prospective designers and bring to the consistory their findings and recommendations on drawing a building plan.

On Friday, March 25 in the First P.R.C. in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Mr. Jim Swart presented a beautiful travelogue on the Canadian Rockies and

Alaska. This presentation used two projectors and music. Refreshments followed the travelogue, sponsored by First's Young People.

March 18 the Young People's Society of the Lynden P.R.C. in Lynden, Washington, hosted a spaghetti supper. All funds from the supper were to go to the P.R.Y.P. Convention.

The Kalamazoo P.R.C. in Kalamazoo, Michigan held a Potluck Supper March 18. Everyone was encouraged to bring a dish or two to pass. An offering was taken to raise money for kitchen utensils. □

IN MEMORIAM

On February 17, 1988, it pleased our Heavenly Father to take to glory our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, MRS. TENA SIETSTRA, at the age of ninety-six years.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Corinthians 5:1)

Gerlof and Tillie Vander Baan
Herman and Edith Sietstra
Reka Sietstra
Martin and Joyce Sietstra
Peter and Lois Sietstra
grandchildren and
great-grandchildren

NOTICE!!!

Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a teacher for the 2nd/3rd grades for the 1988-1989 school year. Applicants may call Alvin Kooiker, at (712) 725-2491, or

Peter Brummel, at (712) 439-2490 [school] or (712) 439-1308 [home].

ATTENTION STUDENTS!!!

The Protestant Reformed Scholarship Committee is taking applications for scholarships to be awarded to future Protestant Reformed ministers and teachers for the 1988-89 school year. Each applicant must also submit an essay of at least three hundred words, presenting a defense of the Bible's infallibility in the context of theistic evolution. For an application, contact Dirk Westra, 7960 Ronson, Jenison, MI 49428. The application, accompanied by the essay, must be returned by June 1, 1988.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE INCREASE

At its January meeting, the Board of the R.F.P.A. decided to increase the subscription price of the *Standard Bearer* to \$12.00 per year. The Board decided that this increase was necessary after analyzing the financial statements. The Board has been able to hold the subscription price for 6 years, but now an increase is needed. Even with the increase, the subscription price will cover only 50% of the actual expenses to publish the *Standard Bearer*. May God bless our work through the means of the printed page.
Sec. of Board - R.F.P.A.