March 1968

The Unbreakable Lock

God Ordained Disputation

Portraits of the Churchfathers (IV)
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THE UNBREAKABLE LOCK

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy; he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Rev. 3:7, 8).

I read this text three times recently before it became evident what the real intent was of the words "he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; ... and no man can shut it. ..." These words have tremendous import for the body of Christ which is afflicted often times in the world. It is this text which bolsters staggering and stumbling saints when the battle of faith becomes bitter and for them desperate. Why ... take a look ... there is nothing that can bother them more than a few tormenting hours of the present time while they are in the flesh. The Christ stands before them (even though they see Him only with the weak and dim eye of faith) and he speaks to them through the Holy Spirit and he says, "I open and no man shuts and when I shut no man opens." What POWER, all the physical forces of the devil in the world can not uproot the children of the kingdom from their Head. Think of that for a time and you will see that the power of the exalted Christ can not even be touched by men. That gives comfort.

This is undoubtedly what David as the future king of Israel experienced under the persecutions of king Saul. This is what the Apostles experienced under the hands of their enemies, the church of the Jews, which church (in name only) followed them from city to city always hounding those who represented the true body of Christ. This is undoubtedly the experience of Martin Luther, and John Calvin and many others of the Reformers who were constantly in danger of the hounding Roman Catholic whore. This was the experience of the leaders of the Afscending in the Netherlands in 1634 especially on the part of Hendrick De Cock. And in a more civilized way the leaders of the Doelantic were pestered and we have all read how Domine Hoeksema was cut off in an illegal manner by a body of churches which confessed to be the purest of the Reformed line, and with that the attendant harassings of a constant threat.

Yet, it was true what Rev. H. Hoeksema wrote many years ago,1

... Even as the child of God, apart from special sins and backslidings, experiences the need of constant and always continuing conversion, so also the Church of Christ in the world is in need of continuing reformation. This is true, on the one hand, because it is always surrounded by enemies who are intent upon the Church’s destruction, who cannot rest until they have destroyed the Church of Christ. In various ways they attempt to deceive the Church into forsaking the right path—that triple alliance of the devil, the world, and the sin which still remains in the Church. Corruption is always sneaking in. The danger of the falsification of the truth, of the profaning of the sacraments, of the weakening and emasculation of discipline, of the degeneration of the worship service, and of the despoothing of church government—these dangers always threaten the Church of the Lord on every hand. ... A watch must be set over church discipline and church government, in order that the former be maintained and the wicked banished and the pious protected, and in order that the latter may not go in the direction of hierarchy. Especially to the latter we must pay attention. The temptation is so very great, and the history of the church conforms this, that the priesthood of believers is forced into the background, is denied, and that they who should be disciples of Christ now begin to lord it over the flock! (Italics mine, A.N.)

That this is true the author of this article knows from experience for he has come out of the church that with its hierarchical hands deposed Rev. Hoeksema and then went on to develop such church government for forty years. Yes, the fruit is coming increasing upon such sowing of seed! But aside and further from that is the fact that we live in the generation, that, according to the history of Scripture, e.g., Israel, and also the church of the New Dispensation, is apostate because it loses the first love. The pure zeal for truth
is lost causing such a generation to become ignorant even of their most immediate history! Such generations even lose their immediate inheritance of the knowledge of the Word of God, yet, even more if they do know it, they reject it out of hand in rebellion. And those signs appear also in our Protestant Reformed churches. Young people, this is a thing not only to be deplored, but it is a thing which should drive us to the Scriptures and that with prayer, for God is a Jealous God and He does not sanction half-love which causes an entire generation to go the way of the world. It is such things that should teach us to beseech the God of mercy to work with the Spirit of Grace within us that we may not so die the death of the wicked. For, without that one thing we will be driven into the arms of the world and sin, and that is an awful tyranny. It is bondage and nothing else. Young people, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). With this there will be the final clause spoken then, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength; and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

A.N.

1. This quote is found in the Jan. 15, 1968 S.B., which in turn is taken from Vol. 7, p. 28.

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**FEATURE**

**God Ordained Disputation**

VERNON GRAESER

"I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist." Luke 21:15

Reading this verse, many times the very opposite seems true. Have you ever tried to talk to ungodly men and explain and argue from Scripture concerning a point of doctrine or concerning the walk of a Christian. Have you ever tried to point out an error to such people basing your argument on Scripture and seeking in love to try and win such a one to Christ. I've spent hours using the wisdom and power of speech which I believed was Christ's gift to me. Did they continue to resist . . . ? Not only did they continue to resist, but their hatred mounted and their last state was worse then their first and I left in dismay. What had I done wrong? Where had I failed? Did I misinterpret Scripture? Not enough love on my part? Did Christ make a mistake? These and other thoughts passed in review before my mind's eye.

It doesn't hurt so bad if you try to explain to the man on the street and fail, you can always say, "Well after all he doesn't belong to a church, knows very little Scripture and maybe doesn't even know Christ." But what really hurts is when you talk to a fellow Christian and get no where, then you are hurt! Your trusted friend, perhaps the man you work with who goes under the banner of a Christian, someone you respected, these all turn a deaf ear to Scripture and turn on you!

Brother I tell you you do some deep soul searching, but better still do some deep Bible searching, pray for wisdom and the Lord who upbraided not will give liberally whatsoever you ask. Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. You will understand and peace will flood your soul!

The answer came to me one night, as I lay in bed reading "Bondage of the Will" while sad and disillusioned. I stumbled across the answer – no, in God's providence He directed me.

Stated Luther,

But if our mouth is weak at this point, so that our adversaries can resist. His statement that no adversary should be able to resist our mouth is false. However, this inability of our adversaries to resist does not mean that they are forced to abandon their view, or persuaded to acknowledge the truth, or to be silent. Who can force men against their will to believe or confess their error or be silent? What chatters more than an empty head? says Augustine. What is meant by their mouth being stopped, is that they have nothing to say in reply, and though they may say a great deal in reply, yet the judgement of common sense is that they say nothing. This is best demonstrated by examples.
When Christ in Matthew 22 silenced the Sadducees (vv. 23ff) by proving the resurrection of the dead with a Scripture quotation from Moses in Exodus 3 ("I am the God of Abraham," etc. [Exodus 3:6]. He is not the God of the dead but the living) they were not able to resist or gainsay. But did they therefore give up their view? How often did He confute the Pharisees with their plainest Scriptures and arguments, so that the people could clearly see that they were worsted, and indeed they knew it themselves. None the less they continue to oppose him.

"Stephen so spoke. Acts 7 tells us that, on Luke's testimony: 'they could not resist the spirit and wisdom with which he spake' (Acts 6:10). But what did they do? Yield? No! Maddened by mortification at being worsted, and by their own inability to resist, they shut their ears and eyes and suborned false witnesses against him (6:11f). See how he confutes his opponents as he stands before the council! Having listed God's mercies from the beginning of the nation's life and proved that God never commanded a temple to be built for Him (for that was what he was on trial about, the dispute centered there), at length he grants that there was a temple built under Solomon. Then he takes up that point as follows: 'But the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands!' To prove it, he quotes from chapter 66 of the prophet Isaiah. What is the house that ye build unto me? (v. 1). Tell me, now what could they reply against so plain a Scripture? Yet they continued unmoved in attachment to their own view. Whereupon he attacks them directly saying, 'Ye uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost! etc. He says that they do resist, though they could not resist."

I jumped out of bed, ran about oh, twenty feet into the living room—to the bookcase—grabbed a Calvin commentary and looked up Acts 6:10 where we find written, "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he (Stephen) spake." But did these church officials continue to resist Stephen? They certainly did—they resisted him to the death. Stephen paid for his defense with his life, for they stoned him to death. Acts 7 vs. 58.

In Acts 7 vs. 54 and vs. 57 we find written the reaction of ungodly men to the truth of the Word of God. These men mind you, were men of the so-called church. It isn't much different today. Vs. 54. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gashed on him with their teeth." And vs. 57, "Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord," And vs. 58—"And cast him out of the city and stoned him ..." ."

Calvin commenting on these verses says this concerning vs. 54—

"At the beginning the proceedings had some appearance of justice, but in the end the judges cannot contain their anger. His speech is first broken off by a murmuring and rustling of disagreement. Then they broke into a tumult of hostile shouts, so that no voice may penetrate their ears. After that they drag the holy man off to death. Now Luke gives a very fine description of what great power Satan has in driving on the adversaries of the Word. When he says that they were broken apart within him means that they were not simply burning with anger; but were stirred up by frenzy. And that fury breaks out into gashng of teeth, like a violent fire into flame. All the reprobate, over whom Satan rules, are of necessity affected in this way, when they hear the Word of God. And the nature of the Gospel is to drive to madness hypocrites, who could previously have presented a mild appearance, just like a drunkard who is suddenly roused up when he is trying to get to sleep. Therefore, Simeon ascribes to Christ as His own, the property 'to disclose the thoughts of many hearts' (Luke 2:35). Yet this ought not to be attributed to the doctrine of salvation, for it has been intended rather to serve the purpose of subduing the minds of men, and then changing them to obedience to God. But the truth is that, when men's minds are in Satan's grip, if they are being pressed by the Word, impiety is bound to break out. This is, therefore, an accidental evil. Nevertheless, we are warned by these examples that we must not entertain the hope that the Word of God will call everybody back to soundness of mind; and this teaching is very necessary to maintain our perservance. Those who carry the burden of teaching cannot perform it and carry it them faithfully, without bringing themselves into a sharp clash with those who despise God. Now since impious men who make light of the majesty of God, are never lacking, it is frequently necessary to have recourse to vehemence like Stephen's. For we have no right to close our eyes to it, when God's honor is being taken away from Him. But what will the outcome of that be? Their impiety will be the more inflamed; and so we shall appear to be pouring oil upon the flames, as the saying goes. But whatever the results may be, yet we must not spare the ungodly.
but we must powerfully suppress them, even if they are bound to spew out all the furies of hell. And it is certain that those, who wish the ears of the ungodly to be soothed with pleasing things, have not so much an eye for success, as that they are soft because of fear of danger. But as for ourselves, even if the result may not always correspond to our wishes, let us realize that firmness in declaring the teaching of godliness is a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God.  

Notice in particular what the ungodly church officers do in the case of Stephen’s trial. Stephen brings them the word of God but they do not refute Stephen’s arguments by Scripture. This is what is meant in the 15th vs. of Luke chapter 21, “... all your adversaries shall not be able to resist.” This council does not refute Stephen’s arguments by Scripture, they cannot and they know it, so what do they do—they resist all the more vehemently, not with the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God, but by physical force. Vs. 57 tells us they stopped their ears, they would hear no more appeals from Stephen, wouldn’t listen to these appeals.

They also cast him out of their midst. Vs. 58. Get rid of him! Not able to resist the force of Scripture, refusing to answer Scripture with Scripture they resort to force and legalism.

But praise be to God, Stephen rested his case in the hands of the Lord. Vs. 59, “... Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” God doesn’t need the reprobate Jew to carry on in the work of His Church. He built himself a new church of which he is the head. Praise be to God, He is not dependent on us but we on Him. May His marvelous wisdom be granted to all those that love Him.


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TRUTH vs. ERROR

by REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

A reference to predestination is probably what he intends when he says that God’s Word is an act. Because it determines history it is therefore an act: “Is not My Word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29). Cf. Isa. 55,10, (178). “That the Word of God is God’s act means ... that it is (also) a decision. It is in that way that an act is distinguished from a mere event. A mere event is in itself an occurrence subordinated to some sort of higher necessity. Above it, it has some sort of cause which occasions it ... The Word of God is not to be regarded primarily as history, and then, and as such, as a decision also, but first and fundamentally as a decision and then, and as such, as history

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also’ (178). This would seem to teach that all history, time events, the whole creation and all things, God foreordains to come to pass according to the good pleasure of His will. At least we could so use these words.

The noetic effects of sin are implied in this sentence: ‘Moreover, our knowledge of the Word of God does not take place by means of an understanding that has somehow remained pure . . . but wholly by means of our fallen understanding’ (189). It would seem that Barth takes into consideration the fact of, first of all, the Adamic consciousness with its Edenic perfection, now lost in the Fall; and, second, the unregenerated (fallen) understanding, which, in reality, is not ‘understanding,’ but rather a form of ignorance; and third, the regenerated understanding by which alone, in Christ, we know the Word of God. It would not be fair to Barth to claim that he here denies regeneration merely because he says our knowledge of the Word of God takes place wholly by means of our fallen understanding. For he does not emphasize the words we underscore, and so probably does not intend the meaning such emphasis might imply. Furthermore he believes we cannot know the Word without the efficacious working of that Word in us. Under the head, “Knowability of the Word of God” (224), he says, ‘The question cannot be how man in general and as such can know the Word of God . . . The question is how these men to whom it is spoken concretely can actually know it. And at least the trend of the answer to this question must be, that they can do so, if and in as much as this ability is given them by the Word itself.” Therefore, our knowledge takes place by means of faith. For pistis is that ‘in which the knowledge of God becomes real. - Pistis (faith) expresses more than gnosia (knowledge), but invariably it expresses gnosia too . . . the content of the concept gnosia is so included in the concept pistis that it patent how God Himself or Christ is at once the object, the meaning, the warrant and the measure of true knowledge of God’ (262). ‘Thus it is in faith . . . that we must regard the knowability of the Word of God. In the event of faith it is, as it were, born, it comes to view, it is to be sought and found’ (262-63).

In the same vein, it is made plain that there is no faith apart from Scripture, and to think anything apart from the standard of God’s Word is futile. ‘To believe aught without God’s Word is not faith but a false delusion that will nevermore come to aught, just as if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst become the Emperor of Rome . . .’. (Quoting Luther on John 4.47f. 267). It would be quite an improvement if the main body of Barth’s material were just as clear and plain as his quotations from Luther.

Ideas, words, terms, concepts – are discussed by Barth in a way which is intriguing to the Reformed thinker. He shows something of how concepts are developed and how the usus loquendi is established. The latter thru the influence of (1) a teacher, (2) a school of thought, or (3) a movement. But none of these is a channel thru which God talks unless it is the usus loquendi of Scripture or agrees with the Word of God. He feels it is a nuisance when uneasy souls, or those whose reading is fundamentally cursory, think they should immediately reject a theological exposition because it operates with concepts which they meet elsewhere in philosophical use. The legitimacy of this use, he maintains, is decided by the context in which they occur. The context decides the legitimacy of the occurrence of all concepts (322). Therefore, our conclusion is, the usus loquendi with which we must have to do, if indeed it be determined by an individual, a school, a movement, must be that of (according to) the individual author of Scripture, the school of the prophets and the movement of the apostles (the Church led into all the Truth).

Barth continues his thoughts on the meaning of concepts. “The Roman Catholic definition of the concepts ‘dogma’ and ‘dogmatics’: according to it a dogma would be a truth of revelation defined by the church; and dogmatics the combination of a commentary upon these dogmas” (304-05).

‘In the . . . Greek O. T. and N. T., the word ‘dogma’ meant primarily a behest, a statute, a decree. E.g., the ’law of the Medes and Persians’ mentioned in Dan. 6.16, because of which Daniel is put into the lion’s den, is a dogma; the command, which according to Lk. 2.1 went forth from Caesar Augustus, is a dogma; according to Eph. 2.15, Col. 2.14 (Gr.) the decrees of the O. T. Law are dogmas.
"But there is also a second meaning of the word in antiquity to be considered, that of a doctrinal proposition in philosophy or in science generally, emanating from an individual teacher, a school or movement; and it is apparently with more of the latter than of the former significance that the word . . . passed over into the usage primarily of the Greek Church . . . But . . . Augustine (et al) were still unacquainted with it in this significance or did not wish to use it, in fact as late as Thomas Aquinas it is seldom used with this meaning (305).

"We make the point, that even we, though, of course, in a way to be explained in greater . . . detail, acknowledge that there are dogmas in the sense of this definition . . .," i.e., the doctrinal proposition acknowledged and confessed by the Church.

In this Roman sense of "dogma," i.e., a doctrinal proposition in philosophy, "dogmatics would be a dialogue by the Church with herself, by the Church of today with the Church of yesterday" (306) which in itself is necessary to do; but dogmatics must not "exhaust itself in that"—otherwise the church merely talks to itself. It is not a channel thru which God talks. Thus Barth concludes, and we rather concur, that "Dogma may . . . be defined as Church proclamation, so far as it really agrees with the Bible as the Word of God . . . dogma is church proclamation in real agreement with the Word of God" (308).

"And so . . . a dogma . . . is also a 'doctrinal proposition' . . . which can teach us and be a dogma, only so far as it 'goes forth' from God as the decree 'went forth' from Caesar Augustus . . ." But he says so much in between, where elisions are indicated, so much that is confusing and muddled, that we cannot be sure what he means!

However, we do know what the following means, taken from page 171, as it is always easy to grasp the meaning of Luther as quoted. "God's Word is a floweret, i.e., the longer the dearer . . . That is, whose once grasps the God's Word properly, loveth it so fondly that he always desireth it more and more" (Sermon on Luke 5.1-11, 1534). The great Luther certainly believed the Word of God to be so dear as to live and die by it. So Kohlbrugge confessed that his only comfort in life and in death was that he belonged to his faithful Saviour Jesus Christ for time and eternity. Hear his beautiful testimony: "Therefore if I die—but I die no more—and some one finds my skull, let this skull still preach to him, saying, I have no eyes, yet I behold Him; I have neither brain nor understanding, yet I comprehend Him; I have no lips, yet I kiss Him; I have no tongue, yet I praise Him with you all who call upon His name. I am a hard skull, yet I am quite softened and melted in His love; I lie outside here in the churchyard, yet am I within in Paradise. All suffering is forgotten. That hath His great love done for us, since for us He bore His Cross and went forth unto Golgotha" (255). True Christian doctrine—and experience! Barth could say, "I wish I had said that!"

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PORTRAITS OF THE CHURCHFATHERS

(IV)

ATHANASIIUS

PROF. H. HANKO

On occasion, as the times demand, there appear on the stage of church history unusual men, highly gifted, stalwart in the faith, not afraid to stand alone against an army of those arrayed against them. God puts these men on the center of the stage because the times are critical. The faith needs defending and the church is in danger of being defeated. Such a man was Luther.

Such a man was Calvin. Such a man was Gomarus at the Synod of Dort. Such a man was Athanasius—with whom this present sketch has to do.

In his defense of the faith, the name of Athanasius became almost synonymous with orthodoxy. In his battle against heresy he suffered untold grief. He was banished no less than five times. In his struggle he was
strengthened only by the hand of his God. In the turmoil he (and the church with him) remained faithful and ultimately emerged victorious.

The controversy was most important. It dealt with a fundamental article of the Christian faith: the divinity of Jesus Christ. It was in Caesarea Philippi that Jesus asked His disciples: "Whom do men say that I am?" After several answers were given by the disciples to this important question, Jesus put the question directly to them: "But whom do you say that I am?" It was to this that Peter, as spokesman of the rest of the disciples, said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus told Peter that this had not been revealed to him by flesh and blood but by God in heaven; that this truth was the Rock upon which the Church would be built; that built upon this Rock the gates of hell would never prevail against the Church.

The rock was under attack in the days of Athanasius. If the rock was destroyed, the gates of hell would indeed prevail. So serious was the issue.

We shall have to go through a bit of intricate doctrinal thinking to understand this.

In our last article we discussed the brilliant, but sometimes eccentric Origen. He also had views on the divinity of Christ but his views were far from clear. He had taught, without equivocation, that Christ was the eternal Son of God. But he had, at the same time, insisted that Christ, the eternal Son of God was subordinate to the Father, not equal with him. This subordination was due to the fact that the Son of God was really created—although His creation was eternal. Origen was of the opinion that only in this way was it possible to maintain three separate persons within the trinity.

Here was the real crux of the controversy. Everyone appealed to Origen in support of their position. The orthodox appealed to Origen in support of their contention that Christ was the Son of God. They pointed to the fact that Origen had taught that Christ was eternal just as God is eternal. But the heretics also appealed to Origen, and with equal justification. They pointed out that Origen taught that the Son was created, that the generation of the Son was not rooted in the being of God as a necessary part of the triune covenant life of God; but rather that it was an act of God's will. Hence, Christ was a creature and not divine.

No wonder there was trouble. And if we are to understand the important place which Athanasius occupied in the history of the church we have got to understand this trouble.

There was a man, Alexander by name, who was bishop of the church in Alexandria in Egypt where Origen had taught. As bishop of the church in Alexandria he was also metropolitan of the whole of Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis. He was responsible for the defense of the faith in this large area.

There was an elder in the church of Alexandria Arians by name. The man was an elder of considerable ability, learning and piety. But he was a heretic. Around the year 320 he began to teach views which denied the divinity of Christ. He taught that Christ was created, that Christ was therefore not of the same substance as the Father, that He was therefore not eternal. Christ was inferior to God. It is true that He was the greatest of all men. He was as much like God as it is possible to be. Yet He was not God. Arianism itself put it this way:

'Ve must either suppose two divine original essences without beginning, and independent of each other; we must substitute a Dyarchy in the place of the Monarchy; or we must not shrink from asserting that the Logos (Christ) had a beginning of his existence, that there was a moment when he did not exist.'

Alexander, the venerable bishop of Alexandria, heard about these strange teachings of Arianism and was not about to permit them to be taught within his churches. He called a local synod of the various churches under his jurisdiction which dutifully condemned, deposed and excommunicated Arius and his followers. Arius was forced to flee the land and the people hostile to him. He went to Palestine and Nicomedia where his views were more readily accepted.

But Alexander could not rest with this. While his immediate concern was for the churches in Egypt, he had a certain responsibility for the churches throughout the empire. And so he composed letters of warning which he sent to all the churches urging them to follow the example of the Egyptian church and prevent Arians from
teaching his views. He succeeded in stirring up a terrible storm of controversy within the church with bishop opposing bishop and churches torn by dissension and conflict.

At this point we must introduce another man by the name of Constantine the Great. He had come to the throne of the empire after the vicious reign of Diocletian. (Novels have been written about this emperor of the Roman empire, the best of which is probably “Constantine” by Frank G. Slaughter. It is worth reading.) This emperor had carefully weighed the policy of persecution which his predecessors had followed in their attempts to destroy the church. He saw readily that this policy had proved to be a complete failure. He was further aware that the Roman Empire was in danger of disintegrating and that it could very well be that Christianity would prove exactly the one force within the empire which could preserve it intact. And so he took a position favoring Christianity, giving toleration to the Christian religion and even bestowing upon it many temporal benefits. But no more than he made this policy official in the empire he saw these same Christians whom he was so generously favoring now turn against each other fighting bitterly over doctrines which he did not understand and cared less about and threatening the unity of the empire with their dissensions. It was all strange to him. Looking to Christianity as the one hope of the survival of the empire he now faced the prospect of Christianity itself tearing the empire to pieces. It could not be tolerated. He announced, with imperial haughtiness, that all controversy had to cease because the struggle was about “an unprofitable question.” But he did not know that the truth was more important than politics; that heresy was more dangerous than the destruction of any empire; that the battle being fought was more important than any battle waged by Rome’s legions in her conquest of the world. The controversy continued unabated.

In desperation he called all the bishops together to a council meeting. It was to be held in Nicea in the northern part of what was then Asia Minor.

Hitherto, in the year 325, the twentieth of his reign, the emperor summoned the bishops of the empire by a letter of invitation, putting at their service the public conveyances, and liberally defraying from the public treasury the expenses of their residence in Nicea and of their return. Each bishop was to bring with him two presbyters and three servants. They traveled partly in the public post carriages, partly on horses, mules, or asses, partly on foot. Many came to bring their private disputes before the emperor, who caused all their papers, without reading them, to be burned, and exhorted the parties to reconciliation and harmony.

(Schafl, History of the Christian Church.)

Some of those present still bore in their bodies the marks of the Diocletian persecution. They had to be carried in unable to walk because their limbs had been pulled apart on the racks of the emperor preceding Constantine. But there convened in far-off Nicea one of the greatest council meetings in the history of the church.

We shall have to continue our story with another issue.

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**CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS**

Most of you, I am sure, are acquainted with the 1966 Christian Reformed Synod’s decision concerning the film arts. This subject has been much discussed, and is still being written about. I ran across an article in the February 9, 1968 issue of The Banner, written by Rev. Leonard Greenway, entitled “Shall we Patronize Hollywood?” The article was well-written and stimulating, and I would like to share it with you.

Rev. Greenway is concerned about the minority of young people in the Christian Reformed Church who do not attend movies because of the moral quality of the industry. Rev. Greenway poses this question: “Because Hollywood has come to represent so much that is indecent, immoral, and promiscuous, should the Christian encourage the production of its commodities by his patronage and his presence?” He answers this question concisely and clearly by showing the main characteristics of the new cinema: “Violence . . . Sex . . . Art,” and then sharply condemning Hollywood.

He says that it is true that “the film arts as actualized in the cinema and television is a legitimate cultural medium to be used by the Christian in the fulfillment of the

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cultural mandate.” The author also says, “certainly there is no argument whatsoever with the synodical position that ‘the products of the film industry must be judged on their merits in the light of Christian standards of excellence.’ ” He closes with an appeal to Christian Reformed young people to “stand apart from this wicked industry and to do so forthrightly. These are days that call for the exceptional Christian—the Christian who is willing to be unpopular for Christ’s sake. Shall we patronize Hollywood? No! Until Hollywood cleans up its house and its name, let’s boycott it, and let’s tell the world why.”

I say “Amen.” While I do not go along with Rev. Greenway’s concurrence with the synodical decision on the film arts, being principally opposed to drama, I heartily agree with his condemnation of Hollywood. But it looks as though we’ll have to boycott Hollywood forever . . . when will it clean up its house and its name? * * * * *

While glancing over the religious page of the Grand Rapids Press of Saturday, February 10, I noticed several sermon topics for the next day’s sermons that interested me. I would like to share them with you because I believe they give an accurate picture of today’s ecclesiastical world today.

The topics ranged from those of churches far down the road of apostasy to those who are fast becoming victims of that malady. Methodist topics included everything from “Get Where the Action Is” to “Men of Good Will” and “Order or Justice.” Congregationalists had a choice “Trying the Things that are Different” and “Getting out of a Tunnel,” among others.

Coming into the Reformed community, a little closer to home, we find “Stop! Look! Listen!,” “Promiscuous Preaching,” and “Fighting God?” among Reformed Church topics. Among Christian Reformed topics we find “God and His Rivals,” “Sink or S.W.I.M.,” “Christian Living in an Affluent Society.”

Do these sound like good, solid, Biblical foundations for sermons? How much exegesis will there be? How much philosophy, psychology, and social gospel will there be? We are told in Scripture that great apostasy will be one of the signs preceding Christ’s second coming. The prophecy of Scripture is being fulfilled now all around us. Even though all others may depart from the truth, let us stand firm, preserving the Scriptural antithesis in the face of this great evil.

MARK HOEKSEMA

FROM THE PASTOR’S STUDY

REV. G. LUBBERS

"BECOMING AN EXAMPLE OF THE FLOCK"

“. . . but be thou an example of believers, in word, in conversation, in love, in Spirit, in faith, in purity.” — I Timothy 4:12

We all must lead exemplary lives. We must not simply have lives which are beyond reproach and censure; lives which are border-line, playing with sin, and really flaunting the spiritual nature of the law of God. Our lives must always be such that they are such as commending themselves to be imitated.

The English term example is worthy of notice. It is derived from the Latin verb:
ex-emplum, fr. ex-inere: to take out. It means that something is taken out of the rest, a part from the whole. It is interesting to notice that the Dictionary, gives the following usages of the term:

"1. A particular item, fact, incident or aspect that is representative of all or a group type."

"2. Someone or something that serves as a pattern to be imitated, whether good or bad."

"3. A parallel or closely similar case, especially when serving as a precedent or model."

"4. A punishment inflicted on someone as a warning to others, as when makes public example of." (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary.)

In the King James Version of the Bible the term “example” is used interchangeably with “ensample.” Both terms are the translation of the same word in the Greek language. In the New Testament Scriptures we have four different words translated in English by the term “example.”

The first instance of these is: δειοντα. In Jude 7 we read “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set for an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” This is very instructive for us and full of warning. This is purely an act of God, the sending fire from heaven, to destroy the wicked and the proud. Lot had been delivered, and God did not destroy the righteous with the wicked. Here the “example” is the punishment inflicted on these cities as a warning to others. God made a public example of these cities. They are an example of all who God will destroy with the breath of His mouth causing them to suffer the “vengeance of eternal fire.” This vengeance belongs to God alone! We are never to act this part of making people a public example of our wrath. We are to give place unto wrath, and not to try to act the part of the Judge of all the earth!

A similar instance of the usage of the “example” of the judgments of the Lord we have in the Lord’s dealing with unbelieving Israel. This was written as an example to us that we should not walk in the same unbelief. In I Cor. 10:11 we read, “Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our ad-
in knowledge and in intellectual achievement, but also in godliness and purity. It is good to notice that this we must "become." The Greek verb is "ginou" present imperative, second person singular. It means: keep on becoming constantly. It is the continual, prayerful struggle and battle. Such is a battle in the field of athletics to be an example to all others in conduct and in performance. But such it is also here for the believers, to be such an example of believers: one taken from the whole to be a pattern of conduct to all!

Here is the golden rule: do unto others as ye would have them do to you. Be to others as you would have them be to you as an example!

Paul singles out the following perfections for Timothy, wherein to be an example of believers and to believers: in word, in conversation, in love, in Spirit, in faith, in purity. Perhaps the last perfection mentioned is the sum-total effect of all the rest.

Purity! What is it?
Again we wrote concerning this in the past: "We believe that the term 'purity' (agnieia in Greek) is placed last with a certain emphasis. It sums up all the other factors here enumerated, such as, words, conversation, love and faith. This purity must not be taken in the sense that moralism would reach purity, leaving God out of the picture, but it must emphatically refer to the spiritual ethical purity of the sanctification which is ours through the Spirit of Christ. It is the purity of heaven, of the spiritual man, of the new man in Christ, in true righteousness, righteousness and holiness. It is the purity of godliness, which is not merely a matter of form and convention, but a life which has the power of godliness..."

Are you such an example of believers?
Are you a living member of the church, who will forever remain such?

CRITIQUE

AGATHA LUBBERS

TEACHING THE SCIENCES (4)

Charles Darwin and the Theory of Evolution (continued)

That Darwin was not simply posing some slight variations in truths that had been believed for centuries is evident when one considers the fact that in 1871 The Descent of Man was published by Darwin. This book took a much longer step in the same fundamentally wrong direction which had been taken in the Origin of Species. The implications of the theory of natural selection and the survival of the fittest become manifestly clear in this later book of Darwin. In this book, The Descent of Man, Darwin denies that man's sense of right and wrong is God-given and he concludes that man has descended from some lowly form of life.

The main conclusion arrived at in this work, namely, that man is descended from some lowly organized form, will, I regret to think, be highly distasteful to many. But there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians. The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind — such were our ancestors. These men were absolutely naked and bedaubed with paint, their long hair tangled, their mouths frothed with excitement, and their expression was wild, startled, and distrustful. They possessed hardly any arts, and like wild animals...
lived on what they could catch; they had no government, and were merciless to every one not of their own small tribe. He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins. For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreadful enemy in order to save the life of his keeper, or from that old baboon, who descended from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practices infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions.

Men may be excused for feeling some pride at having risen, though not through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale; and the fact of his having been aboriginally placed there, may give him hope for a still higher destiny in the distant future. But we are not here concerned with hopes or fears, only with the truth as far as our reason permits us to discover it; and I have given the evidence to the best of my ability. We must, however, acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system—with all these exalted powers—Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.

For anyone who understands and believes the Scriptural account concerning the origin of man, that which Darwin writes must be abhorrent. It should be completely obvious that herein Darwin is a blasphemer. It is as if he sits on the lap of the Sovereign of heaven and earth—the Sovereign who sustains all things by his providence—and gives to that Sovereign an outright slap in the face.

Principles work through. Anyone who wishes to hang his hopes on one tread of the evidence that science pretends to submit concerning the origin of man is doomed. He is doomed both spiritually and ethically. He is on the broad road that leads to destruction.

To deny the popularity of theory of evolution and the working out of this theory by Darwin is simply gross folly. One has simply to take into account the overwhelm-

ing number of the intellectual elite who consider it gross foolishness to believe the Scriptural account of earth history. Darwin's Origin of Species was tremendously successful in terms of sales. Sixteen thousand copies were sold in seventeen years. What he said was revolutionary and affected every area of education.

Philosophers and scientists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century adopted Darwinism. Darwinism is not dead today, either. Scientists were looking for a plausible theory that would eliminate the Creator. Thomas H. Huxley said: "The Origin of Species provided us with the working hypothesis we sought. Moreover, it did us the immense service of freeing us forever from the dilemma—refuse to accept the Creation hypothesis and what have you to propose that can be accepted by any cautious reasoner?"

Wilbert H. Rusch, professor of science, at Concordia Teachers College in Seward, Nebraska, is one of the contributors to the book Darwin, Evolution, and Creation, edited by Paul A. Zimmerman. He concludes concerning Darwin as follows:

... it seems as if Darwin's prime claim to fame lies in this, that at the precise time when fear and dislike of God was on the increase he happened to synthesize the previous evolutionary theories into a single presentation, clothing it in a hypothesis that seemed adequate to explain the marvelous adaptation of living things, by the mere action of natural forces, without the necessity of bringing in divine intervention.

**BOOK REVIEWS**

**Job Our Contemporary**


This book has five chapters which are entitled as follows: 1) Adversity Versus Integrity, 2) Sickness Unto Death, 3) Unsatisfactory Orthodoxy or Fallible Fundamentalism, 4) The Necessity of a Mediator, 5) The Sufficiency of Grace.

It is evident from various facts that are brought forth from the original Hebrew that the author of this book is well acquainted with Hebrew and this has a very favorable effect upon his exegesis of the text. This is enough already to commend the
book to the reviewer, because there is very little real work done on the Old Testament in our day. The effect that this has on the author's comments is favorable because it is plain that the author's soul is moved by the Scripture and he reveals this in his book. Cf. pp. 17, 24-25, 47 e.g.

To quote one passage which I liked from page 24),

Not in all Scriptural literature is there another such human rebel revolting against God and His government. A later Scripture says: "You have heard of the patience of Job." So, we have a misinterpretation which has become a cliche. The word actually means endurance; in effect, "You have heard how Job had to take it." This translation solves a long-standing puzzle, because it is the impatience of Job that characterizes most of his statements. The tenth chapter is typical of his attitude: revolt, yet at the very moment of declaring that he is rebel, accepting whatever God will bring into his life. Once again the attitude of acceptance departs and once again he is in revolution against the government of God. He is seen wrestling as a man wrestles in the ring with his adversary, struggling against his God, yet declaring that all his hope is in Him. He is in flight from God, yet longing to encounter Him as an I to a Thou. Such spiritual ambivalence is the curse and the experience of a great many of us in this day.

And these things we found to give thrust to the book culminating in the chapter on Sovereign grace, which is sufficient. And he concludes the book with this, "Nowhere in Scripture is a greater honor paid to merely mortal man than this; that he is used to refute the slander of the prototypical Slanderer; that he is used as God's own witness; that God counted on him, through agony and darkness, yet to cling to his Creator."

Yet there are deficiencies in the book which decrease its value, for instance, the chapter, "Unsatisfactory Orthodoxy or Fallible Fundamentalism." This dualism we take to be improper for Orthodoxy may certainly be distinguished from Phariseeism which Scripture even condemns. And one need not be forced into receiving an unorthodox fundamentalism because of such a false dilemma. Yet as we said before there is much to commend this book even though the price is to my mind somewhat prohibitive.

As an after thought we would like to add that the chapter entitled The Necessity of a Mediator, is especially nice because he elaborates Job's experience here considerably. With these opinions we recommend this book.

A.N.

Flame of Anger:


There are many good things about this novel and one of the chief points is that the author is well acquainted with Africa, its people, the nature of these people, their environment, their customs, habits, worship, the political movements, and even the land. Then again he has tremendous ability in drawing word pictures both of the land and of the character of the people which he writes about. This all leads to very vivid impressions on the part of the reader. And further, the book is very readable and the narrative flows fast enough so that the reader does not get sick of it.

The main character is a young woman by the name of Cheptumi who in her youth is a rebel by character. This young woman eventually leaves her tribe to seek her lover (from another tribe, which is prohibited by the old customs) and in so doing she makes a journey on foot across the desert of Kenya or East Africa. This journey is revealing of Cheptumi's character and inner motives. But I think that it is here also that the author begins to draw an unreal character (at least to staid materialistic American standards).

The merit of this book is the very discerning portrayal of one of those characters, who against all opposition goes against all things taught to him or her. The fruit of such rebellion is shown with the ambivalence between the old way and the new. In this case it is very aptly drawn in the subjective workings of Cheptumi between the witchcraft of Africa and the Christian religion. The thing which is wrong here is the improper drawing of a picture of Cheptumi "surrendering herself to the Lord," yet it is here, especially in the background of African witchcraft, that it would be nice to see such a portrayal along Reformed lines. How, for instance, God in His providence breaks the heart of the sinner, only to draw him again in irresistible grace. This would have been a tremendous book if that had been done
because the author has great insight into the nature of man and this could have been elaborated considerably.

One of the things which impressed me also was the adequate trouncing the author gives to the mainstream of African modern life which is spending itself in the pursuit of “the here and now, the concentration of all effort into making a nice world” and with this movement the rejection of a hope which looks toward the renewal of all things.

With these things in mind we recommend this book even with its basic flaw. And further this is an adult novel.

A.N.

from, for, and about our churches

by JUDY LUBBERS

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Membership
Mrs. J. Bouwkamp from Holland was granted a certificate of dismissal upon her request.

Miss Lois Bruinsma from South Holland made public confession of faith on March 3.

South Holland received the membership papers of Mrs. Henry Leuting, nee Marcella Van Der Zee, from the First Christian Reformed Church in South Holland.

Deaths
On January 17 Mr. Hohn Haak, a charter member of the South Holland congregation, was called home.

Birthdays
Mrs. Yonker from Holland celebrated her 91st birthday on February 12. She still attends church regularly and members of the congregation provide her with transportation. On February 4 the Ladies’ Society from Holland held their meeting in her home in observance of her birthday.