

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

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Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Business Office: Mr. James Dykstra, Bus. Mgr.
1326 W. Butler Ave., S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$5.00 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

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Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

Second Class Postage paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan

MEDITATION—

Exhorted Unto Faithfulness

by Rev. J. Kortering

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

II Tim. 3:14, 15

We need this exhortation.

There lurks within us the human inclination to forsake the things we have learned. These things that we have learned are disagreeable to the flesh; and whenever we follow our carnal desires, we will most surely

forsake them. There are all kinds of temptations round about us that would encourage us to turn away from the truths of the Scriptures and to follow after the folly of men. Our young people face these temptations when the prospect of marriage is before them, if

only the future husband or wife doesn't want to confess the same truths of the Word of God. It's terribly tempting to marry anyway and leave the church. We face this whenever our faith is tested and we have to choose between the treasures of the world and its way of life and the hardships of the people of God and the narrow place of the Christian in the world. It's easier for the flesh to join the godless labor union and live in financial security than to refuse such membership and live with less income or even struggle to keep a daily job. The temptation to forsake the clear instruction of Scripture for worldly pleasure is always great no matter how old we are.

We must realize how important the things we have learned really are. Only then will be by the grace of God earnestly continue in them no matter what the cost. Then we will see that the only course of wisdom is to continue in them and that it is folly, yea even spiritual self-destruction, to forsake them.

What are the things we have learned?

The first word of our text indicates that there is a contrast between the things we learned and the things practiced by those who do not believe the Word of God. That "But" packs a tremendous force. In the preceding verses Paul has been describing to Timothy how terribly the natural man lives. Listen, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." verses 1-7. In the immediately preceding verses Paul referred to those in the church that would be influenced by sin and cause persecution, "but evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

Those last days of which Paul speaks are our days. One with any degree of spiritual sensitivity knows all too well that it has gotten worse and worse. Lawlessness abounds on every side, boycotts, strikes, riots, public demonstrations, and disobedience to those in authority. Our world may well be classified as pleasure mad. Today one measures his success in his daily occupation by the few hours he has to work. With an abundance of leisure time, the natural man increases in iniquity and thereby becomes a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. The license for gross immorality is being publicly granted even by many who fly under the banner of the "church". They have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. The day is here when the faithful in Christ Jesus are not safe, but become the objects of persecution and hatred. The faithful church of Christ is constantly accused of bigotry and narrow mindedness and thus considered an obstacle to worldly "progress".

Over against such iniquity Paul emphasizes in this letter to Timothy and to all God's people, "But continue thou in the things thou has learned". Emphatically Paul will tell us we have not learned open rebellion, nor to be lovers of pleasure, nor to lead captive silly women, nor to be evil seducers, but we have learned the truths of the Scriptures. These Scriptures were given by inspiration of God and through that miraculous working God has revealed Himself to us. We have learned that God is a sovereign God Who created heaven and earth and upholds all things by His providence. We have learned from the Scriptures that God is jealous of His love and directs it to His people in Christ. Man deserves no blessings of God, for he is conceived and born in sin and increases his debt daily. Christ alone is the ground of our salvation, for He bore the curse due to us for our sins and satisfied the righteousness of God. Having redeemed us from the curse of the law Jesus Christ calls us by the power of the gospel and through the inner working of the Holy Spirit raises us from the dead and infuses in us the breath of life. This same Jesus is coming again upon the clouds of heaven to make all things new, to establish the final, everlasting dwelling place in heavenly glory and to cast all the unrepentant wicked into everlasting destruction.

Having learned the doctrines of the Word of God we have also learned how to apply them to our daily living. Since we are saved by sovereign grace and called out of the darkness into the light, it follows that our life is to be in conformity with the purpose that God has established. We recognize the law that God has established and believe that if we are to live in peace with God and our neighbor, we must live within the sphere of divine law. We are to love God and the neighbor for God's sake. Instead of rebellion we have learned obedience; instead of lust, we have learned holiness, instead of a superficial religion we have learned the true religion which emphasizes the power of God unto salvation.

Paul in addressing this epistle to Timothy reminds him that he has learned the Holy Scriptures from a child. He had been taught these things. With this learning Timothy had been able to perceive the truth of Scripture and had been given the grace to understand them. He knew what was right and what was wrong. And this is true for most of us. Having been born and raised in the church we also have learned the Scriptures. We have a goodly inheritance passed down to us as we stand in the glorious Reformed line of the covenant.

Not only have we learned the truths of Scripture, but we also have become assured of them. This is still stronger. This is more than an intellectual knowing of the mind; this is very clearly a confirming of that which has been learned by the will, so that the person who has learned it also has the conviction that it is right. This assurance is two-fold. We are assured that the things we have learned from our youth agree fully with the Scriptures and are based upon it. This is important! Unless we have the conviction that what we believe and how we live is really

Scriptural, we can never know whether it is right or wrong. The Holy Scriptures are the only divinely revealed truths and they alone are able to make one wise unto salvation. Hence the child of God longs to have the conviction that what he believes is in harmony with what God has revealed. In the second place, we have the assurance that the truths revealed in Scripture speak not only to others, but also to each of us. We believe that not only there is a God, but this God is *our* God in Jesus Christ. We have the assurance that *our* sins are covered by the blood of Christ and that therefore *we* also have part in the hope that maketh not ashamed.

Hence the injunction comes to us, "*Continue* thou in those things". You know by faith what is right and true, you have the conviction that that knowledge is Scriptural; and because it is Scriptural you personally partake in it. Now do not depart from it, do not cast it aside, continue in it, think upon it, follow after it, grow in it more and more until the day of Christ.

You ask, why is this important? Why should we continue to be faithful in our confession of the Scriptures as we have learned them and as they are taught in our churches? Why shouldn't we forsake them for something else?

Paul gave Timothy two reasons, both of which apply equally well to us today.

The first was, "knowing of whom thou hast learned them". Paul referred of course to Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Since his father was a Greek, it appears that he did not take part in his religious training. From childhood's early years Timothy was recipient of these glorious truths. He undoubtedly attended the rabbinical school at Derbe; even Paul on his first missionary journey beheld in Timothy an "unfeigned faith". Subsequently, Timothy was tutored by Paul himself while he traveled with him on the missionary journeys. Much of this applies to us also. Most of us were born within the sphere of the covenant and from infancy on were taught to sing the songs of Zion and memorize the Scriptures and to pray. This is true in the sphere of the home, the school, and the church. The business of all three spheres is to teach the Scriptures.

Why should this be reason for not forsaking? Parents are instructors, teachers take the place of parents in the school, and ministers and elders instruct in the church. Why should this fact that *they* taught us be reason for our continuing in the things in which they instructed us. First, they have been faithful teachers. It is a rare gift today to have teachers that love the Word of God and teach in harmony with it. This is reason to consider the things taught; they have been faithful to the Scriptures because our instructors loved the Word of God. What's more, they have labored with love seeking our spiritual welfare. We may not cast aside lightly the truths we have learned; for our parents, teachers, and ministers have labored faithfully with tears and prayers guiding us into the paths of truth and holiness.

But, there is an even deeper reason. We need not

imagine that it is for the sake of our parents, teachers, or preachers that we should remain faithful to the things learned; in the deepest sense Christ Himself has taught us. The exalted Christ has received all power and authorizes parents in the home, teachers in the school, ministers in the church to act as His ambassadors to instruct His Word. Hence if we consider Who it is that instructed us we must conclude that Christ has done this; and He alone is the way, the truth, and the life.

The second reason is that only those things that are in harmony with Scripture are able to make us wise unto salvation. The wicked is ever, "learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth". This is folly! There is only one state that is truly joyful, and that is the state of salvation. Within the state of salvation we are free from the burden of our guilt and instead enjoy the blessedness of being righteous in Christ. Instead of being under the dominion of sin and brought deeper into death, the child of God who is saved is in principle already delivered from the corrupting power of sin and receives the grace to repent of evil and seek earnestly to do the things pleasing in God's sight.

This requires wisdom. There must be a way that leads us into this joyful state. And that way is the Word of God. The more we hold to the doctrines of the Scripture the more joyful we are; the more we walk in harmony with the will of God the more joyful we are. Hence the Scriptures are so important for us. The joy of salvation is not centered in man, but in God. We desire above all else that God's name be praised. We have learned how to do that, for the Scriptures have pointed that out to us. Hence if we forsake the truths we have learned from Christ we forfeit in that measure the joy of His salvation. When the joy of salvation is gone, God is no longer acknowledged as God.

Continue therefore in the things that you have learned!

May nothing detract us from this faithfulness. As the world gets worse and worse in these perilous times, our carnal flesh is tempted more and more. May God give us grace to continue. Do not forsake this truth because you place greater value upon a husband or wife who doesn't love this Word of God. Do not say that bread and butter is more important than this truth. Do not run away from the pure preaching because you don't like the strict emphasis of the Word of God.

Continue! Search the Scriptures, read diligently and prayerfully the Word of God, that its rays may enlighten us in the midst of the darkness of sin, till we shall enter into the everlasting day.

SCHOOL OPENING

The 1967-1968 term of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches will begin, D.V., on Wednesday, September 6, at 9:00 A.M., at which time opening exercises will be conducted. We commend the seminary and its labors to the prayers of our churches.

EDITORIAL—

Calvinistic, Premillennial, and Dispensational?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In the July 1 issue of our *Standard Bearer* p. 421, the Rev. Harbach suggests that I could perhaps give an evaluation of the theology of Lewis Sperry Chafer with respect to the question whether or not it is Calvinistic. As he surmises, we do indeed have Chafer's "Systematic Theology" in our seminary library; and therefore I am able to give an answer to this question.

Dr. Chafer's "Systematic Theology" is a very extensive work of eight volumes; and it would be impossible to give a detailed review and summary in these columns. Nor is this necessary. I will confine myself to the specific question.

In the first place, this claim of being Calvinistic is found in a biographical sketch written by Dr. C. F. Lincoln, also of Dallas Theological Seminary, and found in Volume VIII. We find there this statement: "Dr. Chafer himself said that 'the very fact that I did not study a prescribed course in theology made it possible for me to approach the subject with an unprejudiced mind and to be concerned only with what the Bible actually teaches.' This independent research has resulted in this work which is unabridged, Calvinistic, premillennial, and dispensational." (pp. 5 and 6)

In the second place, the claim that Dr. Chafer's theology is premillennial and dispensational is certainly true. One does not have to study this "Systematic Theology" very long before he discovers that it is, in fact, a thorough-going dispensationalistic theology. It was the avowed purpose of Dr. Chafer to fill what he believed was a lack in the field of theology, namely, to write a dogmatics which was both unabridged and dispensational. This purpose, I would say, he achieved completely. Not only is there dispensationalism in Chafer's theology, but dispensationalism *permeates* his entire theology.

In the third place, there are without doubt some *Calvinistic elements* (I prefer to say *Reformed elements*.) in Dr. Chafer's theology. I need not go into detail as to these elements. For the question is not whether there are elements of Calvinism present in Chafer's theology, but whether his very theology is Calvinistic. There is, indeed, a difference. I may have many elements of an automobile; but if an indispensable element like the engine or the transmission is missing, it can hardly be said that I have an automobile. Or I may have many elements of a tree; but if the very life of that tree is missing, it can hardly be said that I have a tree. Thus, a theology may have some, even many, elements of Calvinism; but if that theology is not essentially Calvinistic,—that is, if one or more indispensable elements are absent,—it can hardly be called a Calvinistic theology.

Precisely at this crucial point, in the fourth place, Dr. Chafer's theology is found wanting. Calvinism and dispensationalism are in their essence mutually exclusive. Here is an important point. Very often the Calvinistic insistence upon the sovereignty of God, and specifically upon sovereign predestination and sovereign grace, is emphasized as constituting an indispensable element of Calvinism. Now this is true, and I would be the last to deny it. What is often overlooked, however, and what must be characterized as a twin truth of Calvinism, if not an even more underlying truth, is the fact that Reformed theology is *federal theology, covenant theology*. It is with respect to the latter truth that Chafer deviates from Calvinism fundamentally, and that for the very reason that he is a deliberate and thorough-going dispensationalist. And it is for this basic reason and because Chafer's entire theology *proceeds* consciously from a dispensationalist viewpoint that I would deny that his theology may be called Calvinistic.

Finally, we may confront the question whether Dr. Chafer's theology gives evidence of being non-Calvinistic in concrete instances. My answer is affirmative.

As a first item, I would point to the fact that Dr. Chafer, in characteristic dispensationalist fashion, holds to two elections,—an election of Israel and an election of the church. (Vol. VII, "Doctrinal Summarization," pp. 132-138). Now this is a decidedly anti-Calvinistic view. For proof of this I will cite that thoroughly Calvinistic creed, the Canons of Dordrecht, I, A, 8:

There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved, both under the Old and New Testament: since the scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which he hath chosen us from eternity, both to grace and glory, to salvation and the way of salvation, which he hath ordained that we should walk therein.

As a second item, also stemming directly from his dispensationalism and its corruption of the Scriptural truth of God's eternal covenant of grace, I would point to Chafer's denial of infant baptism. This is, of course, characteristically dispensationalist; it is also closely connected with the fact that Baptists are usually dispensationalist.

As a third item,—and here the relation to Dr. Chafer's dispensationalism is not at once clear,—I would point to his denial, mild though it may be, of the thoroughly Reformed doctrine of limited atonement.

Without doubt many more specific departures could be itemized, most of which stem from Chafer's dispensationalist view. Let these, however, suffice.

The above remarks lead me to a more general observation concerning this entire matter. Not infrequently we read and hear of so-called Calvinistic Baptists. These are Baptists who strive, or claim to strive, to maintain the truths of sovereign grace. Undoubtedly it is a cause for joy, in this day of Arminianism gone wild, to come into contact with those who desire to maintain the truth of salvation by sovereign grace only.

It is another question entirely, however, whether such Baptists are indeed Calvinistic, or whether the name *Calvinist* applied to a Baptist is after all a misnomer. As Reformed people, we should not be

misled on this score. For if not explicitly, then implicitly, there is behind the baptistic views of such a theology a denial of the one and eternal covenant of grace which is intrinsically dispensationalist. Baptist theology is not federal, or covenant, theology. For the same reason, I believe, it has been historically impossible to remain Baptist and to remain Calvinistic as to the truth of sovereign grace. That accounts also for the fact that most Baptists today are also Arminian.

The importance of the Reformed truth of God's eternal covenant of grace with His people is indeed great. This truth is basic. Let us appreciate it and hold it fast, both in doctrine and in life!

As To A Common Order Of Worship

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Since I am doing a bit of catching up in the editorial department, I take this opportunity to reflect on some remarks on the above subject made by brother Frank Van Baren in his letter in the July issue (cf. p. 420). I make these remarks in the hope of stimulating further discussion.

First of all, I think brother Van Baren is referring not to our liturgical forms, but to the order of worship in our denomination. To my knowledge, there is no variation in our churches as to our liturgical forms, except, perhaps, that usage in our churches differs as to dividing the Form for the Lord's Supper or abbreviating it in a second communion service. Nor may there be variation as to these liturgical forms. Their use is, according to our Church Order, binding. What the brother had in mind was the variation in the order of worship which there is among our congregations.

Secondly, I think it is correct to say that we are finding a greater diversity in this respect in our churches. As one who has the opportunity to be a guest preacher in our Michigan-Illinois-Wisconsin churches from time to time, I know this by experience. It has even happened upon occasion that I have forgotten whether a certain congregation has an organ offertory or a singing offertory, because our churches are not uniform in this regard. This is only one example. Our churches differ as to several other details of the order of worship. Probably the greatest diversity at present is to be found in South Holland, where an almost completely new order was recently introduced.

In the third place, I believe that brother Van Baren points to a factor which should not be overlooked. It is this: whatever order of worship our congregations have, that order should have a sound basis both principally and historically. In other words, we should not introduce changes merely for the sake of variety,

nor merely because a certain change strikes our fancy or sentimentally appeals to us, while there is no intelligent reason for it, nor merely out of a desire to imitate. In this connection, it should certainly be kept in mind that our order of worship has a rich historical background, one that dates back to Reformation times; and usually when one investigates that background, he discovers that Reformed principles of worship are very much involved also. Yet I dare say that some of our consistories could not even find in their minutes a formally adopted order of worship; their order has simply grown up and become established through usage and perhaps never receives any direct attention until someone suggests a change.

In the fourth place, brother Van Baren suggests the possibility of a synodically appointed liturgy committee. This is no insignificant suggestion. Our present Liturgy Committee is not concerned with the order of worship; its mandate is chiefly to correct the translation of our creeds and our liturgical forms. I would suggest that there are questions to be faced with respect to this proposal. There is not only the question of whether and in how far uniformity in our order of worship is desirable; but there is also the question as to whether this matter lies properly in the province of synod, as well as the related question of the degree of congregational autonomy which our churches have in this regard.

Then, of course, there are all kinds of questions which may be asked about specific elements in our order of worship, — beginning with the opening doxology which some of our churches have, but which some do not have.

Perhaps both the editor of "The Church at Worship" and our readers have a further contribution to make on this subject.

As To Movie Attendance

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Also in brother Van Baren's contribution reference is made to the movie question and to recent editorial comment on it. The brother raises some questions which are worth considering and, I believe, in need of clarification. After reflecting on his contribution and after consulting my recent editorials on this subject, I make the following comments:

1) It is indeed true that our churches have no synodical decision on movie attendance. Whether any local consistory has a decision, I am not in a position to say. This does not mean, however, that my article of March 15, "In Support of Movies" was a mere personal opinion. It means that the article was not expressive of an explicit denominational stand. As to the weight of that article, I would say rather that it had all the weight of the authority of Scripture behind it. And that should speak loudly to the Christian!

2) I wish to clarify the issue, which I had thought was already clear. When I speak of movie attendance, I am not referring merely to motion pictures. There is no sin in a motion picture as such; the movie camera is a very ingenious and useful invention. And if brother Van Baren means by "certain travel and adventure movies" motion pictures of travel and adventure, whether taken by professional or amateur photographers, then it certainly may be granted that such movies can be both instructive and entertaining and are not necessarily of the spirit of antichrist. When I speak of movies, however, — and I thought there was rather general agreement on that score, — I am referring to dramatic productions on the stage or on the motion picture screen. These, I believe, are without exception not lawful entertainment for a Christian.

3) Let there be no misunderstanding on the score of Christian liberty. For one thing, we must surely not restrict Christian liberty to the area of the so-called *adiaphora*, or indifferent things, things which are in themselves neither good nor evil. Christian liberty is a broader concept. It is the freedom of the regenerated and sanctified man of God in Christ according to which he willingly and out of the principle of the love of God in his heart lives and walks in conformity with the will and precepts of the God of his salvation, as revealed in His Word. It is precisely my contention that such a walk in Christian liberty will mean that the child of God willingly and out of the principle of the love of God, desirous to conform his walk to the precepts of the Lord, will spurn the movie as a mode of entertainment. And it is precisely my contention that when the Christian, who ought to walk in Christian liberty, seeks his entertainment in the movies, he is changing his liberty into license.

4) Now what are our objections to the movie? And are these objections a matter of mere logic, reasoning, sound sense; or are they a matter of the ethical principles of Holy Scripture? If by "textual proof" brother Van Baren, or anyone else, wants a literal injunction of Scripture, "Thou shalt not attend the movie," he is doomed to disappointment. The Scriptures do not engage in such legalism and spelling out of precept upon precept and line upon line. The Scriptures do not do this in *any* area of our life. Rather do they spell out the spiritual, ethical principles which must guide our life in all its facets. And it is in the light of these principles that the Christian must also view the matter of the movie.

In this connection, in the first place, if we consider the movie *materially*, i.e., from the point of view of its contents, there really is no question as to whether it is Christian or antichristian. All one has to do is consult the theater page in the daily newspaper with the question in mind, "To what do all these ads appeal?" The answer is extremely obvious to him who has eyes to see: they appeal to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life. If, therefore, I would preach on a passage like I John 2:15, 16, I would certainly include in the homiletical application of that text the warning against movie attendance. Or if I preached on Psalm 119:37, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanities; and quicken thou me in thy way," I would certainly include, among other things, the movie among those "vanities."

In the second place, — considering the movie from the point of view of its *source*, — what must be the conclusion of the Christian? Also this is not a difficult question. Whether that source is, geographically speaking, Hollywood or some other movie production center (for example, in Europe), we all know (whether as a practical matter we are willing to recognize and face up to the fact is another question), — but we all know that the movie has its source in the foul fountain of the world. Now what is the spiritual, ethical principle here? It is this: a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. In other words, the Christian is on the very face of it simply "kidding" himself when he goes to the theater seeking spiritually sound entertainment for himself as a regenerated child of God. It is patently impossible for him to find it in the theater because the very source is corrupt. Of course, if you begin to philosophize on the basis of a so-called common grace that some good can come out of the world and out of the natural man, then you can begin to justify what comes out of the world in the way of theatrical productions also. It is precisely then that

you begin to have all kinds of problems as to which are good, legitimate movies and which are bad. Then you must begin to set up official or unofficial boards of censorship to pass judgment on the movies. Then at your Christian colleges you must have a faculty-student committee to determine which films are going to be shown on the campus. Then, too, you get tensions between faculty and students as to who will have the greatest voice in such a board of censorship. This is what has happened at Calvin College especially in the past year. And it is rather peculiar that while the 1966 decision of the Christian Reformed Synod appealed supposedly to Christian liberty in regard to the (euphemistically denominated) "film arts," the result, unless they want to let the bars down completely, is not less legalism, but more.

In the third place, — and this is my most basic objection, — the fundamental ethical error of the movie (understood in the sense of dramatic productions portrayed on the motion picture screen) is that the dramatic production is always the lie, the living lie. In fact, the more the actors can succeed in lying, the more successful they are considered to be. To be successful actors they must not be themselves, but they must as much as possible be the characters they are portraying. And the audience, to be successfully entertained, must be made to live along as much as possible in that same world of the lie. The result when holy things are dramatized is blasphemy; and the result when sinful things are dramatized is a compounding of the sin. And surely, it is not a question for a Christian whether lying can be in harmony with the precepts of his God?

Finally, in this connection let me remark that in the March 15 article cited I was not busy setting forth positively my principal objections to movie attendance. I was engaged polemically against Dr. John Bratt's use of fragment of a text in support of his so-called "principle of discrimination" with respect to Hollywood movies.

5) Why do I and why do and should our churches inveigh against movie attendance? There are many good reasons for this. And the fact that there may be other evil practices against which our churches do or do not speak out strongly has nothing to do with speaking out strongly on this subject. As far as the *Standard Bearer* is concerned, a not insignificant part of its task to continue to be a testimony toward the

Christian Reformed Church with respect to the issues which led to our being cast out. The movie issue as it is currently troubling the conscience and the life of the Christian Reformed Church is a direct and practical outgrowth of the error of common grace. This is plain from the decision of 1966 which I quoted in an earlier article. For this reason, in part, I called attention to it. In the second place, I do this for the instruction and warning of our own Protestant Reformed people. And I believe our pulpits should do this also.

First of all, I believe that as a practical issue in one's world-and-life view such a matter as the movie points up dramatically the devastating practical results of the common grace theory, — a theory against which our Protestant Reformed people must be warned and the evils of which they must see.

Secondly, I believe that our people should not only theoretically be a people of the antithesis and an anti-common grace people. But they must be such practically also. It will not do to be doctrinally opposed to the theory of common grace, and meanwhile in practical life to live out of common grace principles. Doctrine and life belong together. Our life must seal our doctrine and adorn it.

Thirdly, I am cognizant of the fact that movie attendance (and in this I include movie attendance via the private screen on television) is not a mere theoretical evil among our people. When I was formerly an active pastor in a congregation, it was always a source of sad disappointment to me that so few of our young people could testify, when asked at confession of faith, that they had not indulged in the corruptions of the movie. I have no reason to believe that my experience was unique in that regard. And with the advent of television, I verily believe that the evil of movie attendance is greater than ever.

For these reasons I believe that instruction and warning are timely. I do not believe in legalism. I would not care to have our young people stay away from movies merely because "the church" says they must stay away, and certainly not merely because I say so. They must be warned against this evil, and they must indeed be instructed to walk in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, — with God's Word as a lamp unto their feet and a light upon their path.

...Must not also today the faithful, that do not hide their light, and refuse to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness and to put on another yoke with the unbeliever, suffer reproach, mockery and shame? Are we, too, not frequently confronted with the alternative of suffering the loss of position and name, of a job and our business, unless we will deny our faith, and become amalgamated with the ungodly world? And what is our choice? Listen: the choice of him that lives by grace is to suffer in the behalf of Christ! To choose the world, its name and glory, its treasures and pleasures, our job and position, even our life, is, to say the least, not to live by grace. For it is given you of grace, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake!

—H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 104

FROM HOLY WRIT—

Book of Hebrews

Hebrews 3:5-15

by Rev. G. Lubbers

**THE BASIC ARGUMENT AND
WARNING IN THIS SECTION**

In the foregoing verses the writer had contrasted the greatest from among men in the Old Testament, Moses, with the greatest of the New Testament, the Christ of God. Each was great in his own rank and place in God's house, the church of the living God. Moses was great as a servant; Christ was great as a Son and Builder of the house. Is He not the Apostle and High Priest of our profession? Are we not, in Him, partakers of the heavenly calling? Are we not holy brethren in Him?

The answer to this question is yes and no! As far as the elect of God are concerned, the answer is yes! However, this is not evident to and in the elect, unless they walk in the perseverance of the saints, and they show in their lives the evidence of election—the infallible fruits of God's elective grace. The crowning fruit of election is perseverance! And perseverance is made up experientially of walking in heeding the "Voice" of God in many "To day" situations. Ever we walk in perseverance by walking in what is called "To day." The non-elect do not walk in perseverance because they never walked in true faith in Christ at all! They are not in Christ, are no partakers of Him and all His benefits, and, therefore, they will become embittered by and by, be offended and hardened by the rigor of the journey to Canaan above, and harden their heart, as did Israel in the wilderness in the provocation, in the day of Israel's tempting God in the wilderness! Ever again the mixed multitude and the reprobate Israel will murmur against God's covenant dealings, trials and judgments which the redeemed experience in this world. The righteous must enter into the kingdom through much tribulation. And blessed is he who is not offended at the ways of the most High!

Since only those who hold fast to the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm to the end are the house of God, we are to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. Wherefore we are to take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief to fall away from the living God.

It is our conviction that the KJV is correct in placing the quotation from Psalm 95:7-11 (Hebrews 3:7-11) in parentheses. The injunction is, therefore, that we take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief. There is so much in this present evil world which would draw us away from, and cause us to apostatize from

the living God. To prevent such apostasy in the saints there is need of the means of grace, the means of exhortation and careful mutual regard toward one another. We are to exhort one another daily, while it is called "To day."

In the argument of the writer in this section we see the reality of what the fathers called the sin of separating what God has in His wisdom most intimately joined together. The fathers hold that if we separate the perseverance of the saints from the exhortations of the Word, we tempt God in the church. This writer remembers too painfully that not so many years ago there were some who walked this slippery path, when they echoed and reechoed loudly the slogan: do not tell God's people what to do! God's people walk in the ways of the Lord spontaneously, so they said! Why? Because they are Spirit-led and Spirit-filled! Dangerous talk! Practically it leads (led?) to the carelessness of the life of the antinomist, a trifling with the grace of election. Such do not desire to be admonished by the law of God as the rule for their life of thankfulness and daily conversion. They need not the precepts of the Gospel! Ah, they pretend to be above and beyond the need of the admonitions of the Gospel, and they do not give heed to each other lest there be an evil heart of unbelief in their midst. On the contrary: they allege that the elect do not need admonitions, and the reprobate don't profit by them anyway!

Nevertheless, we shall by God's grace adhere to the sound words of admonition, and give heed to the basic warning and argument of the writer to the Hebrews! Is not all Scripture given by inspiration, and profitable also for reproof and correction in righteousness, that the man of God be thoroughly equipped unto all good works? (II Timothy 3:16 f.f.)

**THE CRISP QUOTATION FROM PSALM 95:7-11
(Hebrews 3:7-11)**

There is an expression of extreme urgency in Psalm 95:1-6. The urgency is expressed in the words "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation... Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving... O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD, our maker." Thus also here in Hebrews 3:7-11 there is an urgent calling to worship God in Christ. Already in verse 1 we hear this urgent exhortation: "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profes-

sion... take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.... but exhort one another daily, while it is called To day."

This urgency is not merely of human invention; it did not originate in the heart of prophets and bards. It is not merely an excited or a devoted David who thus speaks, but it is God Himself who thus speaks to us in Psalm 95:7-11. It was the Holy Ghost who speaks in and through a David. (Hebrews 4:7) Let us, even while we are reading this essay, feel this urgency of God's "Voice." to us, giving instant and continuous heed to the same. When God speaks to us in the Gospel, we are no mere spectators, nor do we simply listen to what others have heard Him say and now relate to us. When God speaks, all hear, whether they heed the Word of God or not! May we say and confess: to me also, to me also, the Word comes. Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth! Let us say this prayerfully before the face of God.

There is a certain emphasis in this quotation — the emphasis of God's "Voice" itself. It is the oft repeated "harden not your hearts," a warning against being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. This hardening is the moral process from evil to worse. It is the process of the sin of unbelief against the clear testimony of God's Word — His voice, clear and strong, as it is accompanied by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the heart of all who hear the Gospel, whether this be in the wilderness of Sinai, or from the pulpit of some little country church in a Western prairie-land! This process reveals itself in the hardening of the heart which expresses itself in contention with God on the part of the sinner, of tempting God to wrath and fury by ascribing evil to the most High! It is really the sin against the Holy Ghost, and ultimately an open falling away from the living God as revealed in His Word, His Voice! Such a hardened sinner says: I have no desire to walk in the ways of the LORD.

Here we come to that point where we feel the force of the quotation of Psalm 95, do we not? We stand here in the either-or. Either we shall more and more come and worship the LORD, our Maker, and bow down to Him, we shall kneel before Him, even as He came to stand before us in the face of Jesus Christ, partakers of the heavenly calling, or we shall gradually lose delight in the church of God, as those who "hear the Word and anon with joy receive it," according to Jesus' word in the parable, the parable of the sower. (Matthew 13:20) Hence, the writer to the Hebrews cites for our warning and admonition the frightful example of the unbelief of Israel in the desert, and how they were condemned to die in the wilderness and forbidden

to enter into the promised land. In that great apostasy of Israel some six hundred thousand men of war died in the wilderness, from twenty years old and upwards. Thus did the Holy Ghost record this history through David for our instruction and warning; yea, thus did this Word of God resound in the ears of the Hebrew christians.

Yes, we need this word of warning. For God does not come to us with a special and individual revelation from heaven to tell us that we are personally elected of Him; that we are engraved in the palms of His hands. Nor are we favored with a trip into the inner sanctuary of God to see whether our name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life; nor are we permitted to curiously pry into the secret will of God and counsel of our redemption. Thus God does not ordain that we shall make our calling and election sure. Nay, we receive such assurance of election in various degrees and in due time by observing in ourselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure the infallible fruits of election. These fruits are wrought by the Holy Spirit in our hearts by the Gospel, and they are pointed out to us in the Word, such as, true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Thus we preach the doctrine of election for our profit, for the comfort of the godly, without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the most High! (Canons of Dordt, First Head of Doctrine, Article 12, 15).

Our confessions are in agreement with this crisp quotation in Hebrews 3:7-11 taken from Psalm 95:7-11. God works the grace of obedience and perseverance in the faith, through admonitions, warnings and threatenings. Wherefore, Today, if ye hear his voice, harden not your hearts...!

**THE TODAY CONCEPT OF PSALM 95:7 AS
QUOTED IN HEBREWS (Hebrews 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7)**

We notice that, in the quotation from Psalm 95:7, the first term is "To day." It is an adverb of time, and it expresses a certain urgency which will allow for no procrastination on the part of those who are called to the worship of the Lord. In the Hebrew language the term for To day is "Ha Yom," the day. The Greek translation is "Hemeera." The term "To day" is used here throughout in distinction from yesterday and from the endless future. We are no longer in yesterday, and we are not yet in tomorrow. The only time allotted us to serve the Lord is "today."

The writer to the Hebrews makes a special use of this term "To day," both in this Chapter and in the next. We notice this peculiar usage of the term in

It is immeasurably better and preferable to suffer and remain on the side of righteousness, Christ, God, than to avoid suffering by denying the name of our Lord, and choosing for ourselves the way of the flesh and of the world. When we face the alternative of an ethical, spiritual evil or suffering for righteousness' sake, it is infinitely to be preferred to choose the latter than to commit the former.

verse 13, where we read, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day." In verse 15 we read, "While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." In Chapter 4:7 the term "To day" is contrasted with an earlier period in the life of God's church. It is the contrast between the time of David and the time of Joshua at the time of Israel's inheriting the land.

From this usage of the term we may conclude that the term "To day" refers to an epoch-period in God's church. It ought to be quite clear that the term "To day" is not a mere adverb of time, but rather is a

basic concept of Scripture, rich in meaning; that it is of great significance for our understanding of the thrust of the exhortation that we do not harden our hearts as in the provocation. The writer to the Hebrews distinguishes the "day" of Israel's being in the desert and their finally entering into the promised land under Joshua from the later "day" of David, as well as from that much later "day," wherein a better "Rest," a Sabbath remaineth for the children of God in the New Dispensation. "To day" therefore refers to the peculiar dispensation of God in which any given saint lives in the history of God's covenant.

IN HIS FEAR—

"And Islands Of The Sea"

by Rev. J. A. Heys

At this writing we are on the largest of those islands in the Caribbean Sea which formerly were called the British West Indies. And although we are only 90 miles from the southern border of Cuba and some 400 miles from Miami and the southern coast of Florida, we are in an entirely different country with an entirely different way of life.

Christianity and the church has come to this island, even as the prophecy was given in Psalm 72:10, "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts." Of this we are also reminded in the versification found in our Psalter,

"The desert lands to Him shall bow,
And all the islands of the sea;
And kings with gifts shall pay their vow,
His enemies shall bend the knee."

From out of Asia and the land of Palestine Christianity spread into Europe, and then from Tarshish (Spain and those regions) it spread over the ocean to all of its islands. North and South America may be in this sense called islands. From the viewpoint of the Old Testament psalmist, who considered Spain to be the end of the world,—and so did all men till Columbus proved the world to be round—anything beyond the western shores of Europe was an island of the sea that stretched out into the unknown regions beyond the eye of man. In due process of time the truth of God's Word came to this island, and sincere children of God are to be found upon it; and faith in Christ is definitely here.

However, one makes a serious mistake if one thinks that an island isolated in the sea, far removed from the mainland of not only Asia but also of Europe and of America, is cut off from false doctrines and from evil

practices. Nothing is farther from the truth. A marked development of sin, and not a "common grace" restraint of sin, may be noted here after a short absence of only two years. The change is simply unbelievable. Gone especially is the Sabbath observance and reverence that characterized this island of the sea. Far more rapidly than in the communities where in the States our churches are found has the quietness and holiness of the Sabbath disappeared, to be replaced by the most open desecration and indifference.

Before we had been on the island a week we were also alerted to the fact that the "God is dead!" heresy had also lifted up its proud head here, and the blasphemous statement was well known in these parts. We heard the Jamaican Chorus which was designed to counteract this vile doctrine in song. The song which we heard was this:

"Don't try to tell me that God is dead,
He woke me up this morning.
Don't try to tell me. It is no lie
He lives within my heart.
He opened up my blinded eye
And set me on my way.
Don't try to tell me that God is dead,
I just talked with Him today."

As to the work, we may report that Elder Zwak and undersigned have been kept busy and will be able to judge the fruits of our labors better at a later date. We would like to review somewhat our calendar with you and point out a few incidents to keep you informed of what is being done.

After 3 hours and 46 minutes of flying time from Chicago's O'Hare Field, we arrived safely and on time at the Montego Bay airport and were greeted there by Rev. Frame and his "son", Rev. Ruddock, and Elder

Ritchie, who had driven in from Lucea that morning. After arranging for the car which we rented for the duration of our stay here, we obtained lodging for the night. We had spoken for a cottage which we planned to rent, but it was occupied until Thursday noon. On Wednesday we travelled to Lucea with a view to the service there that evening at First Hill, and we began to get our legs and feet and backs in shape for the very necessary hill climbing that this work demands. There is a reason why all these churches are so far off the beaten path and so frequently perched high on a hill. It is a matter of finances, and the lower lots are far more expensive. For the strong, muscular legs of the Jamaicans these hills present no problem.

That evening, June 28, we preached to a very attentive audience, choosing for our text the words of the psalmist in Psalm 89:15, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." And we have reason to believe that this congregation at Lucea, First Hill, not only heard the joyful sound but also knows it.

On Thursday we returned to Montego Bay and settled in our place of residence, unpacked our clothing and bought our groceries in quite a different "Super Market" from what is our usual custom. It took longer as well, since we had to look carefully at each item with its marking in pounds, shillings and pence. As far as canned goods is concerned, the difference is not too great, many American brands being found on the shelf. Fruit, of course, is abundant and by nature sweet because it is tree ripened.

On Friday we went to visit the church at Mt. Salem, which is a suburb of Montego Bay, and here it is that we began to hold our classes of instruction for the ministers in the Protestant Reformed Churches of Jamaica. We also travelled up into the hills and into the interior of the island to Latium (pronounced "Lashum." And, by the way, Lucea is pronounced "Lucy," and Jamaica has only three syllables and is properly pronounced as "Ja-may-ca") and were refreshed with glasses of coconut "jell," or water, as we call it, supplied by Elder Spence and his wife. Saturday, of course, was spent in preparing for preaching twice in Rev. Frame's churches.

We say, churches, because in the morning we had a service in Lucea, First Hill Church, and in late afternoon one at Johnstontown, which is one mile east of Lucea. The climb up to this church, although a little shorter than at Lucea, is as far as the last part is concerned much steeper. The text of the morning's sermon was Matthew 11:30, "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." And in Johnstontown, where we

went after a hurried lunch of sandwiches which we had taken along, the text of the sermon was II Peter 3:9, "For the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any (of us) should perish, but that all (of us) should come to repentance."

The following Sunday—after a service Tuesday night (Fourth of July in the States, but here just another day) at Mt. Salem and Wednesday night at Latium—we preached in Cambridge, which is one of Rev. Elliott's churches and Sunday, the 16th of July, we had three services, a morning and late afternoon service at Friendship Hill, which is Rev. Ruddock's church, and an evening service at Mt. Salem. As to that Fourth of July service at Mt. Salem, the preaching did not begin till 10:30 that night. Time on this island is simply something to ignore! It is judged—or misjudged—by the position of the sun, and watches and clocks are a rare item among the people with whom we deal.

That first Sunday we arrived in time to get in on the closing of the Sunday School and we heard the children recite their memory verse which was Matthew 18:3, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." We were quite interested in listening as Rev. Frame drilled with questions until he got his answers. "What must happen before we can believe? What must be there before we can be converted?" At last he got his answer, "We must be born again."

At Friendship Hill we heard a rather cute way of saying the truth that we are saved by grace and not by works, that we cannot save ourselves and must rely wholly on Christ. The statement in the peculiar, short way of the Jamaicans to express themselves is this, "Self is failure!"

"School" is being held every week and the "students" give evidence of eagerness to learn, although the heat is no help, nor the humidity, nor the noise—we intend to change the place of meeting this week—and the Reformed faith is so different from all that they have heard and been taught before. God's Spirit must apply it and give light and understanding. We depend upon Him for fruit upon our labors. But we at the moment do believe that the truth which we emphasize every school day is not only understood but received by faith, namely, that God is GOD; and all our doctrine must declare this or we are not in harmony with the testimony of Scripture. We strive to teach and show that all five points of Calvinism say this and that this is what we must always say in all of our preaching.

ATTENTION: R.F.P.A. MEMBERS

Annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association will be held, Thursday, Sept. 21, D.V., in the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, at 8:00 p.m. Rev. J. Kortering will be the speaker. Three Board members are to be elected from the following nomination: George De Vries, D. Kooienga, G. Schimmel, H. Kamphuis, H. Velthouse, and R. Teitsma.

The R.F.P.A. Board

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

The Office of the Deacon

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

In our last article we emphasized that the deacon's office, apart from the question whether or not Acts 6 records its historical origin, is divinely instituted and has the sanction of the Word of God. Christ will have deacons in His church as well as elders and ministers of the Word. The church that has no diaconate, or where the diaconate fails to function according to the mandate and calling of God's Word, suffers a very serious lack of something that is essential to her existence. The church cannot completely consummate her calling without the labor of the deacons.

It is important that the members of the church understand this. One is easily left with the impression that office-bearers and members alike in our days think of deacons merely as some sort of financial agents of the church. They are to gather the funds, chief of which in the minds of many are the budget contributions for the running expenses of the church. Of these funds they are the custodians, and it often seems that their responsibility ceases with their maintaining the general fund of the church in good order. Others tend to regard the deacons as some kind of assistants to the ministers and elders. This is especially true in the Episcopal and Roman Catholic churches where deacons do not engage in the work of mercy but rather, as assistants to the clergy, are called to exercise themselves in various details pertaining to the worship. To the deacons are assigned all kinds of menial tasks, with the result that their unique calling is either obscured or forgotten.

Reformed churches are not entirely free from this tragic error. Although at the time of the 16th century reformation and for some time after it was the Reformed churches that seemed to grasp the necessity and importance of restoring all the offices of the church to their rightful dignity according to the Word of God, the offices were not always properly maintained. Calvin stressed the ministry of mercy as an integral part of the life of the Christian church. He claimed to find warrant for two types of deacons; those who devoted themselves exclusively to the care of the poor and those who ministered to the sick. That much emphasis was laid on the latter is understandable, when we remember the comparatively poor medical facilities which obtained not only in Geneva but throughout Europe in his day. If deacons did not minister to the sick and the dying, they were often forgotten entirely.

For a long time the diaconal office was held in high honor in all the French and Dutch Calvinistic churches.

It is said that as late as the eighteenth century a Lutheran pastor, visiting in the Netherlands, expressed his amazement at and appreciation for what the Reformed churches did through their diaconates for the alleviation of the poor — something which he could find nowhere in his own church. Deterioration, however, has crept in from time to time. Many diaconates seemingly are more interested in maintaining sizable endowments than in helping the distressed. And not infrequently where the poor are helped, it is done in an offensive way. There is abundant room to review the functions of this office carefully and the time is now to make the necessary amends.

The times in which we live are marked by unprecedented material prosperity and the number of needy has in consequence been reduced. Besides, unemployment and medical insurance, together with old-age pensions and a variety of retirement plans for the average laborer, have become the order of the day. The chief purpose of the diaconate is forgotten and in many instances where there is evidence of need, aid by the deacons is even scorned. This is a most unhappy circumstance. Apart from the question of where the blame for all this must be placed, it is time that the church confronts the reality and takes positive steps to renovate the diaconate. Even though there may be no real needy in a certain congregation for a time, the ministry of mercy must go on. Such a church has a God-given duty to assist sister-congregations where many may be feeling the pinch of poverty. Reports of situations of dire need throughout the church and world should not leave the hearts of those called to minister Christ's mercy cold and indifferent, but should stir the hearts of both deacons and congregations to bring liberal alms. When there was no need in Galatia, Macedonia, and Corinth, these churches were expressly commanded by God through Paul to bring their gifts for the saints in Judea. The principle of this action remains unchanged to the present time and any church that flouts this principle will suffer tragic spiritual repercussions.

If then the diaconate is to be maintained according to the ordinances of God's Word, we must emphasize first of all the care of the needy. Then we show that we truly believe the Savior's word that we have them always with us. This emphasis, then, is also the central point of significance in the description of the office of deacons as found in our installation form. This form speaks of the office as consisting of two functions. We quote:

...that they in the first place collect and preserve with the greatest fidelity and diligence, the alms and goods which are given to the poor; yea, to do their utmost endeavors, that many good means be procured for the relief of the poor...

The second part of their office consists in distribution, wherein are not only required discretion and prudence to bestow the alms only on objects of charity, but also cheerfulness and simplicity to assist the poor with compassion and hearty affection; as the apostle requires, Romans, Chapter 12; and II Corinthians, Chapter 9. From which end it is very beneficial, that they do not only administer relief to the poor and indigent with external gifts, but also with comfortable words from Scripture.

We note here that the installation form says nothing about the deacons collecting monies for the general operation of the church. In every church these matters are entrusted to the care of the deacons. We are not now objecting to this practice, but we are pointing out that this work is not the essence of their office. When the deacons of a church do this and only this, they are not fulfilling the responsibilities of the office to which Christ calls them. Until this is understood, there is little, if any, hope or possibility of restoring the office of the diaconate to its proper place in the church. Deacons are ministers of mercy, and with the work of mercy they must be primarily concerned. Their specific work is to collect alms and properly to distribute these alms to the needy.

That this is not always done is not to be blamed on the deacons alone. The deterioration of this office is properly the responsibility of the entire congregation. And although there are undoubtedly many things that contribute to this, we will single out especially two important factors in this article. In the first place, if the office of mercy is to function in the church, she must live in the conscious awareness of her spiritual unity. The confession, "I believe one holy catholic church", must be more than empty words. This statement, uttered by believers throughout the centuries, must remind us of our basic spiritual unity in Christ Jesus. The church does not consist of a certain number of people, each living his own little life of comparative isolation and unconcern for others. Individualism in the church of Christ stands condemned. God's people are one family, brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. When, therefore, one member rejoices, there is occasion for the whole family to be glad; and like-

wise when one member suffers or is in want, the whole body of saints should grieve with him. The spirit of looking after, not the things of self, but the things of others must prevail in the communion of the saints. (Phil. 2) Without it the practice of Christian mercy becomes obsolete.

Now this unity can be and is expressed in various ways with which we are not at present concerned. Our purpose here is to point out that the spiritual unity of the church is expressed in her offerings for charity. Alms-giving is an integral and essential part of worship and without this the diaconate cannot properly function. The church must, then, in the second place, understand the meaning of charity and must restore to its rightful place, the spiritual practice of alms-giving.

Can the claim that also in our churches there is room for improvement be disputed? Some tend to look at the worship service on Sunday as merely a preaching service. Now we do not minimize the importance of the preaching in worship, but we must insist that worship consists of the bringing of praise and homage to the Lord as well as hearing what He has to say to us through His Spirit and Word. These two aspects of worship must be kept in proper balance.

Others consider the limitation of responsibility of giving to the Lord's cause the paying of the weekly budget. Again it may be said that certainly it is important that the needs for the upkeep and maintenance of the church be met; but this must not overshadow and obscure the important responsibility of giving alms. Likewise it must be remembered that paying one's budget and even contributing to missions, Christian education and other special causes is not an alms. Alms-giving is an essential part of worship and without it the diaconate simply cannot function.

In many churches the offering for benevolence is no longer held in the highest esteem which once characterized it. Indications are that in some instances these offerings are received only once a month, and it is said that there have been churches in the past in which it was customary to receive an offering for the poor only at the time of the Lord's Supper. When these practices are questioned, the answer is generally that offerings for these causes are no longer needed because the congregation has no poor.

Although our Church Order nowhere explicitly demands the receiving of an offering for benevolence

...to suffer in the behalf of Christ also implies the idea of suffering for the advantage and benefit of Christ. Christ must be revealed. His name may not remain hid, but must be made manifest. The glory and beauty of His power and grace must be fully shown forth and declared in all the world, and that, not only in order that His Church may be gathered, and His kingdom may be extended, but also in order that the world may be condemned, and the unfruitful works of darkness may be rebuked. This cause believers must serve. And to serve this cause they must suffer, in order that the measure of iniquity may be filled, sin may become fully manifest as enmity against God, and the evil world may become ripe for the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Because of Christ, but also in the interest of the cause of Christ, it is given to the saints in this world to suffer for His sake.

-H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 102

each Lord's Day, the importance of the matter cannot be questioned. The deacons are required to care for the poor, and to do this they must be provided with means. Inquiry is made into this matter at each meeting of Classis as well as at the time of Church Visitation. But most important of all, the answer given to the question concerning the fourth commandment in Lord's Day XXXVIII of our Heidelberg Catechism indicates plainly that at least one offering each Lord's Day for benevolence is required by our Reformed religion. Concerning the observance of the Sabbath the Catechism states:

First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, the day of rest, diligently attend the church of God, to learn God's Word, to use the sacraments, to call publicly upon the Lord, and *contribute to the relief*

of the poor, as becomes a Christian." (Italics mine)

Is there then not something lacking in the worship that fails to provide the opportunity to fulfill this important part of our religion? Must not the church restore the offering for charity to its rightful place in our services? Alms must be provided so that the diaconates can properly function. However, this raises one important question. What about the church that is itself the object of charity, unable to provide its own essentials? Must not charity begin at home? Is it the obligation of such needy churches to use their own benevolence first; to take more offerings for the poor which then would be used for self-support instead of being subsidized denominationally? Can a church that is not self-supporting really exercise benevolence outside of her own sphere? And, if not, what is the function of the diaconate in such churches?

ALL AROUND US—

Conditional Reprobation

The Mideast Crisis

by Prof. H. Hanko

CONDITIONAL REPROBATION

It is often lamented that in the Christian Reformed Church the doctrine of eternal and unconditional reprobation is no more taught. While this is clearly the truth of Scripture and, indeed, the specific and undeniable teaching of Calvin, it is almost totally ignored today even in churches which claim to stand in the tradition of the Reformer of Geneva. An instance of this denial recently appeared in *The Banner*. In his column "The Question Box", Rev. Bratt has the following. We quote the article in full.

A Michigan Men's Society, discussing Malachi 1:2, 3, and Romans 9:10-14, arrived, as might be expected, at a parting of the ways as far as interpretation is concerned. The majority held that God hated Esau prior to his earthly existence, and the minority held that God hated him because of his disreputable life. They ask: "Whose side do you take? What do you believe to be the right position?"

Answer: I side with the minority. The other position lands you in the bog of fatalism.

Implicit in the question is the very difficult matter of the conjunction of God's election of man and of man's full responsibility for what he does. Both are clearly taught in the Scriptures and therefore, despite our inability to harmonize them, must be firmly maintained. Furthermore, as I mentioned in a related article some time ago, what complicates this issue is that the one factor (election) belongs to the category of

eternity while the other (man's choices) belongs to the category of time.

We must be concerned that we do not impose our own logic on the Scriptures on the one hand and that we observe the boundaries of the Bible on the other.

If we were to take the doctrine of election and apply stern logic to it, we would posit the cold judgment that back in eternity God chose some to be saved and in a parallel decree chose some to be damned.

But the Bible does not proceed in that fashion. It teaches that man is saved in the electing grace of God. God chose him to salvation from before the foundation of the world. No credit for this can be ascribed to man. Salvation rests on the eternal love of God. That is one set of teachings.

The other is that the wrath of God rests on the sinner because of his sin. Damnation is based on human sin. (The fact that God hated Esau is, significantly enough, not stated in the Genesis record but long after Esau had left the human scene.) The lost will locate his perdition in his rejection of the Christ. The redeemed will say, "I'm here because God saved me," while the lost will say, "I'm here because I deserve this punishment."

The Men's Society that sent in the question would do well to take a close look at the Canons of Dort in this regard. The Conclusions are very emphatic. They state that the teaching "that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation and has created them for this very

purpose; (and) that in the same manner in which election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety. . . the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge but even detest with their whole soul." (cf. also Canons I, 5; III-IV, 9 and the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III, 8, 23.)

Now it is true that our Canons, in the Conclusion, say precisely what the quote above includes. Nevertheless, Rev. Bratt is mis-applying the Canons badly when he quotes them in support of his view of conditional reprobation. The fact is that the Canons are denying that the Reformed Churches teach that *in the same manner* as election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety. In other words, they are denying that the Reformed faith teaches that God's decree of reprobation is the cause of the sin of man. They are insisting that this is not the Reformed faith, nor is it the truth of Scripture. The Reformed Churches until today have concurred in this. But from this it must not (and cannot) be deduced that our fathers maintained a *conditional* reprobation so that unbelief and impiety in the wicked is the cause or basis of God's eternal decree. This is what Rev. Bratt wants when he says that God did not hate Esau until after he sinned. This is at variance with Scripture and with the Reformed faith.

It is true that this is an exceedingly difficult problem — one surely, that is, for us, insoluble. But Rev. Bratt's advice should then surely be followed: "... we must observe the boundaries of the Bible . . ." And the Bible teaches that also the decree of reprobation is sovereign and unconditional.

I cannot find the reference in Calvin's *Institutes* which the author mentions. (Perhaps this is due to the fact that I have a different edition than he does; mine is the Allen translation published by Eerdmans.) But quotations can be made from Calvin's writings which specifically condemn conditional reprobation and emphasize its sovereign character.

In Calvin's treatise "The Eternal Predestination of God" in which Calvin answers the heresies of Pighius, he writes, commenting on Romans 9:22, 23:

Now if this being "*afore prepared* unto glory" is peculiar and special to the elect, it evidently follows that the rest, the non-elect, were equally "fitted to destruction," because, being left to their own nature, they were thereby devoted already to certain destruction. That they were "fitted to destruction" by *their own wickedness* is an idea so silly that it needs no notice. It is indeed true that the reprobate procure to themselves the wrath of God, and that they daily hasten on the falling of its weight upon their own heads. But it must be confessed by all that the apostle is here treating of that difference made between the elect and the reprobate, which proceeds from the alone secret will and purpose of God. (*Calvin's Calvinism*, translated by Henry Cole, Eerdmans, 1956.)

Or again, in his commentary on Romans 9:11, Calvin writes:

It is indeed true, that the proximate cause of reprobation is the curse we all inherit from Adam; yet, that

we may learn to acquiesce in the bare and simple good pleasure of God, Paul withdraws us from this view, until he has established this doctrine, — that God has a sufficiently just reason for electing and for reprobating, in his own will.

The editor of this Commentary, evidently not agreeing with Calvin on this point, adds in a footnote:

Archbishop *Usher* asks this question, "Did God, before he made man, determine to save some and reject others?" To this he gives this answer, — "Yes, surely; before they had done either good or evil, God in his eternal counsel set them apart." It is the same sentiment that is announced here by *Calvin*. But to deduce it from what is said of Jacob and Esau, does not seem legitimate. . . .

A little further, Calvin writes:

False then is the dogma, and contrary to God's word, — that God elects or rejects, as he foresees each to be worthy or unworthy of his favour.

All these quotations could be multiplied from Calvin's writings — also from his *Institutes* where, among other comments on this doctrine, Calvin defines predestination in these words:

Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which he has determined in himself, what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated either to life or to death.

Hence, in order to define the relation between the sovereign decree of reprobation and the sin of man, Reformed writers have avoided the error condemned by our Canons in the Conclusion, but have likewise condemned the error of conditional reprobation. They have rather chosen to speak of reprobation as *in the way of sin*. It is evident that the expression "in the way of" does not say a great deal. But here is where we must follow where Scripture leads and stop where Scripture stops. But to adopt conditional reprobation is to ignore Scripture's plain statements, to deny the truth of God's absolute sovereignty, and to pave the way for conditional election as well and a complete denial of predestination.

THE MID-EAST CRISIS AND PREMILLENNIALISM

Since the establishment of the nation of Israel as an independent country, those addicted to the theory of pre-millennialism have found support for their views in this historical fact. With the recent war between Israel and the Arabs and the Israeli conquest of Jerusalem, the claim is once again heard that Scriptural prophecies are being fulfilled by these events. An example of this is to be found in the writings of L. Nelson Bell who in his column "A Layman And His Faith" in *Christianity Today* writes an article from which we take the following:

That for the first time in more than 2,000 years Jerusalem is now completely in the hands of the Jews

gives a student of the Bible a thrill and a renewed faith in the accuracy and validity of the Bible.

The Jews as a "separate" people demonstrate a mystery and a hope. Their continuance as a people in the midst of all other nations is itself a miracle. The cohesiveness of these Jews is demonstrated by the fact that at least ninety-six countries are represented in Israel today — from the ends of the earth, but Jews all.

... the events in the Middle East certainly fit — at least in some measure — into the picture revealed in the Scriptures. If we say, as the Arabs do, that Israel has no right to exist, we may prove blind to her peculiar destiny under the providence of God.

"... prophecy has come true. A flag of Zion floats over Jerusalem for the first time since the Romans leveled the holy city 1900 years ago.

It is a thrilling thing to see a segment of prophecy being fulfilled!

Apart from the exegetical question involved in the premillennialist's views, there are a couple of serious mistakes involved here.

In the first place, this position is based upon a logical error called *Petitio Principii* or "begging the question" or "reasoning in a circle." The argument goes something like this. The Israelis have a right to the land of Canaan because Scripture gives them this rightful claim. There are prophecies, so it is argued, which specifically mention that Israel shall some day receive Canaan again for her inheritance. Now that the Israelis are in possession of Canaan (and particularly of Jerusalem), we have the obvious fulfillment of Scripture in these events in the Mid-East.

These are the facts of history. When the Romans conquered Palestine and destroyed Jerusalem, most of the Jews fled the land. This marked the end of Israel as a nation. In the 600s A.D., the Arabs conquered the land and have inhabited it ever since — except for a brief period during the time of the Crusades of the 11th Century. In the First World War, the British drove out the Turks and established some sort of rule there. In 1917 the British statesman and Zionist Jew, Chaim Weizmann, persuaded the British Government to issue a statement favoring the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. This statement, called the "Balfour Declaration", was approved by the League of

Nations. From that time, Jews began to settle in Palestine and reclaim the wasteland. The Arabs took a dim view of this and resisted this takeover. The result was that the British temporarily halted immigration officially, although many Jews continued to come to Canaan secretly worried lest they be denied a homeland. The Jews fought with the Allies in World War II, and, as a reward the British Government asked the United Nations in 1947 to solve the problem of Palestine, but in favor of the Jews. Under pressure from the Jews, the United Nations decided to divide Palestine between Jews and Arabs and internationalize the city of Jerusalem. Israel agreed to this division, but the Arabs never did, and thousands of them were dispossessed. In May of 1948 the British mandate in Palestine ended, the British left the land, and the Zionists proclaimed the new state of Israel. This is where things stood until the Jews conquered new lands in the recent war.

Because the legal status of the nation is in considerable doubt, those who find in all this the fulfillment of prophecy prefer to establish Israel's claim to Palestine on the words of Scripture. But it is at this point that the argument breaks down. For isolated and mis-interpreted texts in Scripture cannot both be the justification for the establishment of the nation of Israel and serve as texts which are now supposedly being fulfilled in these recent events.

In the second place, it is not so sure that even the misinterpretation of these texts is being fulfilled. I am told that 80% of the Jews in Palestine are purely secular; i.e., those who are without any religion whatsoever. The remaining 20% are orthodox Jews, i.e., those who still attempt to maintain the Phariseeistic interpretation of the Mosaic law. This hardly sounds like the nation of Israel spoken of by the pre-millennialists.

The conclusion is that, rather than finding in these events a fulfillment of prophecy, we must rather interpret the efforts of men to establish a separate nation of Israel as being based upon a misinterpretation of prophecy and as the result of the desire of the Jews for a homeland of their own.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Doctrine of Sin

The Second Period, 250-730 A.D.

The Doctrine of Sin in General

by Rev. H. Veldman

This second period, 250-730 A.D., is characterized chiefly by the Pelagian controversy. To be sure, this Pelagian controversy is not the only struggle that was

waged during this period. In fact, one may well question whether it may be called the chief controversy. The Pelagian struggle was waged in the Latin or west-

ern part of the church. But there were also mighty struggles waged in the Greek or eastern segment of the church. There the battle was joined in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity and the Person of the Christ, the truth of the one divine Person of the Christ in two natures, the human and the divine. Infact, the struggle involving the Trinity and the Person of the Christ was the first gigantic battle which was waged by the church of God in the new dispensation. And the leading exponents in this Christological and Trinitarian controversy were Arius and Athanasius. However, we are now discussing the doctrine of sin, and this struggle which is known as the Pelagian controversy was waged principally in the Latin or western part of the church.

Before discussing this important development in the history of doctrine, it is well to call attention to the doctrine of sin in general and the events which led to the Pelagian controversy. In this struggle for the truth of the Word of God, the two great antagonists, we as all know, are Pelagius and Augustine. We will have opportunity, in subsequent articles, to give a brief sketch of the lives of these two men. Augustine's view of the doctrine of sin and grace, and also of the doctrine of predestination, and his own personal experiences are vitally connected. This also applies to Pelagius. And we all understand, of course, that this Pelagian controversy is of the greatest significance for the church of God throughout the ages.

In his introductory remarks on this subject of the doctrine of sin in general during this second period, Hagenbach writes as follows (Vol. I, 290-291):

Concerning the nature of sin, the generally received opinion was, that it has its seat in the will of man, and stands in the most intimate connection with his moral freedom. *Augustine* himself defended this doctrine (at least in his earlier writings), which was opposed to the Manichean notion, that evil is inherent in matter. *Lactantius*, on the contrary, manifested a strong leaning towards Manicheism by designating the body as the seat and organ of sin. The ascetic practices then so common, sufficiently indicate that the church tacitly approved of this view. *Athanasius* regarded sin as something negative, and believed it to consist in the blindness and indolence of man, which prevent him from elevating himself to God. Similar (negative) definitions were given by *Basil the Great* and *Gregory of Nyssa*. But sin was most frequently looked upon as opposition to the law of God, and rebellion against his holy will, analogous to the sin of Adam, which was now generally viewed as an historical fact (contrary to the allegorical interpretation of Origen).

Rev. H. Hoeksema, writing on this subject in his *History of Dogma*, writes as follows (pages 39-41):

Under this head (the anthropological controversies - H.V.) we may remark, in general, that there was a considerable difference between the Eastern and the Western Church in regard to the doctrine of man. Especially with respect to the emphasis that was being placed on some elements of the locus of Anthropology. The Eastern Church, although it cannot be said that such elements as the total depravity of the human nature, original sin, and the bondage of the will, were denied, nevertheless laid very little stress upon these

truths and was more inclined to maintain the freedom of the will. Indeed also the Greek fathers admitted that the fall of Adam entailed many evil results for his posterity, such as the corruptibility and mortality of the body, the suffering and misery of this present time and also ethical deterioration. But the total depravity of the human nature as a result of Adam's sin was, to put it mildly, forgotten. This is even true of such men as Gregory of Nazianzus who is sometimes said to have been most nearly in agreement with the viewpoint of Augustine. Athanasius maintained the freedom of the will of man to choose the good as well as the evil. He even mentioned the possibility that some of the saints were born entirely without sin. Of Chrysostom we do not even expect that he had much sympathy for such truths as man's depravity and the bondage of the will as a result of Adam's sin. He was too much of a morality preacher. Cyril also entertained the notion that we are born without sin and that man became sinful only through the deeds determined upon by a free will. Of course, we must not lose sight of the fact that in this early period the anthropological questions had not been developed. The entire attention of the church had been concentrated upon the theological and christological problems. The fact remains, however, that much more emphasis was laid upon these truths by the Western Church. This is true especially of the time immediately preceding the Pelagian controversy. Augustine had been taught by Ambrose that we all sinned in the first man and he appeals to Psalm 51:5 in support of the truth that all men are born under sin and that the ethical evil and corruption of the nature must be traced even to the conception. However, the lines were not sharply drawn until God raised up the British monk Pelagius and through him compelled the fathers, especially Augustine to concentrate all their attention upon the Biblical teaching concerning the natural man.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FIRST SIN, AND FREEDOM OF THE WILL (According to the theologians of the Greek Church)

Hagenbach writes, Vol. I, 293, and we quote:

Even those theologians who kept themselves free from the influence of the Augustinian system, held that the sin of Adam was followed by disastrous effects upon the human race, but restricted these evils (as the fathers of the preceding period had done) to the mortality of the body, the hardships and miseries of life, also admitting that the moral powers of man had been enfeebled by the fall. Thus *Gregory of Nazianzum* in particular (to whom Augustine appealed in preference to all others) maintained, that both the *vous* and the *psuchee* (mind and soul - H.V.) have been considerably impaired by sin, and regarded the perversion of the religious consciousness seen in idolatry, which previous teachers had ascribed to the influence of demons, as an inevitable effect of the first sin. But he was far from asserting the total depravity of mankind, and the entire loss of free will. On the contrary, the doctrine of the freedom of the will continued to be distinctly maintained by the Greek church. *Athanasius* himself, the father of orthodoxy, maintained in the strongest terms that man has the ability of choosing good as well as evil, and even allowed exceptions from original sin, alleging that several individuals, who lived prior to the appearance of Christ, were free from it.

Cyril of Jerusalem also assumed that the life of man begins in a state of innocence, and that sin enters only with the use of free will. Similar view were entertained by *Ephram the Syrian*, *Gregory of Nyssa*, *Basil the Great*, and others. *Chrysostom*, whose whole tendency was of a practical and moral kind, insisted most of all upon the liberty of man and his moral self-determination, and passed a severe censure upon those who endeavored to excuse their own defects by ascribing the origin of sin to the fall of Adam.

Gregory of Nazianzum is compared by a certain Ullmann. And the latter writes: "Gregory by no means taught the doctrines afterwards propounded by Pelagius and his followers; but if all his sentiments be duly considered, it will be found that he is far more of a Pelagian than of an Augustinian." Of course, we must bear in mind that the freedom of the will was emphasized especially in the Eastern Church, and that over against heresies that would reduce man to a stock and block. We must always be careful that, fighting one type of heresy, we do not fall into the extreme of another deviation of the truth.

That the doctrine of the freedom of the will continued to be distinctly maintained by the Greek (Eastern) church appears from a statement attributed to a Methodius, that man does not possess the power either of having desires, or of not having them, but he is at liberty either to gratify them or not gratify them. This could mean that, although man does not have the power to convert himself and God must begin His work of grace in him, he does have the liberty to continue in the way of sanctification. Scripture, of course, declares that the Lord not only begins the work of salvation in us but also completes it until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Basil the Great must have delivered a discourse, the authenticity of which was denied, but again defended in later times. In this discourse, although admitting the depravity of mankind, he asserted that human liberty and divine grace must cooperate. And Gregory

of Nyssa also takes for granted a universal bias to sin, but he finds no sin in infants. This latter thought is, of course, very similar to the heresy of Pelagianism, namely that all men are born inherently good, and that the original sin of Adam did not affect the human race. And this, of course, is directly in conflict with the Word of God, which teaches us that we are *conceived and born* dead in sins and in trespasses. And we all know the language of our Reformed Confessions in regard to this matter, as also beautifully stated in our Baptism Form.

Chrysostom, it is asserted, was so zealous for morality, that he must have considered it a point of special importance to deprive men of every ground or excuse for the neglect of moral efforts. His practical sphere of labor in the cities of Antioch and Constantinople gave a still greater impulse to this tendency. For in these large capitals he met with many who sought to attribute their want of Christian activity to the defects of human nature, and the power of Satan or of fate. But Chrysostom also urged quite as strongly the existence of depravity in opposition to a false moral pride.

From the above it is evident that the power of sin, as held forth in the Holy Scriptures, was defined very vaguely in the early centuries of the new dispensation. On the one hand, the depravity of the human nature was not denied. However, on the other hand, it is also clear that the awful power of sin was not clearly understood and set forth during that early period of the church. The connection between the sin of Adam and the subsequent corruption of the human race certainly did not receive the emphasis which Scripture lays upon it. This was not fully developed until the Pelagian controversy. And it is Augustine, who himself was led by God in the deep way of sin and grace, who emphasized the corruption of mankind, and that the sin and guilt of our first parents in Paradise were transmitted to all their posterity.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

David and Nabal

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.

Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?...

And it came to pass about ten days after, the Lord smote Nabal, that he died.

I Samuel 25:10, 11, 38

At last the time had returned once again when it appeared quite safe for David to pass wherever he might desire to go in the land of Israel. Before his undeniable kindness in sparing the life of Saul, the king

had withdrawn in confusion and shame blurting forth so very uncharacteristically the acknowledgement of his own sin. There was no reason to believe any more, therefore, that Saul would interfere with him wherever

he went. Yet David remained very much unsure. He had seen too much of the vicissitudes of the king to rest his life on any momentary promise that came from his lips. For the time being he thought it much safer to remain in the comparative safety of the Judean hills rather than attempting to return to life in the populated cities. Even when the news was brought to him that his old teacher and friend Samuel had died, as much as he would have liked to have joined the mourners before his grave, discretion told him that it was better not, lest the attention which he would surely arouse might again serve to cast down the king into another one of his dark and moody fits of jealousy and hatred. Rather, he merely satisfied himself with passing on to a little less desolate portion of the wilderness.

Through this all, moreover, David was not one to remain inactive. He was not one who found himself able to sit around doing nothing. His time had to be used profitably, which for him meant, that it had to be used in the service of the nation and the people whom he loved. Neither did he lack for opportunity. It was an undisciplined age in which he lived, and there was no greater danger that threatened those that lived without the protection of city walls than that of roaming robbers and marauding bands of enemies. A wealthy man with a goodly number of servants might be able to keep his own home safely; but those who remained unprotected out in the fields were considered fair game for all. It was here that David and his men proved particularly helpful. Their force was large enough and their men experienced enough that they could repel a force of any size that might try to ravage the land; and they did exactly that too. It must surely have been a new and wonderful thing for the inhabitants of the territories into which David came. For the first time, they found themselves protected from all their enemies. Every robber was duly punished, every enemy was immediately driven back; even the wild animals of the hills were slain and kept under control by David's hunting parties; and through it all, because David's men were men of righteousness and faith in God, never once did they themselves think to plunder or steal or do harm to any man. In gratitude, the people were usually more than willing to pay for the services of David's men with gifts of food and clothing which they needed if they were to live.

Not always, however, did it work out so well, as is brought out for us by the history of Nabal the Maonite.

It came about after the death of Samuel, when David moved into the district of Paran, that he first came into contact with the possessions of Nabal. Nabal was an extremely wealthy man with many servants and great flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. He was exactly the kind of man who benefited the most from the presence of David's force within the territory. No sooner had David moved into this area than Nabal began to prosper as he had never prospered before. One of the regular, anticipated expenses of his business was the continual loss of sheep and cattle to marauding forces of all kinds; and now suddenly this was stopped. David's men were everywhere throughout the territory to protect them from evil and to lend a helping hand whenever

Nabal's men were in need of any aid. The result was a prosperity for Nabal far beyond any previous experience.

But Nabal was a selfish and very wicked man. Having what he did at any one moment, his mind could think only of how he could keep it and increase it still more. Apart from this his whole nature was quite incapable of functioning. Particularly foreign to him was any feeling of gratitude or sympathy for his fellow man. Thus it came that weeks and months passed by without one word of recognition for David from Nabal. Above all, there was no expression at all from Nabal as to his willingness to pay David and his men for the innumerable services which they had rendered. For David, it presented an extremely difficult and embarrassing situation. He was not a man who found it easy to impose himself upon others, and he found it embarrassing to have to beg anyone for anything even when he clearly had it coming. Nevertheless, the needs of such a large company of men were great; and they could not go on long without due return in food and other needs for the labors which they provided. Finally, therefore, David determined to send a group of young men to Nabal to remind him of their needs and the benefits which had come to him through their presence in the land.

It appeared that the time was ideal for such a request. It was the time of the shearing of sheep, by far the most jovial time of all the year in lands where sheep were kept. Wool was their greatest cash crop, and when it was gathered the prosperity of the coming year was guaranteed. It was the season of feasting and good will and kindness to all men. The very sheep shearing camp itself was like a great festival at which everyone was welcome to join in the festivities. Thus it appeared to David most appropriate that he, having contributed so much to Nabal's prosperity for this year, should send a delegation to the shearing camp asking that they too be remembered and be allowed to share in some of the fruits of the season. Ten of his finest young men were chosen to fill out this delegation.

Coming to the camp of Nabal, the words which David's young men were instructed to speak were as mild and polite as possible. They in themselves reflected clearly that these were not wild, undisciplined and lawless men, but men of true character and righteousness. The words they spoke to Nabal were these, "Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers; now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, and the while they were in Carmel. Ask the young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day; give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David."

But the fact that Nabal had heretofore ignored David and his men was far from an oversight on his part. He knew full well what David's men had done, and he knew the reward that was due them. But his only concern had been with how this payment could be avoided, and

he had decided that the best would be to feign that he knew nothing at all about David and what he had done. His reply to David's men constituted the height of all rudeness; for he answered with a tone of scorn, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?"

Utterly taken back, disgusted and dismayed, and not knowing what they could answer to words as rude and uncouth as these, the ten young men turned away from Nabal and hurried back to David to tell him what Nabal had said. But with David there was no such stunned uncertainty. Here was not just a disdaining of all of the efforts his men had expended in Nabal's behalf, here was a direct affront to their righteousness and integrity, to their right of existence within the nation. Quickly he acted, commanding four hundred of his men to take up their swords and follow him.

Surely at that point things would have gone very badly with Nabal had it not been that one of his servants went immediately to his wife and said, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: they were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household; for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him."

For all of Nabal's pride and foolishness, his wife Abigail was a woman of discretion and great faith. Immediately she understood the critical nature of the situation, and gathering together a large supply of food and wine she set out herself to intercept David. Through many years of marriage, she had become accustomed to the foolishness of her husband and to making recompense for it without his knowledge. Even more, she knew about David and understood the blessing of God that was with him. She could understand his anger; but also for his own sake it was best that he should be kept from seeking vengeance beyond his right. And so it was that when she came to David, she threw herself to the ground before him and gave forth with a most beautiful speech. She said, to David, "Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine hand-

maid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal; for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him; but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid; for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid."

David recognized the beauty of a truly virtuous woman, and his answer was accordingly, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with thine own hand. For in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel liveth which hath kept me back from hurting thee...." So He received her gift, and so he dismissed her with the words, "Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person."

But God was not through with Nabal. That night yet he feasted and drank in hedonistic revelry; but with the coming of morning his wife told him of the danger that had come so close to touching his life. Even more, with that there came upon him from the Lord that same spirit of depression that Saul had known. Only Nabal had not the strength to bear it and within ten days he died.

They were "tortured, not accepting deliverance." It was thus that the martyrs of the early church chose to suffer with Christ. They were placed before the alternative of being dumped alive into a seething caldron of boiling oil, or making a bow as a sign of worship to Caesar. And it often was made extremely easy for them, so easy that in our day we would probably discover a thousand reasons why we would be allowed to choose the latter. They were permitted to maintain their confession that Christ is Lord, if only by a slight bow to the image of Caesar they would admit that the Roman emperor was also Lord. But in the behalf of Christ they deliberately chose the awful death in the seething caldron, not accepting deliverance, insisting that Christ is the Lord alone!

-H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 103

The Church Between The Temple and Mosque

Faith and The Physical World

Heaven: A Place, A City, A Home

Theology of the English Reformers

Christian Reflections

Religion and The Schools

THE CHURCH BETWEEN THE TEMPLE AND MOSQUE, by J. H. Bavinck; Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966; 206 pp., \$2.65 (paper).

Dr. Bavinck was missionary to Indonesia for twenty years before he occupied the chair of missions at the Free University of Amsterdam from 1939 to his death in 1965. In this book he has provided a very interesting and, in some respects, important book about the relation between the Christian religion and pagan religions — particularly Hinduism, Buddhism and Islamism. The strength of the book lies in its evaluation of pagan religions and in the unique claim the Christian religion has over against them. He has some very important remarks to make concerning the method of mission work among these pagan religions.

However, there are also important points of disagreement. The author has adopted, to some extent, the position that God has, through general revelation, prepared the heathen for the preaching of the gospel. This is based on the author's interpretation of Romans 1:18ff. With this I cannot possibly agree, and find in it a very dangerous error, since it leads inevitably to some form of syncretism. The author repudiates all syncretism, but cannot escape the logical conclusions of his own position. He speaks of God "struggling" with pagan man through general revelation.

Briefly I make mention of the following questions also which arose in my mind. Does the author want to maintain some form of evolution of religion? Some statements suggest that he does. His exegesis of Romans 1 seems in some instances to be under the influence of Freudian psychology. And he tends toward a strangely mystical (almost occult) conception of the Christian faith.

However, the book is worth reading. It is recommended to anyone interested in the work of missions among those who live in paganism.

Prof. H. Hanko

FAITH AND THE PHYSICAL WORLD: A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW, by David L. Dye; Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966, 214 pp., \$2.95 (paper).

The purpose of the author in writing this book is stated in his Introduction: "Our purpose here is to show how to develop a consistent, comprehensive world view and how to use it in interpreting data. Since it is a Christian world view, it deals significantly with man's relationship with God; it is truly Christian in acknowledging the divine authority of Jesus Christ. Since it is a world view, it attempts to account consistently for the data of the physical universe, i.e., the observable phenomena described by scientific methods. It does not compete with the valid application of these methods, but rather it uses them. Further, since it is a comprehensive world view, it is flexible enough to accommodate data yet to be discovered, without modification of its essential nature."

This is an ambitious project, and not very successfully accomplished. The deepest error of the book is the isolation of science (as knowledge of the observable) from the Christian faith; i.e., the author insists on a neutrality of scientific data. From this he proceeds to find two standards of truth: Scripture and scientific data. The result of this is that he adopts completely biological evolution, denies the fall, a universal flood, the miracle of Babel, and attempts to explain many miracles from a natural point of view.

While the author wants two standards of truth (Scripture and science), it soon becomes apparent that he is willing to reject the clear testimony of Scripture if it conflicts, in his opinion, with science.

The book is quite technical in places and difficult for one not versed in the fields of science to understand.

Prof. H. Hanko

HEAVEN: A PLACE, A CITY, A HOME, by Edward M. Bounds; Baker Book House, 1966; 151 pp., \$2.50.

The author of this book lived from 1835 to 1913 and was a minister in the southern part of the country. This book is therefore a reprint. Rather than being an exegetical study of the Scriptural concept of heaven, it is intended as a devotional book primarily. It is designed to bring the child of God to a contemplation of the blessedness of heaven and to stir within him longing for his final destination. For those who enjoy devotional literature, the book will be good reading.

Prof. H. Hanko

THE THEOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH REFORMERS, by Philip E. Hughes; Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966; \$5.95, 283 pp.

The author has already given us a valuable book in "The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin." This book too is extremely worthwhile. In it he treats the theology of the early English Reformers such as Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, etc. But he lets them speak for themselves, adding very little comment of his own. Hence the book is filled with important quotations from the writings of these men. He deals with seven subjects: Holy Scripture, Justification, Sanctification, Preaching and Worship, Ministry, The Sacraments, Church and State. The book is a remarkable demonstration of the how near to the truth of Scripture these early English reformers stood even though it was not until later that the Reformation in England came under the dominating influence of Calvin. The book is a valuable addition to the library of anyone interested in Reformation theology and is heartily recommended.

Prof. H. Hanko

CHRISTIAN REFLECTIONS, C. S. Lewis; Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967; 176 pp., \$3.95.

This book by the well-known English author is a collection of speeches and magazine articles, many of which are published for the first time. The subjects ranged from "The Christian and Literature" through "The Problem of Petitionary Prayer" to "Christian Problems in the Space-Age." Because of the wide diversity of subjects, it is impossible to give anything like a comprehensive review. Suffice it to say that it is well worth the reading. It contains Lewis's own incisive writings

to which readers of Lewis have become accustomed. It has penetrating insights into many perplexing problems facing the Christian in his calling in the world. It casts fresh light on many difficult questions — his analysis of modern, liberal Biblical scholarship is especially worthwhile. Yet at the same time, while one is pleased with Lewis's conservatism, he is also alarmed by how far Lewis can drift away at times from Scriptural orthodoxy. The book is a must for all fans of Lewis.

Prof. H. Hanko

RELIGION AND THE SCHOOLS, by Nicholas Wolterstorff; Wm. B. Eerd-

mans Publishing Company, 1966; 46 pp., \$.75 (paper).

This little booklet is a "Reformed Journal Monograph" a printing in slightly altered form of articles which originally appeared in The Reformed Journal. The book discusses the place of education in our pluralistic society. The three chapters are entitled: The Pluralistic Society; Religion and the Public School; The Place of the Non-Public Religious School in American Society. An interesting and informative booklet worth the money to anyone interested in Christian education.

Prof. H. Hanko

IN MEMORIAM

After fifty years of a happy marriage the Lord took away from us on July 24, 1967 our dear wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother,

MRS. JENNIE VELTHOUSE

at the age of 86 years.

May the Lord comfort and strengthen us in the faith, knowing that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a house of God, not built with hands, eternal in the heavens.

John Velthouse

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Velthouse

3 grandchildren

1 great-grand daughter

IN MEMORIAM

On July 16, 1967, it pleased our heavenly Father to take up in glory our Mother, Grandmother, and great-grandmother,

JENNIE RUTGERS

at the age of 74 years.

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

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Rutgers

Mr. Jacob Fischer

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Zandstra

Rev. and Mrs. George Lanting

Mr. and Mrs. Jake Regnerus

Mr. and Mrs. George Vroom

Mr. and Mrs. Martin De Vries

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Buiter

37 Grandchildren

4 Great-grandchildren

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Loveland, Colorado on September 20, 1967 at 9:00 a.m. Delegates in need of lodging should inform the clerk of the Loveland consistory of their need.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church extends its sympathy to its fellow office-bearer, Elder John Kalsbeek, Senior and family in the death of his mother

MRS. ANNA DE JONG

and we also rejoice with them in the assurance that she has gone to be with her Lord in glory.

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die". John 11:26 (a).

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.

Dewey Engelsma, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society of the Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to the members of the family of

MRS. JENNIE RUTGERS

whom the Lord was pleased to call into eternal rest on July 17, 1967. With them we can also rejoice in the assurance that "when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Cor. 5:1)

The Ladies' Society of the Oak Lawn
Protestant Reformed Church

Mrs. C. Haak, Ass't. Sec. Treas.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Priscilla Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church herewith expresses its sincere sympathy to Mrs. Charles Emaus and Mrs. Tom Van Eenenaam in the loss of their father and father-in-law, respectively,

MR. EDWARD VAN EENENAAM

"In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us". Psalm 62:7 and 8.

Mrs. J. Oomkes, Pres.

Mrs. R. Kamminga, Vice-Sec'y.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

August 15, 1967

Rev. G. Vanden Berg declined the call he had received from Hull, Iowa, and Rev. C. Hanko also declined the call he was considering from South Holland, Ill. Hull has subsequently named a trio consisting of the Revs. C. Hanko and G. Lubbers and Candidate D. Kuiper, and extended the call to Rev. Hanko.

Candidate Kuiper has received calls from both Isabel and Forbes, our Dakota churches, and is also considering one that has come to him from Randolph, Wis.

* * *

The Beacon Lights Singspiration Committee was concerned about the size and enthusiasm of the crowds that came out to their hymnsings and did something about it. They advertised the Pre-convention Singspiration in all the area bulletins extensively and strikingly. Their specific aim was to show the young people that they were supported in the fellowship of the saints as they left for Hull, Iowa, and the people responded with fervor. The "sing" was held in Hope Church Aug. 13 and the church was filled to overflowing. The people overflowed into all the aisles on folding chairs hastily brought up from the basement when the last stragglers arrived from Grand Rapids and Holland. Besides the usual group singing three special numbers were prepared for variety. A male quartette, a saxophone solo rounded out the program in a very pleasing way. The quartette consisted of Bob Velthouse, Don Jonker, Gary Bylsma and Jim Huizenga, accompanied by Mary Kregel. Mary Klop was the violinist and her accompanist was Anita Clason, both of Kalamazoo. The saxophonist was a future (in about five years) conventioneer, a young lad by the name of Bruce Lubbers whose mother accompanied him at the piano. This was the first time a violin and a saxophone were heard at one of these gatherings, and was probably the first time that only two *and a half* stanzas were sung of a four stanza song. The song director was Gerald Kuiper; Mark Hoeksema opened the meeting, and Rev. Kortering led in the closing prayer committing the covenant young people to our Covenant God. One of the obvious reasons that such a large crowd could come out for this gathering was the fact that the audience included many youngsters in summer vacation who did not have to get up early the next morning to go to school, but it is hoped that future hymnsings may continue to rouse the interest of young and old that they may be as well attended as this Pre-Convention Singspiration of '67.

* * *

The congregation of Hope Church was confronted by the following paragraph in their July 9 bulletin:

"Do you know: why the kingdom of anti-christ will surely fail? What really constitutes the power of preaching? Why the Reformed Creeds are so easily cast aside in our day? What position does the Reformed Ecumenical Synod take regarding labor unions? How would you criticize the Scofield Bible? What is wrong with young people dancing? Was there a law of God before Sinai? What transpired at the graduation exercises of Candidate D. Kuiper? If you read your latest issue of the *Standard Bearer* carefully you will find the answers in detail. Let us study to make ourselves approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

* * *

And we ask you readers of the last page of our magazine: Can you answer the above questions whose answers are found on the *other* pages of the July 1 issue?

* * *

Redlands' bulletins reveal that the summer brings many visitors to their services from our other churches. The congregation of Redlands did not have to entertain fears due to riots such as plagued Grand Rapids and many other large cities this summer but they did live through an arson scare—two old churches in the heart of the city went up in smoke and a Catholic school burned up the next day—which led to having a police guard in their church for a week because that building was "suspect". Their once beautiful neighborhood is rapidly declining and is the major reason for purchasing new church and school property elsewhere.

* * *

Lynden's July 2 bulletin called for volunteers to assemble the materials just received to make their long awaited banquet tables; the same bulletin carried a "thank you" from a lady in Tuscon, Arizona for the "Studies in Biblical Doctrine" that she finds "very interesting and instructive and a very great help to me".

* * *

First Church of Grand Rapids scheduled a special congregational meeting to elect an elder and a deacon to fill the unexpired terms of an elder who resigned and a deacon (Mr. Fred Hanko) who is moving to Doon, Iowa to teach in the new Protestant Reformed Christian School there.

* * *

Oak Lawn's Church Extension Committee has recently published and distributed two more pamphlets, "The Reformed Faith and Arminianism" and, "God's Great Love Toward the World".

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.