

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE

Meditation:

Finding A Lost Life

Editorials:

Remember Galileo!

Some Questions to C.A.F.

The Purpose of Christian Education

(see: The Strength of Youth)

The Waldensian Movement

(see: Studies in Depth)

Volume XLV / Number 18 / July 1, 1969

CONTENTS

Meditation —	
Finding A Lost Life	410
Editorials —	
Remember Galileo!	412
Some Questions to C.A.F.	415
The Strength of Youth —	
The Purpose of Christian Education	416
Studies in Depth —	
The Waldensian Movement, II	419
Contending for the Faith —	
Doctrine of Sin	421
A Cloud of Witnesses —	
“Absalom’s Hour of Glory”	423
From our Theological School Committee —	
Seminary News	425
In His Fear —	
Wisdom That Excels (concluded)	427
Book Reviews	429
Church News	432

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Meditation

FINDING A LOST LIFE

Rev. M. Schipper

“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

Matthew 10:39

Strange indeed, and profound is the Word of the Lord in our text!

By no means an isolated saying of the Lord!

All the gospels record similar passages. We read again in Matthew’s gospel the following: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” Matt. 16:25. Mark puts it this way: “For whosoever will save his life shall

lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.” Mark 8:35. Luke tells us: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world, and lose himself or be cast away.” Luke 9:24, 25. And again, “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall

lose his life shall preserve it." Luke 17:33. John's gospel records: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." John 12:25.

Apparent it is therefore that the Lord spoke these words on more than one occasion; emphasizing the fact of their importance and practical significance.

How drastic and final is this Word of the Lord in all these passages, as well as in our text!

He that findeth his life shall lose it!

He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it!

In the context of our passage the Lord had just chosen His disciples and commissioned them. He would send them out as sheep among wolves, and in their going they are to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and to preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. No provision were they to make for the way, but they were to live of the gospel. If they were received, they were to abide; if not, they were to shake the dust of their feet; believing that it would be more tolerable in the judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city. Wise as serpents and harmless as doves they were to be, and understanding well that they would be hated of all men for Christ's sake. Delivered they would be to the councils, where they would be scourged and given over to death. They were not to fear them which kill only the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. They were to confess Christ before men, while they clung to His promise that He would confess them before His Father in heaven; knowing also that they who deny Him shall also be denied. And the reason why they were not to expect peace and prosperity in the fulfillment of their commission is to be found in the fact that their Lord had not come to send peace on earth but a sword — the sword that brings division in the most intimate relationships of life, so that a man's foes are they of his own household. Never were they to love father or mother, son or daughter, more than Christ. To neglect this mandate would make them unworthy of Him. They were to take up the cross and follow after Him.

And so, he that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for Christ's sake shall find it!

The positive truth in the text concerns: Finding a lost life!

But what does this mean?

To what does the Lord refer when He says first of all, "He that findeth his life shall lose it?" And then, what does He mean when He says, "and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it?"

To get at the meaning, it is important, first of all, we believe, to notice what the Lord says in the original text. If we may be allowed to translate literally it would be something like this: "The one having found his soul shall lose it: and the one having lost his soul on account of me shall find it." With this translation the

Holland agrees: "Die zijne ziel vindt, zal dezelve verliezen, en die zijne ziel zal verloren hebben om mijnent wil, zal dezelve vinden."

The term "soul" refers to the seat of one's physical, psychical life — the life that one lives in the physical body — the life one lives in this present world. Not without reason, therefore, the translators have termed it "life." So that, as one commentator correctly puts it, "the point lies in the reference of the finding and losing not being the same in the first as in the second half of the verse." He continues by translating the text thus: "Whoever will have found his soul (by a saving of his life in this world through denying me in those times when life is endangered) will lose it (namely, through the eternal death at the second coming). And whoever will have lost his soul (through the loss of his life in this world in persecution, through an act of self sacrifice) will find it (at the resurrection to eternal life)."

With the above explanation we agree. The finding in the first half of the text denotes the saving of the soul when to all appearances it is hopelessly endangered by temporal death; while in the second half it denotes the saving of the soul after it has actually succumbed to death. The former is a finding that issues in eternal death; the latter, one that conducts to eternal life.

And make no mistake by concluding that the Lord is here speaking only of martyrs. No doubt they have the preeminence in losing their lives. Has it not been correctly said: The history of the Christian Church has been written with a pen of blood? Is not the history of the church of Christ replete with examples of those who because of their relation to Christ were required to be burned as torches to light the arenas of pleasure-mad demons, who allowed their bodies to be cast into the teeth of ferocious beasts, or who suffered the members of their bodies to be pulled apart on the racks? Is it not so that of the immediate disciple group only one was allowed to pass away on a bed of peace, though he was an exile?

Yet the losing of one's life has a broader significance than mere martyrdom. The term refers also to the daily act of self-negation. It is therefore not only the martyr on whose bleeding brow the crown of life is gently placed, whose temples have first been torn by a crown of thorns; but there is a daily dying, which perhaps is as hard or harder than the brief and bloody passage of martyrdom through which some enter into rest. For the true losing of life is the slaying of self, and that has to be done day by day, and not once for all, in some supreme act of surrender at the end, or in some initial act of submission and yielding at the beginning of the Christian life.

We must not forget that by natural disposition we are all inclined to make our selves to be our own centres, the objects of our trust; and if we do so, we are dead while we live. But the death which brings life

is when, day by day, we “crucify the old man with his affections and lusts.” And crucifixion is no sudden death; it is a slow and painful one. One does not, therefore, naturally choose to lose his life. Rather, he seeks to preserve it and all the material resources at his disposal he would use to find his life in this world, in which, like the fool, he imagines he shall live forever.

How tragic is the end of such an one! He that finds his life, in this sense, shall lose it! With nothing more, such a soul ends in eternal death.

On the other hand, the one having lost his soul shall find it!

That is, the one having lost his soul for Jesus’ sake! On account of Me!

This must mean, first of all, on account of what Christ Jesus has done for that soul! Understand it well — there is no soul that will lose itself on account of Christ that was not first operated upon by Christ. We have nothing to give to or for Christ that we did not first receive from Him.

You remember it was Simon Peter, with all the emphasis on “Simon,” who said: “I will lay down my life (soul) for thy sake.” To whom Jesus replied: “Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.” The error and sin of Peter was not only that he rashly believed he could do something for Jesus, even give his life for Him; but his great mistake was that he failed to see that he could not lay down his life for Christ until Christ had first laid down His life for Peter. What brought Peter to repentance and bitter tears after he had denied His Lord as was predicted, was not only the fact that he sensed his awful sin of denial, but the look of the Saviour as He passed from the judgment hall of Annas to the ecclesiastical hall of justice (?) before Caiaphas, which look penetrated to the very heart of Peter with the implied words: “Peter, you must understand well that you cannot lay down your life for Me until I first lay down My life for you. I go now to do exactly that. For in a moment I shall be condemned to death not only by the church, but also by the world. I have power, Peter, to lay down my life,

to lose it; and I have power to take it up again. And only after I have so conducted Myself, may you, Peter, follow me, and lose your life.”

And so it must always be!

This is also the sense of what John writes (I John 3:16) “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” That is always the order! “On account of Me” must refer, therefore, to what Christ has first done.

Then, in the second place, it can and does mean also, in service to Him! He is Master — I am His slave. Obeying Him I love not my life unto death.

Such losers become finders!

Beautiful promise!

He shall find it!

Or, as John expresses it in the parallel passage quoted above: “shall keep it unto eternal life.” Striking is the immediate context of this reference, where we read (John 12:24) “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” One kernel dropped in the furrow and dying there brings forth a field of waving grain. Christ evidently is speaking here of His own death, a death that would eventually bring forth a veritable harvest of living, glorified souls. And this grace He passes on to all His servants whom He makes willing to lose their souls in this life, in order that they may repossess their souls unto eternal life.

This life we experience now in principle and in a relative sense, in the measure we lose our life for Christ’s sake in this present evil world. That is, when we put the knife to the throat of our sinful nature and mortify the deeds of the body so that they are slain completely, then we live. And when we lay down our lives, we actually lose nothing, but we find the life that shall never end, which is the experience of everlasting fellowship with the God of our salvation in Christ Jesus.

For this is indeed eternal life: “That they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Editorials

Remember Galileo!

In the on-going debate about Scripture and its authority no little stir has been created by a brochure (in the series *Kampen Exercise Books*) from the pen of Dr. H. M. Kuitert under the title “Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?” This brochure is supposed to be about the interpretation of the Bible, according to its sub-title. In fact, however, it is about the Bible

itself; and it is an obvious attempt to present in popular style and for the general reading public the so-called new theology concerning the authority and inspiration of Scripture which is current in the Netherlands and which finds its leading representatives in men like Dr. G. C. Berkouwer (to whom Kuitert dedicates this brochure in thankfulness for his “inimi-

table book, 'De Heilige Schrift II' "!!!), Dr. Kuitert, and others.

One of the favorite devices of those who attack the literal interpretation of those parts of Scripture which plainly demand a literal understanding is to refer to the history of the controversy between the scientist Galileo and the Roman Catholic Church in the 17th century. Here is supposed to be an instance where the church unjustly condemned a man on the basis of a literal interpretation of Scripture and later came to understand that this literal interpretation was untenable.

Dr. Kuitert in his insistence that the writers of Scripture were time-bound, that is, limited in their views to the historical horizons of their own times (so that, for example, they could erroneously think and write as though the earth were flat and four-cornered, etc.), also refers to the Galileo-question.

Although one would think that some of these theologians would tire of threshing this old straw, especially since this argument has been repeatedly and effectively answered, they nevertheless continue to bring it up. Why, I do not know, except for the fact that it has been effectively used to deceive the simple sometimes.

In one of the Dutch papers, "*Tot Vrijheid Geroepen*," G. Goossens has written a series of articles in which he criticizes Kuitert's views as presented in the above-mentioned brochure. These articles have appeared under the title "Adamlessness in Kuitert." In the second article (March, 1969) he very neatly answers Dr. Kuitert's argument from the Galileo-controversy. In fact, he turns Dr. Kuitert's argument against himself.

Because the Galileo-matter has been repeatedly brought up, also in our own country, and because Mr. Goossens treats this matter rather thoroughly and effectively, I am presenting a translation of a large section of one of his articles. All that follows in this editorial is a quotation and translation of the above-mentioned article.

* * * * *

Time-bound Interpreters

That the *interpreters* of the Scriptures are also strongly "time-bound" is illustrated by Dr. Kuitert by means of the well-known narrative of Joshua 10 ("Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.") and the Galileo-question.

"There was a time when this text was used to refute the assertions of Copernicus and Galileo. Here they surely found it clearly stated in Scripture that not the earth revolved about the sun, as Copernicus and Galileo claimed, but the sun about the earth," we read.

A little further, on p. 26: "Although it stands there, today we say: 'Anyone who would contend that Joshua 10: 12, 13 would inform us that the earth

stands still and that the sun revolves, has not understood what he reads.'

"Although it stands there," says Dr. Kuitert, but the amusing thing is that Kuitert himself never tumbled to it that what he asserts one should literally read there does *not* stand there. The fact of the matter is that Joshua does not say of the earth that it stands still, does not turn upon its axis, or something similar. If Galileo in his time had only contended that the earth turned upon its axis — leaving the rest as it is — then the exegetes could not have attacked him with Joshua 10: 12, 13, even with the best intentions in the world.

Yet that would not have helped him very much. For the simple reason that the (Roman Catholic) "interpreters" of the beginning of the 17th century, who busied themselves with Galileo's "heresy," were all cut from exactly the same wood as Dr. Kuitert today. And it was no different with Galileo.

By "time-boundness" of interpreters Dr. Kuitert would understand, not wrongly, that these live in a definite age, with a definite state of scientific development. Whatever is known of the universe and the course of the heavenly bodies or whatever is thought about these things, whatever is discovered in every sphere of natural science and is accepted as established, furthermore whatever — upon whatever ground that may be — is conceived and generally accepted as the truth, — all of this together constitutes the "world-image" of a certain period. Not all contemporaries have that same world-image. One finds it in the sphere of science, and from that height some of it trickles down — all according to the ability of individuals to grasp it — to the masses. In our time men speak (as we are also assured by Prof. Van de Fliert in his brochure, "Fundamentalism and the basis of the geological sciences") of "our world-image," which — compared with that of earlier generations — "has attained to tremendous dimensions, in time as well as in space." Well then, no one need dispute this. In another century — should the world still exist then — every scholar will be able to say that again, — perhaps after he is basically done with the "world-image" of the present generation for good and all. Who will say?

What Dr. Kuitert now wishes to do by recalling the Galileo-question is to support the popular fable that the earlier exegetes (i.e., those of the beginning of the 17th century) viewed the Bible as a book from which you could also learn astronomy, geology, biology, etc. etc. To that end they read the Bible *literally*. However, there is no truth to this.

If only those "interpreters" of the Inquisition had read *literally*! Then they would have readily comprehended that Joshua employed exactly the same word-usage as they themselves and also as we still do today. We speak too, do we not, of the sun which goes every day from the east to the west? If on a summer day one should notice that in the evening at 10 o'clock the sun

still stood just as far above the horizon as at 7 o'clock, he would cry out entirely correctly: "The sun is standing still!" We also speak (even today) of the tropics, or solstices, between which the sun goes and returns, (*keerkringen*, *waartussen de zon heen en weer keert*). Dr. Kuitert observes correctly that Joshua 10: 12, 13 would tell us something entirely different than that which the interpreters in the days of Galileo read in it; but when he then continues "that the narrator avails himself of the knowledge which he has of the sun and moon," this last assertion is, of course, nonsense. Just as well as it would be nonsense if someone who heard Dr. Kuitert assert at the Zandvoort beach that the sun set beautifully in the sea and the moon rose above the dunes in stately grandeur to the heavens, would assure us that Dr. Kuitert avails himself of the knowledge of the sun and moon which he has. Fortunately the Bible does not concern itself at all with "world-images." It speaks common human language.

Hewn From The Same Wood

How is it now with those "interpreters" of 1616, and especially with those of 1633, with whom Galileo had trouble?

They certainly did not swear by the Bible, saying that it stands thus and so when read literally and that this is now the "world-image" of the "Biblical writer" and therefore also ours, and that whatever is not in harmony with it is heresy, etc., etc.

No, they swore by the science of Aristotle, who knew nothing of a Bible. Thomas Aquinas had been a genial coordinator, who had very neatly fitted together the doctrine of Aristotle and the doctrine of the church. Well now, entirely in harmony with the teaching of Aristotle the learned astronomer Ptolemy (also a heathen, as far as is known), who lived about 130 A.D., projected a world-image on the basis of his own observations and reckonings in which the earth stood in the center of the universe. The earth stood still, and the sun and the planets moved at enormous speeds around this center. All that was known about astronomy until the days of Ptolemy he had compiled in a book, named the "Almagest." Far into the 17th century this scientific work was regarded by many men of science and by church authorities as the end of all contradiction.

Had Galileo but remained quiet and confined himself to his own scientific sphere, continuing to build on the teaching of Copernicus that the earth turns about the sun and also has its own revolution about its axis, etc., he would not have encountered much difficulty. But he found it necessary to make it clearly known that the traditional interpretation of Scripture erred on some points. For it was scientifically certain that...etc., etc. Against this the ecclesiastical authorities then took up arms, supported

by the overwhelming majority of the men of science (who often were at the same time church authorities).

Actually they stood, without their knowing it, on the same standpoint as Galileo. They also swore by a certain science. In this instance, that of Ptolemy. Armed with those scientific spectacles, they read the Scriptures. They did not permit Galileo to put other spectacles on them.

They did not get it from Scripture that the sun turned about the earth. No, they had long ago gotten that from science, namely, from the *Almagest* of Ptolemy. And then they *thought* to find it also in the Bible.

Naturally, the fat was in the fire when in 1632 he wrote his "Dialogue" about the two chief world-images, that of Ptolemy and that of Copernicus. In that work he let three persons argue about the pro and con of both world-images. The one was a confirmed follower of Copernicus, the other a fanatical opponent, well-versed in the teaching of Aristotle. In the book this one is pictured as a half-baked simpleton. The third plays the part of an impartial auditor, a kind of moderator — to use a modern word. It caught the attention, however, that Galileo put the arguments which the Pope and his prelates used in their opposition to the world-image of Copernicus in the mouth of that half-baked simpleton.

As is well-known, in 1633 Galileo was compelled to repudiate his teachings, which he did only out of self-preservation, with the words: "I declare that I believe, and always shall believe, what the Church acknowledges and teaches as Truth."

All that can be deduced from the history of Galileo and his conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities is this, that those "interpreters" as well as Galileo and his supporters both swore by science. Actually the difference concerned only the question *which* science one had to adhere to, *which* world-image one had to have in order to be able to read and understand the Scriptures well. This, then, is precisely the same question at issue today with Dr. Kuitert, *cum sociis*, and with many other scholars — also non-theologians. *Again* they swear by science. This time, however, by the teaching of evolution. Therefore we said: *hewn from the same wood*.

Because Dr. Kuitert has a "world-image" which is closely connected with what he has learned from the evolutionists in the sphere of the natural sciences and likewise in the sphere of the spiritual sciences and accepts as irrefutable truth, he has gone about reading and understanding the Scriptures *differently*.

His opinion, that Adam and Eve did not exist and that there was no paradise, no serpent, and no fall, no finely formed human beings six or eight thousand years ago, — this he did not get from the Scriptures. No, the evolutionists taught him this. What was taught him about fossils and earth-strata has become for him

decisive proof for the untenableness of that which the writer of Genesis relates to him as "having really happened."

Prof. Van de Fliert has remarked in his previously cited brochure that the "fundamentalist," who wants to see the trustworthiness of Scripture scientifically proven, must live in fear and anxiety for the results of an ever-developing science because this development might indeed also be able to disprove that trustworthiness.

This, however, is a completely erroneous presentation of matters. For those who should have to live in fear

and anxiety are exactly the theologians like Dr. Kuitert and his fellows. For as soon as their evolutionistic world-image is toppled by newer results of scientific development — and those results are already among us — nothing remains of their entire theology, which is directed toward a "better reading and understanding" of the Scriptures.

That anxiety and fear then reveals itself in them also in a haughty self-withdrawal into an evolutionistic ivory tower, — inaccessible to scientific results other than those which appear to be a confirmation of evolutionism.

Some Questions to C.A.F.

"C.A.F." stands for "Christian Action Foundation," a rather new organization which claims to be dedicated to Christian communal action in the areas of education, scholarship, labor, politics, amusement, communications, etc., an organization which was formed in Sioux Center, Iowa, but which has membership throughout the country. Those of our readers who have access to "Torch and Trumpet" magazine will know that there has been a kind of marriage between the two organizations, at least in so far as "Torch and Trumpet" has lent itself to being a propaganda outlet to C.A.F., with the result that in recent issues there have been several articles devoted to the purposes and aims of said Christian Action Foundation.

It is not my intention at this time to offer a thorough-going critique of this Christian Action Foundation. Perhaps at a later date the *Standard Bearer* will do so. Nevertheless, I have some questions which in a way go to the heart of the issue of the validity or lack of validity of this organization, questions which surely would be of fundamental importance to any Protestant Reformed person who would ever consider having a part in the Christian Action Foundation, and questions which probably will not, but nevertheless ought to, give pause to the spokesmen of C.A.F.

In part, these questions are occasioned by a question with which I was confronted some time ago. The question was: why cannot you Protestant Reformed people cooperate with the rest of the Reformed community? At first, thinking that the question had to do with ecclesiastical cooperation, I replied that our Protestant Reformed Churches have always been willing to discuss the matters which have caused and still do cause separation between us and the Christian Reformed Churches, but that the Christian Reformed Churches at every occasion when we expressed readiness for such discussion have steadfastly refused it. That, of course, is a matter of record. And my questioner (who is one of the spokesmen of C.A.F.) conceded the truth of this. However, he then made it

clear that he did not have in mind cooperation in the ecclesiastical sphere, but in other, non-ecclesiastical spheres. My reply, — and I think these were my literal words, — was: "We are willing to cooperate in any Reformed movement; but the trouble is that every time we think there is a movement or an organization in which we might be able to cooperate, it isn't long before we run 'smack-dab' into the common grace theory, which makes it impossible for us to cooperate."

This, it appears to me, is the case with C.A.F.

I ask, therefore, in the first place, whether or not it is true that common grace is an operating-principle of C.A.F., even though, perhaps, it is not specifically enunciated in the official principles or constitution of the C.A.F. I ask this question because on more than one occasion I have observed that spokesmen of C.A.F. in their writings in "Torch and Trumpet" have made references to common grace at rather key junctures in their writings.

In the second place, I ask the question, — one which has been asked many times previously, but never satisfactorily answered: what grace do the reprobate wicked receive? I would like an answer to that question in the light of Scripture and the confessions, not a philosophical answer.

In the third place, I have this question: what becomes of the *antithesis*, which must needs lie at the basis of any Christian communal action, if common grace is a fact and must serve as an operating principle in Christian communal action such as that proposed by C.A.F.? If God's grace, favor, is upon the wicked as well as upon the righteous, where is the fundamental cleavage and where the possibility of confrontation of "an apostate world, under the grip of a false world-and-life view and moving in the wrong direction" (Rev. B.J. Haan in "Torch and Trumpet," May, 1969, p. 2)?

These are old, familiar questions. But they are fundamental ones. And in the interest of a clear understanding of the C.A.F. movement, as well as in

the interest of a clear understanding of the reasons for any cooperation or non-cooperation on the part of Protestant Reformed people in a movement such as

this, I would like to see any spokesman of C.A.F. give some clear and straight-forward answers to these questions.

The Strength of Youth.

The Purpose of Christian Education

(Guest Article)

Mr. Jon Huiskens

I have been invited here tonight to speak about education, about school, a topic which, I am sure, is very dear to your hearts. I say this of course with tongue in cheek. From my experience with many of you, I know that if you are going to complain about something, one of those "somethings" will inevitably be school. I do believe, however, that in spite of your grumblings and complainings there are here tonight many people who are concerned about their education, concerned enough to seek guidance and direction with respect to it. This ought to be the case. You should not shun the guidance of your parents, ministers, and teachers but rather should want it and seek it. You should also want to be educated. You ought to want to know. There is perhaps among us today a move in the opposite direction, a move toward anti-intellectualism. A move precipitated, I believe, not only from the bottom up from the student but also from the top down. We fear learning, especially higher education, because we have seen what it can do to unfounded people. We ignore learning because it cannot give social or financial status. Learning, however, ought to have a high value among us and, as we hope to point out, not because it is necessarily so practical and pragmatic but basically because God has commanded us to know. If there is one thought that I wish to leave with you tonight it is this: education, Christian education, *your Protestant Reformed Christian education* is serious business. It ought not be taken lightly nor matter-of-factly, neither should it be feared. Rather, shown in its proper perspective, your education ought to be considered by you to be one of the most loved and prized possessions that you will ever acquire.

It will be my purpose tonight, then, to show you just exactly why this is so. Why is it so important that we go to school, and not just to any school, and not just to any Christian school which happens to be convenient, but why is it so important that you attend a Protestant Reformed Christian school? What's your purpose there? What is the purpose of the school?

It must be seen from the outset that the purpose of education can be no different from the purpose of anything else. Man, according to Calvin's Genevan

Catechism, has but one chief purpose: "to know God and enjoy him forever." We must know God, we must know Him in the spiritual sense of the word. We must believe that He is, that He is Creator, that He is Redeemer, and in thus believing, we must acknowledge that God is sovereign over all areas of life. We must know about Him, Who He is, what He does. We must seek out his ways and his works. God alone gives meaning to things. Life without God is futile and meaningless. So, too, in education. Also here we must seek to know God, we must seek His wisdom. Education, too, without God is meaningless and pointless.

As soon as we talk about God, however, we are talking about the infinite, incomprehensible One, the One "whose ways are past finding out." Man of himself cannot know Him, not even intellectually or intuitively. If we are going to talk about God, we must immediately speak of revelation. God tells us Who He is, and what He has done. He has done this in two ways, through His Word and through His creation.

It was man, then, who was placed in this creation and instructed to know about God. In Genesis 1:28 we read that Adam, and thus all men through him, was instructed not only to replenish and multiply but also to subdue the earth. He was king. He had to use his intellect and reason to govern the creation and, above all, he had to view the creation as mighty work of the Creator. He had to bow before the mighty speech of God, he had to acknowledge God in all things and use all things to worship his Father-Creator. Man today is given the very same command: "subdue the earth," use all things for God's sake, use all things to worship your Father-Creator. Know God, know him with all your faculties, seek his fellowship and his knowledge in all areas of life. This, then, is the purpose of all of man's life. Where, then, does education fit in?

If we review for a moment the relationship between the church, the home, and the school, we must be willing to recognize from the outset that it is the church which has been given the responsibility of working with this revelation, especially now the revelation through the Word. It is the duty of the

preacher to explain and interpret what God says to us. It is the church which lays the foundations, the spiritual principles which must guide our lives. This was certainly true in the Old Testament: the prophet always spake, "Thus saith the Lord." The Lord told the prophet how He would have his people behave. The same is true today. The minister must also say, "Thus saith the Lord." This is indeed how the Lord would have you behave. This is His will, His commandment to you. The church sets the standards, standards dictated by the Word of God. The individual believer, however, if he is a responsible Christian, takes these principles and applies them to his life and, of course, to the revelation which surrounds him in creation. He must be able to see in the light of the Word that creation also speaks loudly of God as Creator and Redeemer. I say, now, that he must be *able* to do this. It is precisely here that the Christian school has arisen. The situation in the home is such that the parents are not able to adequately apply these principles, they simply do not have the time and some do not have the ability. The school, then, is set up to enable the parent to fulfill this responsibility. The school is designed to perform this very task: the application of scriptural principles to life, and especially to the revelation in creation. Broadly conceived we might state the purpose of the school as follows: It is the purpose of the school to elucidate the revelation of God in the creation, to give that creation meaning, to interpret that creation, to see to it that the student also understands that God is "out there." Do not forget, however, our original purpose, our chief and only purpose. We do not go to school to see how many facts we can accumulate, neither do we go to school simply to gain skills which will be requirements for an occupation. I am not trying to minimize this aspect of education, for it certainly is a necessary part of education. The point I wish to make, however, is that these are only means, only tools, which enable us to reach a specific end. We learn to read and write and spell and compute for one ultimate and primary reason, so that we may be better equipped to serve God, so that we may be better equipped to delve into the mysteries which His revelation contains. The purpose of school, then, is not to prepare one for his life's occupation nor is it to see how high we can score on a National Merit test; it goes much deeper than that. We go to school to gain understanding, to gain wisdom, to learn how to properly apply those spiritual principles to all areas of learning, to gain the proper perspective from which to view that wondrous creation which we face every day.

We must emphasize, however, that man, you as student and I as teacher, cannot do this without help. This takes grace, this takes faith. Only the man of faith will attempt to do this in education today and only the student who has faith will subject himself to such an

education, for he clearly sees that without faith, without regenerating grace there will be no meaning whatsoever to what we do. Without grace we cannot see God at all. School without the foundation of the Word and the church is utter nonsense. Education, too, begins and ends with God. Listen to the words of Job in this regard: "Where is wisdom?" ask Job. It cannot be bought, it does not lie in riches nor material goods. The world does not have it. Only God knows "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28) St. Augustine had this very clearly in mind when he wrote *credo ut intelligam*, I believe in order that I may understand. Faith, faith in the Word of God precedes all of the activities of reason. Reason never searches unattended and in isolation. Only in the light of the Word of God and only from its perspective can we obtain any meaning at all from the creation of God. Faith seeking understanding, this is the purpose of the school, this is the only valid reason for its existence.

The school and church, then, must be pictured as being intimately related, the one is the foundation for the other. This is why I stated earlier that it is so important *where* you go to school. The principles of the church are necessarily reflected in the teaching of the school. We must not segregate education from the rest of life; rather we must view it as being a very necessary part of life. Education, your life at school, must not be used as an excuse for experimentation with far-out ideas. The same church which gives the people of God principles for their lives also gives the guiding principles for our schools. There are not two sets of principles, one set distinctly Protestant Reformed and the other set some vague general principles. Our view of all of life and of all that that life contains is determined by the Word of God and that Word as it is preached to you on Sunday.

In addition, however, to this purpose of the school we must also see that it is not only the purpose of the school to provide the student with principles with which he himself can attack the creation but the school must also enable the student to make proper value judgements about the subject material which is presented to him.

As we stated before, God reveals Himself through His Word and His creation. Man, then, when he is placed in the creation, comes face to face with this revelation of God. And, seeing God, he cannot help responding. It lies in the very nature of the case. Man works with creation, he digs in it, he dissects it, he analyzes it with his telescopes and microscopes, he builds, he constructs, he writes, he paints, in a word he produces a culture. It is these cultural productions which are the subject material of your curriculum. The important thing that we have to see in this respect is that we have to learn how to properly handle this culture. We must be able to evaluate it, analyze it, and

by all means criticize it. We must ask ourselves what does that culture say and why does it say what it does. Never must we fall into the idea that somehow this culture is neutral, that the Christian can take it or leave it, or, at best, all he has to do is to somehow miraculously transform it. Never must we accept it at face value. We have to make judgments, value judgments, spiritual-ethical judgments, judgments as to whether it is good or bad.

That this is the case lies in the very nature of culture itself. Culture cannot be neutral, but it is necessarily colored by the particular viewpoint of its progenitor. Let us now take a close look at this culture to determine just why this is so.

The term culture is derived from the Latin word which literally means to till or to cultivate. It was first used to denote exactly that, the cultivation and tilling of the soil. The first culture was agriculture. Throughout the process of history, however, many other "cultures" have been developed and the term has now come to include all of the activity of man as he belabors the earth in his attempt to advance himself and the universe. It shows man as fulfilling the command of God in Genesis 1:28, as fulfilling the command to subdue the earth.

It must be noted further that man is not laboring with a chaotic heap out of which he is trying to create form and order. In doing culture, man is busy with God's creation. Man is working with a cosmos, an ordered universe. Man is not a creator but merely a discoverer. As man works, then, he comes into contact with the revelation of God.

Adam, of course, in his perfect state saw this very clearly. Created in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, as the friend-servant of God, Adam perfectly obeyed God's commandment. He subdued all things to himself but with the purpose of using all these things in the service and praise of his Creator.

Adam fell, however, and with the fall sin comes into the world, and, with sin, comes the antithesis. The creation was changed; man was changed. Sin had an effect upon culture. The creation is cursed; man is darkened. God's speech is lost to him; being spiritually blind, he cannot see God. But man, though fallen and darkened, still remains man, he does not become beast or devil. He is still a rational-moral being. Sin, rather, changes man's spiritual-ethical nature. His light becomes darkness, obedience becomes disobedience, truth becomes the lie. He is no longer an office-bearer of God but a servant of sin. Sin posits the antithesis, the antithesis between it and grace. After the fall, we have two types of men, the elect and the reprobate, the believer and the unbeliever. Two types of men, both, however, still engaged in producing a culture but now with an entirely different purpose. By grace, and by grace alone, the regenerate can again obey the command to "subdue the earth." He has been called

from his darkness into light. He works, he dissects, but not for self but in praise and worship of his Creator. The unregenerate, however, is left in his sin. He, too, works, but he is working to erect his Babels and Babylons and New Deals and Great Societies. He labors for himself, he attempts to subserve all things for his own glory and benefit.

Such is the distinction in all spheres of life, none excepted. Two types of men, similar in all respects except the redeeming grace of God. The one is spiritual, the other carnal. The one has meaning in life, the other is hopelessly caught up in a vicious circle trying to make things relevant.

I think you can see now what I meant when I said that culture cannot be neutral. All of life, all of culture and every cultural product either speaks for God or against Him. It is the purpose of the school to show you just exactly that fundamental truth. The antithesis is absolute, either-or, for or against.

The school, then, must equip you to meet and evaluate that culture, to aid you in making critical judgments with respect to it. I do not care whom you read, Plato, Hemingway, Shakespeare, Barth, or Tillich, all of them must be read and studied from this point of view. All of them are going to say something about God and His creation, all of them are either going to serve Him or blaspheme Him. Afares we remind you of Augustine. Faith seeking understanding, that is the key to your education.

We must understand further tonight that this a very urgent calling and duty which is given to you. This is something that you must learn when you are young, especially now in our own situation. This is something which you must learn before you are out of high school, for this is where, for most of you, your Protestant Reformed education stops. Now is the time to prepare yourself. Christ's parable in Matthew 24 is very applicable here. There are two types of servants, there are those who are always making excuses, those who are always procrastinating, those who are saying, "Give me time, let me mature, death and the end of the world are years and years away." Do not be fooled, says Jesus, blessed is he whom the Lord findeth busy working, busy preparing himself for His coming, busy in subduing all things in His service.

Necessary it certainly is that you work today, right now. Do not deceive yourselves. It does not take a genius to determine what the world and the devil are up to. Friederich Nietzsche spoke prophetically one hundred years ago when he wrote:

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly, "I seek God! I seek God!" As many of those who do not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. . . .

"Whither is God?" he cried. "I shall tell you. We

have killed him — you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods too decompose. God is dead Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must not we ourselves become gods simply to seem worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever will be born after us — for the sake of this deed he will be part of a higher history than all history hitherto."

It has been related further that on that same day the madman entered divers churches and there sang his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said to have replied each time, "What are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchres of God?"

This is what the world is about today, they are burying God. That old-fashioned concept of a God who is the sovereign ruler of all things has bitten the dust. The church has moved outdoors. Nietzsche was absolutely right and Nietzsche shouts a loud "Amen! Good work! The deeper the grave the better." Man has become of age, he no longer needs the benevolent, protecting hand of God. Gone forever are the days of the church-centered, Christ-centered society. Man has been

liberated from the hands of an angry God. This is the spirit today. Can you read it? Can you answer it? It is this philosophy and this type of thinking which is thrown at you from all sides today. Get rid of traditional Reformed theology, put the church on the street, sepulchres indeed are these stodgy Reformed churches. God is just a concept, a big woozy idea, action's the thing. Can you cope with this in education, especially now those of you who hope to continue your education? Are you prepared to fight it?

In conclusion, let me impress upon you the fact that you have placed upon you a tremendous responsibility. If you are going to make those critical judgments which are required of you, it means that you are going to have to be firmly fixed in your faith, you are going to have to know what the Word of God says and how to apply it. You don't go to school forever, you know. Put on the armor of God while you have this opportunity, prepare yourself for the battle. You, too, are called to fight. Learn while you have the opportunity. Alexander Pope was right when he penned the words:

A little learning is a dangerous thing,
Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring

Yes, blessed indeed is that servant whom the Lord shall find busy preparing himself for His coming.

J. Huiskens
Delivered at the Young People's
Spring Banquet on May 1, 1969

Studies in Depth

THE WALDENSIAN MOVEMENT, II

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

Its Doctrine and Persecutions

A very comprehensive study of the Waldensian Churches and its history from primitive times is to be had in the very worthwhile book, *The History of the Churches of the Valley of Piedmont*, by Samuel Morland, London, 1658, containing "a faithful account of the doctrine, life and persecutions of the ancient inhabitants, together with a most naked and punctual relation of the late bloody massacre, 1655, and . . . following transactions to . . . 1658." (Franklin Printing Co., 414 B St., Fort Smith, Arkansas, 1955, \$10.00).

What the author means on the title page by the words "naked and punctual" he makes abundantly clear in his introduction. "There are now more than nineteen months past since the voice of the blood of the poor Protestants in the Valley of Piedmont was heard in all the corners of the Christian world,

especially throughout the English nation, where there then arrived letters upon letters, just like Job's messengers, one at the heels of another, with the sad and doleful tidings of most strange and unheard of cruelties, for which I almost dare to challenge the best furnished historians, as well ancient as modern, to find me their parallels. Some of their women were ravished and afterward staked down to the ground through their (genitals); others strangely forced, and their bellies rammed up with stones and rubbish: the brains and breasts of others sodden and eaten by their murderers, as if the design of those bloody cannibals and barbarous *anthropophagi* had been not only to extirpate those poor creatures out of this world, but also . . . to hinder them from having a being in the world to come." The author then asks, "If two she-bears out of the wood were commanded to tear in pieces forty and two little children for abusing the old

prophet barely by the term of *bald pate* . . . what shall be the end of these murderers of riper years, who took so much pleasure and delight in torturing so many poor, impotent and aged persons by fire and sword?" (p. a-1) This immediately throws light on the meaning and appropriateness of the text printed on the title page, "When he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?' " (Rev. 6:9). The book comes well documented, based as it is on authentic ancient historical manuscripts "written many hundreds of years before Calvin and Luther" (some of them), the true originals of which in their proper languages may be seen in the public library of the famous University of Cambridge.

The author informs us that the production of this work, of 709 pages, was a torture of a kind for himself. "My spirit has oft waxed cold within me, and my heart even failed me, yea, my very hand has trembled as with a fit of palsy in the writing thereof." The perusal of it, in some places will have a similar effect, he assures. "Sure I am, whosoever shall read . . . the treacherous stratagems and horrid cruelties therein contained, must have a heart of adamant and bowels of brass, should they not be touched with a fellow-feeling of their brethren's misery." (p. a-3) To read every part of this book and even to carefully examine its horrifying illustrations (in old wood-cut style) will take, if not a heart of adamant, at least bowels of brass or an iron stomach. After a little of this reading, one may understand the author's opinion that "the ancient heretics, Mohammedans and pagans, had they now lived, would have been very much ashamed to have seen themselves so outstripped by the bloody butchers of these our days, in the invention of so strange and unheard of cruelties!" (p. c-7)

Besides Luther, Melancthon, Bucer and many others regarding them as brethren, Beza called the Waldenses "the very seed of the primitive and purer Christian Church" and "those . . . so upheld . . . by the admirable providence of God, that neither . . . that Bishop of Rome, falsely so called, nor those horrible persecutions . . . were ever able to prevail upon them, as to make them bend or yield a voluntary subjection to the Roman tyranny and idolatry." (a-6) The book contains church-historical, doctrinal, confessional, catechetical and sermonic material in abundance. A few Waldensian statements of faith follow.

1. "Christ . . . died for the salvation of all those that believe." This is from an ancient confession of faith bearing the date, 1120, A.D. (p. 33). 2. "We believe that there is one holy Church, which is the congregation of all the elect and faithful ones from the beginning of the world to the end" (p. 37). 3. "All

those that have been and shall be saved have been elected of God before the foundation of the world" (p. 40). "It is impossible that those that are appointed to salvation, should not be saved. Whosoever upholds free will denieth absolute Predestination and the grace of God." 4. "We were baptized being little children . . . in remembrance of that great benefit given to us by Jesus Christ, when He died for our redemption and washed us with his precious blood" (p. 41). "Children are to be baptized unto salvation, and to be consecrated to Christ, according to His Word, Mt. 19:13-15" (p. 53). "Baptism (is) a testimony of our adoption and of our being cleansed from our sins" (p. 67). 5. "We request the Reformed Churches to hold and acknowledge us, as true members of theirs, being ready to sign with our own blood, if God calleth us to it, the Confession of Faith by them made and published, which we acknowledge every way agreeing with the doctrine taught and registered by the holy apostles, and therefore truly apostolical, promising to live and die in it" (p. 42). 6. "Where Christ is absent, and His Word rejected, there can be neither a true Church, nor people pleasing to God" (1535 A.D.). (p. 50). "All men ought to join with that Church and continue in the communion thereof" (p. 67). 7. "God so loved the world, that is to say, those whom He has chosen out of the world" (p. 65). "The Church is the company of the faithful . . . having been elected before the foundation of the world." "All the elect are upheld and preserved by the power of God . . . they all persevere in the Faith unto the end" (p. 67). "God saves from that corruption and condemnation those whom He has chosen from the foundation of the world, not for any disposition, faith or holiness that He foresaw in them, but of His mere mercy in Jesus Christ His Son, passing by all the rest according to the irreprehensible reason of His free will and justice" (64). "By the holy catholic Church is meant all the elect of God, from the beginning of the world to the end, by the grace of God through the merit of Christ, gathered together by the Holy Spirit and foreordained to eternal life, the number and names of whom are known to Him alone who has elected them; and in this Church remains none who is reprobate" (p. 79). 8. "We do agree in sound doctrine with all the Reformed Churches of France, Great Britain, the Low Countries, Germany, Switzerland, Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, et al" (p. 69). "Therefore we humbly entreat all the Evangelical Protestant Churches to look upon us as true members of the mystical body of Christ, suffering for His name's sake, notwithstanding our poverty and lowness; and to continue unto us the help of their prayers to God" (p. 70).

Referring to the persecutions of the Waldenses we read that "they found (when it was too late) how far the [Roman] Catholics keep faith with those that they call heretics; for having used all possible artifices to

draw the rest within their reach, they presently clapt to their nets, and dividing the prey, put all to fire and sword, . . . and that in the most barbarous manner they could possibly devise . . . those horrid and unheard of cruelties" (328). Not many will want to read through all these unbelievable (yet we believe it all!) accounts of the obscene barbarities that the Protestants of Piedmont of all ages and sex suffered. But some reading ought to be done in this book. A brief sample of the more refined accounts follows. A Bartholomeo Frasche of Fenile is mentioned. He was taken by the soldiers who slashed and sliced his legs, then thrust a poisoned knife through his heels, after which they dragged him to prison, where he soon died . . . Magdalena La Peine, a woman of about thirty-five, pursued by these enemies and knowing what measure she would receive from them, cast herself over a very formidable precipice, rather than to fall into the hands of such butchers (362) . . . Jacopo Roffeno refusing to say "Jesus Maria" (shades of Theosophy!) was most cruelly beaten with sticks and clubs, shot several times in the body and then his head cleaved in two (368) . . .

What encouraged the vile imaginations of these

inhuman persecutors to perpetrate their monstrous crimes was the promise of plenary indulgences, absolution of sins, to all who would go and serve in this war of massacre and extinction. Many originals of these official papal papers, found on the dead bodies of soldiers of the popish army or in possession of prisoners of war, are on record in the library of Cambridge University.

The Church has never demanded "reparations," and never will, for all the sufferings, bloodshed, death and cruelties worse than death endured by the Christian martyrs. That matter shall be handled in a much different way. The Lord, the righteous Judge will most certainly repay that false persecuting harlot of Babylon with an even greater variety of punishment, both in this world and in that to come. Shall not God avenge (deal justice to) His elect that cry day and night unto Him? I tell you, *saith the Lord*, that He will avenge them speedily. He shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. When He maketh inquisition for blood He will surely remember them. Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest.

Contending for the Faith

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

THE THIRD PERIOD – 730-1517 A.D.

PROTESTANT DOCTRINE OF SIN

ACCORDING TO THE CONFESSIONS

Rev. H. Veldman

Schaff, setting forth the creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches in his *Creeds of Christendom*, distinguishes between the creeds of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the creeds of the Evangelical Reformed Churches. I assume that he makes this distinction because the Lutherans broke away from the rest of the Protestant Churches because they could not endorse the Protestant conception of the Lord's Supper. It may be considered a sad and tragic thing that this break occurred because of Luther's insistence on his view of the Lord's Supper, that the communicants receive Christ through the mouth. We assume that it is because of this break between the Lutherans and the rest of the Protestant Churches that Schaff distinguishes, as he does, between the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Reformed Churches. We first quote from the Lutheran creeds in connection with their conception of the doctrine of sin.

THE LUTHERAN CREEDS

In the Augsburg Confession, A.D. 1530, Art. II is devoted to the doctrine of original sin. It reads as follows:

Also they teach that, after Adam's fall, all men begotten after the common course of nature are born with sin; that is, without the fear of God, without trust in Him, and with fleshly appetite; and that this disease, or original fault, is truly sin, condemning and bringing eternal death now also upon all that are not born again by baptism and the Holy Spirit.

They condemn the Pelagians, and others, who deny this original fault to be sin in deed; and who, so as to lessen the glory of the merits and benefits of Christ, argue that a man may, by the strength of his own reason, be justified before God.

In this article, the Lutherans condemn the pelagian conception of sin, and declare that all men are born with sin, and that this spiritual disease is sin indeed.

The Lutherans also express themselves on the subject of original sin in the Formula of Concord, A.D. 1576. Art. I treats this subject of original sin, from an affirmative and negative point of view. In the affirmative section of this article, after maintaining that we must distinguish between the nature of the sinner and his sin, maintaining the distinction that the nature of man, also after the fall, is and remains God's creature, this creed states the following:

III. But, on the other hand, we believe, teach, and confess that Original Sin is no trivial corruption, but is so profound a corruption of human nature as to leave nothing sound, nothing uncorrupt in the body or soul of man, or in his mental or bodily powers. As reads the hymn of the Church: "Through Adam's fall is all corrupt, Nature and essence human." How great this evil is, is in truth not to be set forth in words, nor can it be explored by the subtlety of human reason, but can only be discerned by means of the revealed word of God. And we indeed affirm that no one is able to dis sever this corruption of the nature from the nature itself, except God alone, which will fully come to pass by means of death in the resurrection unto blessedness. For then that very same nature of ours, which we now bear about, will rise again free from Original Sin, and wholly severed and disjoined from the same, and will enjoy eternal felicity. For thus it is written (Job. 19: 26): "I shall be compassed again with my skin, and in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

However, it is especially in the negative section of this article on Original Sin that this Formula of Concord expresses itself very strongly on the awfulness of sin, and we quote:

II. Also, that depraved concupiscences are not sin, but certain concreate conditions and essential properties of the nature, or that those defects and that huge evil just set forth by us is not sin on whose account man, if not grafted into Christ, is a child of wrath.

III. We also reject the Pelagian heresy, in which it is asserted that the nature of man after the fall is incorrupt, and that, moreover, in spiritual things it has remained wholly good and pure in its nature powers.

IV. Also, that Original Sin is an external, trivial, and almost insignificant birthmark, or a certain stain dashed upon the man, under the which, nevertheless, nature hath retained her powers unimpaired even in spiritual things.

V. Also, that Original Sin is only an external impediment of sound spiritual powers, and is not a despoliation and defect thereof, even as, when a magnet is smeared with garlic-juice, its natural power of drawing iron is not taken away, but is only impeded; or as a stain can be easily wiped off from the face, or paint from a wall.

VI. Also, that man's nature and essence are not utterly corrupt, but that there is something of good still remaining in man, even in spiritual things, to wit,

goodness, capacity, aptitude, ability, industry, or the powers by which in spiritual things he has strength to undertake, effect, or co-effect somewhat of good.

In Art. II of the Formula of Concord, the Lutherans treat the subject of Free Will. This, too, is very interesting. In this article the Lutherans placed themselves before this question: whether by his own proper powers, before he has been regenerated by the Spirit of God, man can apply and prepare himself unto the grace of God, and whether he can receive and apprehend the divine grace (which is offered [presented] to him through the Holy Ghost in the word and sacraments divinely instituted), or not. In answer to this question Art. II, in its affirmative section, declares the following:

I. Concerning this matter, the following is our faith, doctrine, and confession, to wit: that the understanding and reason of man in spiritual things are wholly blind and can understand nothing by their proper powers. As it is written (1 Cor. 2: 14): "The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because he is examined concerning spiritual things."

II. We believe, teach, and confess, moreover, that the yet unregenerate will of man is not only averse from God, but has become even hostile to God, so that it only wishes and desires those things, and is delighted with them, which are evil and opposite to the divine will. For it is written (Gen. 8: 21): "For the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth." Also (Rom. 8: 7): "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be."

Therefore we believe that by how much it is impossible that a dead body should vivify itself and restore corporal life to itself, even so impossible is it that man, who by reason of sin is spiritually dead, should have any faculty of recalling himself into spiritual life; as it is written (Eph. 2: 5): "Even when we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ." (2 Cor. 3: 5): "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing good" as of ourselves; but that we are sufficient is itself of God."

In Art. III the Formula of Concord addresses itself to the subject of the conversion of man and that the Holy Spirit effects this conversion by the means of preaching and the hearing of the Word of God. This article reads as follows:

Nevertheless the Holy Spirit effects the conversion of man not without means, but is wont to use for effecting it preaching and the hearing of the Word of God, as it is written (Rom. 1: 16): "The gospel is a power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." And (Rom. 10: 17): "Faith cometh by hearing of the Word of God." And without question it is the will of the Lord that His Word should be heard, and that our ears should not be stopped when it is preached (Psalm 95: 8). With this Word is present the Holy Spirit, Who opens the hearts of men, in

order that, as Lydia did (Acts 16: 14), they may diligently attend, and thus may be converted by the sole grace of the Holy Spirit, Whose work, and Whose work alone, the conversion of man is. For if the grace of the Holy Spirit is absent, our willing and running, our planting, sowing, and watering, are wholly in vain (Rom. 9: 16; 1 Cor. 3: 7); if, that is, He do not give the increase, as Christ says (John 15: 5): "Without Me ye can do nothing." And, indeed, in these few words Christ denies to free-will all power whatever, and ascribes all to Divine grace, "that no one may have whereof he may glory before God (1 Cor. 1: 29; 2 Cor. 12: 5; Jer. 9: 23).

Of interest is also what this Formula of Concord has to say in the negative section of this article on free will. How strong and forceful is the language here:

We repudiate, therefore, and condemn all the errors which we will now recount, as not agreeing with the rule of the Divine word:

I. First, the insane dogma of the Stoic philosophers, as also the madness of the Manichaeans, who taught that all things which come to pass take place by necessity, and can not possibly

be otherwise; and that man does all things by constraint, even those things which he transacts in outward matters, and that he is compelled to the committing of evil works and crimes, such as unlawful lusts, acts, rapine, murders, thefts, and the like.

II. We repudiate, also, that gross error of the Pelagians, who have not hesitated to assert that man by his own powers, without the grace of the Holy Spirit, has ability to convert himself to God, to believe the gospel, to obey the Divine law from his heart, and in this way to merit of himself the remission of sins and eternal life.

III. Besides these errors, we reject also the false dogma of the Semi-Pelagians, who teach that man by his own powers can commence his conversion, but can not fully accomplish it without the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord willing, we will continue with this quotation in our following article. But already in the articles quoted, it is plain that the Formula of Concord condemns and rejects the Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian conceptions of original sin.

A Cloud of Witnesses

ABSALOM'S HOUR OF GLORY

Rev. B. Woudenberg

And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.
II Samuel 16:15

At last Absalom was obtaining that which was the dream of his life—he was entering Jerusalem with all of the glory and honor of a king. To his vain nature, there was nothing more that a person could ever desire. It was his most glorious hour.

With Absalom came all of the grandest show that could be gathered together. He had always had a flair for such things, from the fifty runners he had used for many years to announce his approach, to the elaborate tomb which he had built to house his body in the end. Everything was designed to bring attention to himself and distinguish him among the people. It was so completely different than anything his father had ever done. For David, all such pomposity was nothing but a waste of time and the last thing he desired. He never had seen any reason to try to draw special attention to himself since all of his blessedness was not in himself but a gift of grace proceeding from God. And it was this very fact that made Absalom's efforts so much more effective. Never before had the people seen such pomp as Absalom was bringing into their city. They liked it. Somehow just to see Absalom with all of his show of glory made them to feel identified with it

and participants in it. In a moment, whatever feelings of sympathy had remained for the old king were swept away, and with joy they welcomed his treacherous son in his place.

With Absalom by this time there was gathered a rather large force of fighting men. His journey from Hebron to Jerusalem had witnessed a phenomenal growth in his strength. People from all parts of the country came to take part in his revolution. Some of them were people whom Absalom had in one way or another befriended, some of them were adventurers looking for the excitement of the moment, some were opportunists who saw in the sudden rise of Absalom an opportunity to share in some of his new-found glory, some were deserters from David's army, and some of them were simply those who through the years had come to hate David, if for no other reason, because he had always so firmly insisted upon the exclusive service of Jehovah within their land and they didn't like it. And when all were gathered together, it formed a most impressive number. It tended to feed itself and bring even greater support and growth in the excitement of the moment.

In spite of all who joined him, however, there was one from whom Absalom gained more satisfaction than from any other: that was Ahithophel, the former adviser to his father David. Here was a man renowned as being one of the very wisest men in all of the kingdom. His father had always used him in solving the most difficult problems that came to him. And now this man had joined himself to Absalom from the very start. It, more than anything else, proved to the satisfaction of Absalom that his plans from the very beginning were wise and well conceived. And yet this was soon to change.

It was when Absalom stepped in to take over the royal palace that there came to him a surprise far beyond his greatest imagining. There before him stood Hushai the other adviser of his father David. This he could hardly believe. It was not that Hushai was actually so much wiser than Ahithophel. It was just that he was different. Ahithophel was known to be a cold and calculating man. He could take an issue and pick it apart piece by piece without any emotional involvement in it. This was maybe his big virtue, he could be so very objective. But Hushai was different. He too was an extremely wise man; but with him there was none of that cold distance that held the feelings of life so far away. He was warm and kind and understanding with all of the sincerity which always characterized David the king. For this reason he and David had become the closest of friends with a deep bond of understanding and love between them. Even now as Hushai stood there before his very eyes, Absalom could not really believe that by Hushai all of this was forgotten. And still Hushai spoke, and the words which he said were these, "God save the king, God save the king."

In a way it almost hurt Absalom for a moment to see even this closest friend of David's to prove unfaithful in the end. In his amazement he blurted out, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?"

To Hushai himself, however, these words were even more cutting. Just for a moment even to be thought of as a traitor to his dear master and friend was almost more than he could bear. And yet it had to be borne for the moment, and he was not one to lose his bearings at a time like this. Quickly he answered with words purposely ambiguous but designed to soothe whatever suspicion Absalom might have. He said, "Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. And again, whom should I serve? should not I serve in the presence of his son? as I have served in the father's presence, so will I be in thy presence." With Hushai there was no real question as to who was the properly appointed king of Israel and, therefore, to whom his service would be directed whether he stood in the presence of the father or the son; but Absalom

in the vanity of his soul could not be expected to see through this ambiguity of Hushai. To him the very thought that even Hushai would leave his father David to join the company of the son was all too flattering to let pass. Here was the ultimate proof that he was the person of great excellency which he had always thought himself to be. The last thing he wished to do was to undermine it by being overly suspicious. With all of the joy of a self-satisfied ego, he welcomed Hushai into the circle of his most intimate associates.

It was not long before Hushai discovered, undoubtedly to his greatest shock, just exactly how far Absalom and those surrounding him had gone in rejecting the principles upon which the kingdom of Israel was founded. It came about almost immediately after Absalom had taken over the royal palace. At that time he called his counselors together and turning to Ahithophel as the senior member of the group, he said, "Give counsel among you what we should do." The whole approach was presumptuous and arrogant, so far different from David's customary command, "I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod" by which he made consultation first always with God. But Absalom's confidence did not rest on any such faith. He was confident that they with their human wisdom would be able to solve any problem that might arise, and his every word reflected this.

The shocking part did not come in this, however, but in the advice that Ahithophel tendered him. His advice was this, "Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong." It was not that the action itself was so very unusual. This was what any heathen king would have done in that day. It was the way they had of showing their contempt for a king which they had defeated by debasing his wives publicly and thereby demonstrating his inability to defend even his own family. But that this should be done in Israel, and that by a son taking over the throne of his own father, was all too incomprehensible. It was an affront, not just to David the fleeing king, it was an affront to every man in Israel who was left with any sense of decency and of love for the law; but even more than this it was an open affront to the God of Israel upon whom the whole strength of the nation rested. To think that Ahithophel who had stood with him for so many years in the presence of David where the precepts of the law were always of first consideration should now present such a plan with perfectly sincere intent and without any sign of shame, and to think that David's own son should receive it with equal equanimity was altogether too much.

But that was not the end of the matter either. With cold and calloused deliberateness, they actually went ahead to do what Ahithophel suggested. It was a public

notice with proof which could not be questioned that Absalom held no love for his father and no fear of God in his heart.

Thus it was that when once again Absalom returned to his counsel chambers there was no question left in the mind of Hushai as to the desperateness of the situation. The very survival of the nation in the fear of the Lord was at stake. Well had been David's wish for him, "If thou return to the city . . . then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel."

The question at stake at this point was what to do about pursuing David, and Ahithophel's advice was with its usual discretion. He said to Absalom, "Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only: and I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace." It was good advice and Absalom and all those with him felt it: and yet Absalom did not feel completely at ease with it. For one thing, it meant that while Absalom remained in Jerusalem Ahithophel would be going out to gain the final stroke of victory with all of its glory. The only alternative would be for him to go on to the battle also; and he was not quite ready for that either. He was enjoying himself much too much amid the newfound glory of Jerusalem. Thus he commanded that Hushai should be brought to him to see what he would think of the plan.

Once Hushai had come and the proposition of Ahithophel was explained to him, he understood the danger that it threatened. Above all, it was necessary that it should be prevented. But the Spirit of God was with him and so he spoke. "The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time. For thou knowest thy father, and his men, that they be

mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it, will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom. And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men. Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one. Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there." It was advice far less practical than that of Ahithophel; but it allowed for the nature of Absalom far more. Not only did it protect his thirst for glory by allowing opportunity for him to go with and gain the credit for that final battle, but it also appealed to the basic cowardice of Absalom's nature by promising him the possibility of a force so great that David could offer no resistance. Quickly Absalom agreed and decided that Hushai's advice was best.

It was Ahithophel alone that saw what this really meant. Without the advantage of a sudden sweeping victory, all of their plans were vain. But it was useless for him to protest. Everyone would only think that he was trying to defend and promote his own name. Instead, he went home and hanged himself. There was nothing more that he could do.

From our Theological School Committee...

SEMINARY NEWS

Mr. J. M. Faber

The doors of our Seminary have closed! Closed for the summer, that is! Closed for an all too brief respite from hard work on the part of the students, a vacation from studies but not from work. The students will utilize this time to their utmost to earn money to carry them through the coming school year. Some will work at landscaping, some a construction; but work will be their lot. Closed are the doors to the professors to give them a bit of respite from their day to day teaching in order to provide time to make preparations for next

year: time to prepare the '69-'70 curriculum, this year with more assurance than a year ago when they were beginning a new set-up where pre-sem students were to be enrolled! But now they have had a year's experience, and a joyous year it has been. The faculty and students agree that "it was good for us to have been here."

The Theological School Committee is also very pleased with the results of that trial year. Predictions were fulfilled, promises were realized, expectations

were outdone! Good, sound Biblical instruction was faithfully given and assiduously received. Our students are one year closer to the pulpit! The Committee assigned committees of two — a minister and an elder — to pay periodical visits to the school. Would you like to hear about the visit made April 22?

On that day the first scheduled class was "Practice Preaching." A class in which our lone seminarian was to try his skill in preaching a sermon. Mr. Miersma was assigned this practice session only one month after the first one. At 8 o'clock the fledgeling mounted the pulpit, opened the service with prayer and read the Scripture portion for the day, and announced his text. His congregation consisted of two professors, two visitors, and the other six students. This was not the ordinary congregation an ordained minister faces; this was one made up of critics! Two of the students had been assigned to criticize the preacher's delivery. This they did, criticizing his pronunciation, his enunciation, the pitch of his voice and its range, his vocabulary, his gestures, his eye-contact with the audience, etc. Two other students offered their critique of the sermon and its proposition and outline. The minister-visitor, Rev. Schipper, was also given opportunity to offer his criticism, which centered around the introduction of the sermon.

If this were not enough, the student-preacher's sermon was then opened to the official criticism of Prof. Hanko and of Prof. Hoeksema. Of course, you understand that such criticism (though it might at times sound destructive) is designed to be constructive. There is as much room for commendation as for condemnatory remarks. In this case the seminarian had taped all the criticism on his portable recorder in order to replay it in his study as often as he liked, to receive the most profit from his critics. In that way he could write down the thoughts worth emphasizing and thus be able to edit, correct, elide, and rebuild his sermon according to the suggestions given. To a mere layman, who has never made a sermon, this criticism seemed somewhat severe; but we understand from the ministers present (who also suffered under like critique) that this proves to be the best means to build good preachers. In their chosen vocation the best is none too good; for it involves the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the very best vehicle for this purpose must be sought!

We were singularly impressed with the fact that pre-seminary students (who are also, by the way, receiving part of the seminary training simultaneously with their pre-sem instruction) were allowed to criticize a seminarian! This privilege is of great advantage to them in that it gives them an acute awareness of the pitfalls they will have to try to avoid in their sermonizing. It is safe to say that if Rev. R. Miersma in the future should preach on the text of Isaiah 43: 21, it will be a revised sermon that had been delivered by

Seminarian Miersma!

After the practice-preaching session a short recess was in order. Then, at 10 o'clock, we visited the class of Church History conducted by Prof. Hanko. The class was finishing their study of the second period of Medieval Church History, covering such subjects as the sacerdotal system, the apostolic succession, the church institute; and the students' thinking was in this class directed to the contemplation of the Eucharist. It was learned that the R.C. priesthood makes a non-bloody repetition of the sacrifice of Christ, a sacrifice made by the priest for the people, as he stands between God and His people. In this study the idea of "transubstantiation" was examined; the claim of the ubiquity (omnipresence) of Christ was questioned; and the matter of the doctrine of purgatory (for whose sufferers many sacrifices were made) was under scrutiny. The discussion led to the subject of penance and the resulting fallacy of the dispensing of indulgences by the ordained priesthood. It was pointed out that penance consisted of four parts: contrition — sorrow of soul over sin; attrition — sorrow over sin out of fear of punishment; satisfaction — made by prayers, money, and good works; absolution — by the word of the priest. This teaching developed into the claim that certain persons could earn in excess of their own debt, which could be deposited in the Bank of Heaven. This bank account in its further development became an account of infinite value. This class lasted for an hour, so you can see that we have only touched upon some of the highlights of the discussion.

At 11 o'clock the class of Church Polity was called to order; and Prof. Hanko instructed his charges in the study of Articles 69 and 70 of our Church Order, the two articles probably most ignored in the way of strict observance. Article 69 lists the songs which *shall be* sung, mentioning the Songs of Mary, Simeon, and Zechariah (which may be found in our Psalters), the Ten Commandments and the Twelve Articles of Faith and the morning and evening hymns (of which none of this generation knows the whereabouts). Article 70 speaks of the propriety of having the marriage state *confirmed* in the presence of God's church, attended to by the consistory. Class discussion on this subject became quite lively and somewhat informal, even drawing upon the experiences of the committee-delegate, Rev. Schipper, who was considered to be an authority because of his many years of service.

The Theological School Committee is truly grateful to the consistory of First Church for the two basement rooms provided for our school. With the enrollment of pre-seminary students, more rooms are desirable; but these will have to wait the erection of a seminary building. The 1968 Synod mandated the Committee to report to the '69 Synod with plans that may happily be realized before 1974, when we hope, D.V., to celebrate our 50th anniversary. A special Seminary

Building Fund has been started with two separate gifts — one from an individual and one from a society.

And now we shall also go on vacation: no more reports until next fall!

In His Fear

WISDOM THAT EXCELS

(Concluded)

Rev. John A. Heys

The believer, rather than the unbeliever, has true wisdom and understanding.

He has this true wisdom and understanding because he meditates in God's testimonies. It does make a difference what your textbook is and what the source of your wisdom and understanding is. It does make a difference who your teacher is. And when in Psalm 119:99 the psalmist says, "I have more understanding than my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation," he tells us that, although certain men taught him certain facts about this earth and that which it contains, he has another teacher Who causes him to understand correctly all that which man has taught him. His teacher is no one less than God Himself. That is what it means that God's testimonies are his meditation. God's testimonies testify of God, but they are also that which God testifies of Himself and of all His works among and upon mankind.

It does make a difference, then, whether you are willing to receive the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God that they are, or whether you want to lift some works of man to the level of that Word of God (because you have not this wisdom that excels) and then choose from both that which appeals to your flesh. To have wisdom that excels, you must have a textbook that excels. We may note that the psalmist speaks of having one text book, and that he ascribes all his true understanding to that which he has been taught out of that holy textbook. And, as we pointed out, he has an understanding which his teachers cannot have, because they have discarded, disregard or despise this Word of God.

What folly this, that in the sphere of the church, where men have for years and centuries had and still have the infallible record of the Word of God, that men will exchange it for the word of the creature of dust who depends so completely upon this God Who gave us His Word! That the professing Atheist, who says that there is no God, will look for the best teachers among men, is to be understood. But that in the church-world there are those who will with the lips acknowledge that there is a God and that this is His Word, and then will dare to take the haughty position that they have more understanding of how this world

came into being and where it is going, because they have meditated in the writings and spoutings of unbelievers, is hard to understand.

You understand, of course, that it is not simply a matter of choosing between taking the Word of God or the word of man. It is not a matter of going to righteous Adam, to whom God gave true knowledge and holiness, and asking him to explain to us this vast creation, our calling in the midst of it and where all these things lead. It is instead rejecting the Word of God to listen to Satan's graduates. You could approach righteous Adam and get the same instruction that God would give, for God would then give it through Adam. You would not be elevating man's word to be on the plane with God's. You would be seeking God's Word as He revealed it to man. You would be getting a photostatic copy of what is in the Word, exactly alike in every detail.

But what we get now, when we seek any wisdom and understanding apart from the Word of God, is to seek the philosophy of Satan. All men are under the power of his lie; and they all approach all matters of life and of their existence under the power of that lie. Paul writes to the Church at Rome in chapter 8:7, "Because the carnal mind (that is, the mind of our flesh, the mind which we have by our natural birth, the only mind that the unregenerated have) is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." With that kind of a mind the unbeliever approaches all that which he sees on this earth. With hatred against God he scans the heavens and plans to plant his foot on the moon. With that kind of a mind he studies our diseases and physical afflictions. Refusing to refer to God's testimonies and to consider that matter of SIN, he spouts forth that which appeals to the flesh of man and gives him false hopes. Refusing to seek the Creator's version of the work of creation and asking the creature for a description and analysis of the Creator, he comes up with a lot of monkey business, and is willing to flatter (?) himself into thinking that he has such ancestry.

Shall these teach our children? Shall we even allow them in our Christian schools? Shall we let these "teachers," who have been taught and have accepted

the word of those who deny The Word, shall we let those who, in this, evidence their enmity against God in their own flesh, have an opportunity to corrupt the minds of our children? Or shall we insist that all those who teach our children get their wisdom and understanding from God's testimonies? Is it an act of love to God to let His enemies teach the children of God, His covenant seed? We hear so much about love, love, love — and not simply from the hippies and yuppies — but it must be love to God first of all and basically. We may not hesitate to hurt the feelings and to criticize men, when they perform acts of hatred against God, in order to walk in love towards God ourselves. And in that same love to God we must want to protect His children from His and their enemies. School boards, if they have any understanding of their calling and responsibilities and of the love of God, should get to work after meditating themselves in that Word of God. The matter is serious, and the hour is late!

The first principle, then, of all wisdom is that Jehovah is God. And the next principle follows at once: His Word is truth and reveals the truth concerning Him. All the teaching of the unbelievers in one way or another, to one degree or another denies that Jehovah is God and denies the truth of His Word. All the teachings of the unbelievers ascribe that which is the Creator's to the creature. They do not all do this in the same way and in regard to the same virtues of God. They may even agree that He created the world, but they will so present that creation and the act of creating that world that Jehovah no longer is the sovereign God that He is and Christ is no more the first born of every creature.

God's testimonies are the Holy Scriptures wherein He testifies of Himself. They are the testimonies that He gives. But they are also the testimonies that He gives of Himself. Let us refer back again to the second article of the Netherlands Confession. Its very heading is, "By what means God is made known unto us." And as far as that Word is concerned, it declares, "Secondly, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation." By that Word we learn to know God. The "elegant" book of creation makes it very plain that there is a God, and no man is without an excuse in that respect. His power and divinity are to be seen in every creature. And in Scripture we learn to know this God in as far as in this life we need to know Him, and in as far as He has made it possible for us to know Him. God's testimonies, therefore, are both that which He speaks and to which He gives testimony, but they are also that which testifies of God.

The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, requires a knowledge of Him as He is. It must not be the fear of an idol, an imaginary god. That is

folly. But to stand in awe of Jehovah — Whose very name is awe-inspiring — is to have wisdom and understanding. In Psalm 111:11 the psalmist declares, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments: His praise endureth for ever." Now keeping His commandments, or doing them, exactly requires that we know Him as fully as He has revealed Himself to us. You cannot serve the man whose mind and will you do not know. You cannot keep the commandments of a God Who has not revealed His will to you. And doing God's commandments means a whole lot more than simply to know what they say. It is quite possible to keep the external aspect of a command of God and still perform an act of hatred. It is possible to be a whited sepulchre, a Pharisee that is flawless as far as the eye of man can see and yet be rebuked by Christ as an evil doer. And it is exactly because we need to meditate more fully in God's testimonies that we are at a loss at times as to what we ought to do, what is right and what is wrong, whether we are to approve of or reject a proposed action.

The answer we will always find in God's testimonies. These will show us either that this denies that He is God and is an act of not doing His commandments, or these will reveal to us that by this action He, Whose praise endureth for ever, is glorified. That is why the instruction of our children must be based upon these testimonies and must be given by one who has meditated in these testimonies.

And meditating in God's testimonies is not giving them a quick and superficial glance. Nor is it approaching the Word with our own preconceived ideas. Certainly it is not searching them to see whether we can find some proof and basis for what the unbeliever has already with his God-hating mind postulated as the right understanding of the facts at hand.

We miss some of the force of this statement of the psalmist in our translation. The word "meditation" comes from a verb that means "to bow down, to prostrate." That is what it means to meditate in God's testimonies. We come ready to listen and not to tell God what He ought to be saying. It means, therefore, that we do not come with an idea and an explanation that came from a man whose mind is enmity against God, to see whether God's testimonies have to be explained in the light of what man has deduced. It means the very opposite, that we reserve all acceptance of what men say until we first listen to what God's testimonies declare.

Woe unto us, if we bow down before those under Satan's lie. Blessed we are, if we have that fear of the Lord that causes us to bow before the All-wise God, the Creator of all Who alone can cause us to understand all things as they are and were made by Him. We simply do not have true wisdom, if we are not

wise enough to bow before God in His Word. And we perform an act of exceeding folly when we elevate man's word and explanations above God's testimonies.

Do you have that wisdom that excels? Do you meditate in God's testimonies and provide for your children to be taught by those who bow before His Word? The psalmist can say, "I have" Can you?

You need not give answer to man for that. But before God you do give answer by what you do. One with understanding that the unbeliever does not and cannot have rejects the philosophies that originate in man's mind and turns to the All-wise and living God and cherishes His Word as his guide and instructor in understanding and wisdom.

BOOK REVIEWS

Prof. H. Hanko

BEHOLD HE COMETH, by Herman Hoeksema; Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1969; 726 pp., \$9.95.

In his book, "The Progress of Dogma", James Orr takes the position that the Church from Pentecost to the present develops the truth of the Word of God along the lines of the six *loci* of Dogmatics. That is, the early Church concentrated her attention upon Theology and Christology; some centuries later, the *loci* of Anthropology and Soteriology were the main concern of the Church; around the time of the Reformation Ecclesiology was developed; it remains for the Church of today, living in the end of the ages, to deal with the doctrine of the last things: Eschatology. While there can be some criticism made of this conception, the truth is that the dominant theme of today's theological inquiry is the doctrine of the last things. And if this is true, the book "Behold He Cometh" will have to be considered a major contribution to this discussion.

"Behold He Cometh" is a commentary on the book of Revelation. Yet, while we use the word "Commentary", it must be mentioned that the book is not a commentary in the usual sense of the word. It is a series of essays on various sections of Revelation rather than a verse-by-verse exposition of the prophecies of the seer of Patmos. For this reason, it has all the characteristics of a scholarly commentary in that it is expository, exegetical and a thorough explanation of the entire book. But it is also of immense value to people who will want to read a book for other purposes than a detailed study of one particular section of Scripture. There is to be found in it no technical language, no long discussion of textual problems, no Greek interspersed throughout the book. It is a book written for those who earnestly desire to gain an understanding of the prophecies of "the things which shall be hereafter." It is a book written for those who take seriously their calling to live in the constant expectation of the Lord's return. It is a book which possesses a wealth of instruction, a mine of inspirational and devotional reading and a fountain of encouragement to walk faithfully in the midst of the world.

I was privileged to receive my seminary instruction under Rev. Hoeksema. Although a large section of the classroom notes on Eschatology (now published in "Reformed Dogmatics") was devoted to a general survey of the teaching of the book of Revelation, Rev. Hoeksema would often turn to this important book in other connections. It became, in the classroom, increasingly apparent that, whether one agreed or not with every aspect of interpretation, the explanation offered by Rev. Hoeksema was one which almost alone made some sense out of this difficult book. It was an explanation which took into account the book as a whole. It was an organic explanation which did not treat every part of the book in isolation from every other part. It rather was an explanation, which caught the theme of the book and developed carefully this one theme throughout. In subsequent years I have had at least two opportunities, in connection with society discussions, to pay rather careful attention to the book. The opinion I had formed in school that Rev. Hoeksema's interpretation was basically sound and was one among a host of expositors which made sense and which was faithful to the whole of Scripture increased. This faithfulness to Scripture is especially apparent in the author's careful explanation of the symbolism of Revelation. The explanation of the symbolism is always an explanation which is itself based upon God's Word.

The book has been called an "amellennial" interpretation of Revelation. This is intended to distinguish the author's position from pre-millennialism and post-millennialism. Yet the author himself did not particularly care for the designation "amillennial." While it was useful to distinguish between his view and deviating positions, it is, after all, a negative term which means simply "non-millennial." This is not adequate to define the author's position. The positive truth emphasized throughout the book is that Jesus Christ is the fulness of the revelation of God as the God Who sovereignly saves His people. This beautiful truth which formed the heart of the author's theology is discussed in Revelation from the unique viewpoint of the final revelation of that sovereign salvation in the

second coming of Christ. This essential meaning of Revelation the author has captured in his book. It is stressed throughout. When Christ comes again, He fully reveals Jehovah God Who saves His people through unmerited grace. For this reason the book is necessary reading for anyone who wishes to understand the full scope of the author's theology and the wide range of his theological reflection.

But above all the book is expository. The material in the book is based upon sermons which the author preached in his congregation. These sermons revealed the author's unusual exegetical ability and his gifts as a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not surprising therefore, that the author's ability as a preacher should make its imprint upon the book. Throughout there is a devotion to Scripture as the Word of God, a faithfulness to the inspired record, a deep sense of the need of God's people, a sound application of the truth of Scripture to the times, a burning zeal to encourage the people of God to look with uplifted heads for the coming of their Redeemer.

The problems of the day, so closely related to the signs of the Lord's coming, are analyzed carefully and weighed constantly in the light of these beautiful prophecies. For anyone who is a student of the times, the book is essential. It will be of invaluable aid to God's people to help them understand the times in which they are called to live and to interpret the events of the present in the light of the universal rule of Christ Who does all things in order that the full purpose of God may be realized and the everlasting kingdom of Christ established at the end of the age.

The book is not pre-millennial. Yet, pre-millennialists will do well to read it carefully and study it closely. If they are sincere in their determination to understand the Scriptures, this book will be an occasion for much thought and searching the Scriptures to see whether these things be so — whether they ultimately agree or not.

The strong tendencies of our day are in the direction of post-millennialism. The dangers of this view are many and far-reaching. The book ably defends the proposition that the saints must not look for the kingdom of Christ realized here upon earth, but must set their hopes upon a kingdom above. The dangers of post-millennialism are exposed, and it is shown that post-millennial views will inevitably leave the Church ill-prepared to face the persecution which must surely come before Christ comes again.

The book is beautifully printed in a type-face easy to read. The chapters are divided by paragraph headings. The cover matches the volume of the author's "Reformed Dogmatics". The jacket is beautifully done. The book is a worth-while addition to the libraries of covenant homes and of ministers and teachers.

Yet it must never be and surely is not intended to be

a mere addition to a library. It is, above all, meant to be read and studied. Whether one agrees or not with every part of it, with every interpretation of every passage, it is a book which will instill in one a love for Scripture. It will encourage the people of God to faithfulness in the midst of the world. It will inspire those who find here no abiding city but who seek that city which is above.

MORE NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES, By C. H. Dodd; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1968; 157 pp., \$4.50.

This volume contains a series of essays in which the methods of form-criticism are applied to various aspects of the gospels. The basic assumption throughout the book is that the gospel narratives are based upon a common oral tradition present in the early church. The book is an attempt to identify this common oral tradition and make some conclusions as to its content. In the whole book there is no place for the doctrine of infallible inspiration.

One essay deals with the Beatitudes; another with the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem; three deal with the unique tradition which supposedly lies behind the Fourth Gospel; two deal with the relation between the sayings of Jesus and the catechetical teaching of the early church; one treats all the passages in Scripture which pertain to the appearances of Christ after His resurrection.

The book is not written for those who are unacquainted with the Greek language and with the principles of textual criticism. Its value lies in the fact that it gives the views of a "conservative" higher critic. It shows the labyrinthine argumentation of which higher critics are capable in their efforts to treat Scripture as only another literary document, rather than as the inspired Word of God. It is a clear demonstration of how much of the argumentation of these higher critics is based upon conjecture, supposition, hypothesis, and sheer guesswork.

CONTEND WITH HORSES, by Grace Irwin; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968; 284 pp. \$4.95.

This novel by Grace Irwin is the third in a trilogy. The other two are "Least of all Saints" and "Andrew Conington." I have not read the first two books in this trilogy and cannot compare this book with its predecessors. But the book is an attempt to be a Christian novel and is, from this point of view, impressive. The book picks up the thread of the story of Andrew Conington, minister of the gospel, who has sacrificed his immense popularity as a preacher to remain faithful to his convictions, who has lost his wife and must weigh carefully the possible effects of another marriage on his congregation and his family, who must struggle with the problem of a son who seems on the verge of giving up his Church and family in a struggle with

unbelief, who, in short, is constantly confronted with difficult problems which place him before the alternatives of violating his own conscience or risking the displeasure of various elements in his congregation.

While I cannot agree with the theology of the book (or of Andrew Conington himself), the book is a successful attempt to write good Christian literature. On these grounds it is recommended to those who enjoy reading novels as being far superior to a great deal of sentimental slop which often goes under the name of Christian literature.

A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST, by Everett F. Harrison; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968; 288 pp., \$5.95.

Everett F. Harrison, professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, is generally considered a conservative evangelical. His study of the life of Christ reveals that this is true. The book is not really intended to be a book devoted to the history of the gospel narratives with emphasis on the historical aspects; it is more intended to be a brief interpretation of various aspects of the life and ministry of Christ: e.g., all the miracles are treated in one chapter. There is a chapter on Jesus as Teacher; a chapter on the Call and Training of the Twelve; and a separate chapter is devoted to various aspects of the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ.

The emphasis on interpretation makes this book a valuable one. Some of the interpretations which Prof. Harrison offers are original and unique. Some of them are very peculiar — as, e.g., the explanation of the voice from heaven at the time of Jesus' transfiguration as being chiefly a rebuke to Peter for his suggestion to build three tabernacles. (Cf. p. 159.)

The chief criticism I have of the book is the characteristic of the author to answer the criticisms of

the higher critics on their own grounds and with their own methods. Prof. Harrison himself rejects the liberalism of higher criticism. But he does so by appealing to their own methods, adopting their own lines of argumentation and debating with them on their own grounds. Ultimately, this is to lose the battle. To let the enemy pick the battlefield and to fight the enemy under their conditions is dangerous business to say the least. The author does not take a firm stand on the truth of inspiration.

From this follows another criticism. There is too much emphasis in the book on the humanity of Christ without proper regard for his divinity — although the author firmly believes in the divinity of Christ. One example will suffice. On p. 62 the author describes Jesus as being faced with the choice of involving Himself in the politics of the day, but after carefully considering it, Jesus decided against it.

If read carefully, the book is recommended as giving fresh insights into the ministry of Christ.

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Because of continued publication cost and the expense involved in the binding and mailing of the books, the recipients of the Bound Volumes of THE STANDARD BEARER are hereby notified that the cost per volume will be \$7.00. This price represents only a portion of the actual cost per book and is in line with the yearly subscription price. A limited number of past volumes can be obtained through the Business Office at \$7.00 per volume.

The Board of the R.F.P.A.

IN MEMORIAM

On the afternoon of April 24, 1969, it pleased our Lord to take unto Himself, after a short illness, our beloved wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

MRS. FLORENCE HOEKSTRAA.

Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. Peter M. Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Martin Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Brummel
Mr. and Mrs. George Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Ted Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Bert Van Maanen
Mr. and Mrs. Ray Brunsting
Mr. and Mrs. John Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Pete Hoekstra
Rev. and Mrs. Alvin Mulder
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoekstra
65 Grandchildren
1 Great Grandchild

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Ruth Lubbers, in the passing of her mother.

MRS. MILDRED VAN DEN BELDT

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose".

Romans 8:28

Rev. H. Veldman, Pres.
Freda Zwak, Sec'y.

The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School at Grand Rapids will need teachers for Kindergarten and the First Grade for the 1969-70 school year.

If you can consider one of these positions kindly contact the school.

Clare Kuiper, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

June 15, 1969

Our church at Pella, Iowa, has had the services of Rev. D. Kuiper for six weeks, and he was followed by Rev. D. Engelsma for his six-week stint. These men are kept busy, preaching, teaching and lecturing. Rev. Kuiper's lectures were on, "Holding to the Truth," and, "The Nearness of the End". Rev. Kuiper spoke highly of the lively interest of the children and young people in the catechism classes. The little flock in Pella now numbers twenty-six souls.

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Synod, 1969, is history. The business was conducted with dispatch under the capable leadership of Rev. C. Hanko, who presided over this session of Synod. First Church of Grand Rapids has been named the calling church for 1970.

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The Hope School Graduation Exercises were held June 4 in their church. Rev. Engelsma, of Loveland, was the Commencement speaker.

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Sunday, June 8, in a between-Synodical-sessions-tradeabout, Rev. Van Baren preached in Randolph, Wisc., and his own pulpit was supplied by Rev. C. Hanko, former minister of First Church, and Rev. R. Decker, son of the church.

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Rev. Engelsma declined the call he had from Hull, Iowa; and Pella was disappointed with Rev. Lanting's decision to remain in Edgerton, Minn.

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The Commencement program of Doon's school was held in the auditorium of Hull's church. Rev. Decker addressed the graduates in a speech entitled, "Jehovah our Light."

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Not many of us get to read Lynden's bulletins, so we would like to share with you an item of interest found in the June 1 issue: "After repeated invitations, our pastor is presently making plans to visit various Primitive Baptist Churches in Tennessee and Alabama which have corresponded most regularly to our Study Program. He plans to fly there and stay from the 20th to the 30th of June, during which time he will speak in a number of churches and visit with many Christian friends in those areas."

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Doon's June first bulletin announced that they had received into their membership two confessing members and four baptized members of another family.

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Adams St. School Graduation Exercises were held in

First Church, with Prof. H.C. Hoeksema giving the Commencement Address.

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From Randolph we learn that three of their four Servicemen are stationed in Viet Nam; that four of their young folk plan to attend the Convention in Redlands; that their Young People's Society closed the Season's activities with a Memorial Day Outing to which the young people of Oak Lawn were invited. Randolph also plans to host the September meeting of Classis West and the Office-Bearer's Conference which precedes it.

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At a May 26 Congregational Meeting the members of our Hull church adopted the proposal of their Building Committee to remodel the front entrance of the church.

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The latest "Reformed Witness" pamphlet by our Western Churches was written by Rev. Engelsma, and was entitled, "Lawlessness." Over 600 copies of this issue were mailed in the Loveland area alone! Loveland's Prot. Ref. Chr. School is making its presence felt in the neighborhood. Next year's first grade will number four, three of which are not members of Loveland's church! The prospect of enlarging their school is greatly enhanced by the interest shown in Christian education by "outsiders" who are impressed with the quality of the education given in their school.

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The consistory of First Church, of Grand Rapids, has decided to limit the celebration of the Lord's Supper to the morning service only. This involved some family planning of making provisions for caring for little infants, and some re-arranging of nursery scheduling, which seems to have been implemented quite adequately on the first attempt Sunday, June 15, when the decision was put into effect.

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The news of Rev. Vanden Berg's recuperation is quite encouraging. The large body cast has been removed and a smaller one applied, and he can now walk with the aid of crutches. Sunday, June 8, he was able to attend both services among the worshippers; and he offered to preach for one service the next Sunday. It is reported that he is in good spirits, profoundly grateful for having experienced the tender mercies of his Lord while confined in a state of immobility.

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... see you in church,

J.M.F.