

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Lot Choosing The Plains

Editorial:

The Erring Views of Dr. H. M. Kuitert

Our Mission Activities

Paul The Apostle To The Gentiles

(see: The Lord Gave The Word)

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

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

Business Office: The Standard Bearer,
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P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$7.00 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$2.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$2.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 5th or the 20th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

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

Meditation

LOT CHOOSING THE PLAINS

Rev. M. Schipper

"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other."

Genesis 13: 10,11

The herdmen of Abram and the herdmen of Lot had been quarreling!

As they were returning from Egypt to the land of Canaan!

"And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

And Lot lifted up his eyes and chose all the plain of the Jordan!

The plain of the Jordan, a well-watered and fertile land. Once a year, in the springtime, the Jordan river overflowed its banks, the swift-flowing stream fed by torrents flowing down from Mount Hermon in the north, carried with it a rich sediment of silt which it deposited over the whole land. Not only did the water of the Jordan tend to fertilize the soil and irrigate the land, but it also provided water for the numerous cattle that Lot had obtained in his association with Abram. Because of its fertility the land was beautiful and lush. The text informs us that the land, before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, was comparable to Egypt and even as the garden of the Lord. The beauty of Egypt Lot had only recently witnessed with his own eyes. Of the beauty of the garden of the Lord, that is the garden of Eden, Lot also undoubtedly had been well informed. Tradition was most accurate in those days. When you consider that Methuselah lived 243 years before Adam died, and Noah lived 500 years as a contemporary with Methuselah, and until two years before Abram was born, then the description of Eden could very easily have been transmitted to Lot. So beautiful was the Jordan plain that it was to Lot, more beautiful than fertile Egypt, it reminded him of the beautiful garden in the land of Eden where the Lord God had placed the parents of the whole human race before the curse of God settled over the earth because of man's sin. This was what Lot beheld as his eyes scanned the plain of the Jordan to the east.

Moreover, because of the richness of the soil, prosperous communities of cities were erected there, chief of which were Sodom and Gomorrah. As in modern times cities may arise over night where rich material resources are discovered, so, no doubt, these cities toward which Lot looked had their reason for existence. Centers they became of agriculture and commerce, promoting every worldly enterprise.

What natural man in his right mind would not choose such a place in preference to the arid and rocky terrain where Abram now dwelt? Nay, rather, what child of God, such as Lot was, would not by natural inclination prefer to live there? Even if his going there entailed dwelling near the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? For we read in verses 12 and 13: "And Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly."

Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan! He chose all

that appealed to the eye of his flesh for its material beauty, for its potential wealth. This does not necessarily mean that he chose the wickedness of the cities of the plain. Does not the apostle Peter tell us that he vexed his righteous soul with the filthy conversation of the wicked? (II Pet. 2:7). Indeed, Lot was a child of God who presently would have to be delivered by fire from the destruction of the cities. But when he made his choice, all this was farthest from his thought.

The well-watered plain was typical of all the material prosperity the world has to offer. There was no sign of depression there. It was a material utopia. And at the same time it served, in conjunction with the cities, a type of the world that is always developing in the way of destruction. Sodom is a picture of that world in the raw. Ezekiel so describes it. "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good." (Ezek. 16: 49,50).

Indeed, the object of Lot's choice was typical of the material world which is fast developing in sin and corruption unto destruction!

Motivated was he by carnal lust!

That his eyes were lifted up so that he beheld all the plain of Jordan was not in itself wrong. That he even considered in his mind the material possibilities the plain had to offer was also not wrong in itself. Should not the child of God see the world and analyze discreetly all that that world has to offer? If he knows his calling, he does not walk through this world like the horse with old-fashioned blinders which could allow it to see only that which was ahead of it, but not see what was to the left or right. Nay, rather, he observes that world as it is, and properly assesses its worth. He will even make use of that world, if he can bring it into the service of his God. Then he does not serve Mammon, but Mammon serves him. (Luke 16:9).

But this is not what Lot did! His natural and burning lust was fanned into a flame. And Lot chose the plains!

Lot must choose! All men must choose! Even the child of God must make a choice! But for him the choice must always be antithetical, that is, he must choose the good, while always rejecting the evil. The principle of the antithesis the Lord introduced for man already in the garden of Eden when He placed man before the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and taught him thereby that man is not to live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Before this antithesis Lot also is placed, and it was his calling to choose to be obedient to the Word of God and reject all that militated against that Word.

But this child of God decided to set aside his antithetical calling, and he chose bread alone! He passed

by, as it were with the wave of the hand, the things of God and His covenant, only to obtain as Esau a mess of pottage. He lifted up his eyes to behold all the plain of Jordan, and then chose to journey to the east, and so separated himself from Abram.

What a sad commentary on an erstwhile congenial and brotherly relation!

But the sadness of this separation lay not only in the fact that here were brethren according to the flesh who were being pulled apart. It was much deeper than that.

Lot separated himself from Abram, the Church! Was it not with Abram that God had established His covenant? Was it not unto him and his seed that God had given exceeding precious promises: "I will be thy God, and thou and thy seed after thee shall be My people" – and, "Unto thee and thy seed after thee will I give this land and thou shalt possess it forever?" And that seed was not merely his son Isaac, which was yet to be born, but, according to the apostle to the Galatians, that seed was Christ, the Hope of everlasting salvation.

Without hesitation Lot should have answered Abram's proposal to separate from each other, by saying: My dear brother, I agree with you that we should stop our fighting, and we should do everything in our power to make our hostility to cease, but please do not ever suggest that I leave thee. I know that God has placed in thy loins the Hope of salvation, and for me to get out of this land would be to separate myself really from Christ and His Church, even from heaven itself. No, Abram, the very thought of leaving thee would bring me with grey hairs to the grave. Moreover, my dear brother, don't you see that everywhere I would go, there would be in that place no manifestation of the Church of God. Right here with thee is the only true manifestation of the Church. And of that manifestation I must be and forever remain a living member. How can you even suggest that I should separate myself from thee? And what is more, Abram, if we should go through with this thing, namely, to separate from one another, and you give me the opportunity to choose, I might naturally be inclined to go to the plain of the Jordan because there is much grass and water there. But don't you see, Abram, that behind that temptation lies the wicked cities? How could I ever leave the Church only for material reasons, and then hope to bring up my family the Lord will give me in that ungodly place? If I should go there and let my light shine, as I would, don't you see that I would not last for a moment, they would persecute me to the death. But what is more important, how can light and darkness dwell together?

Such, indeed, would have been Lot's remonstrations if he had stood at the moment on a high spiritual plain. But, alas, his faith was dim, and his spiritual life at a low

ebb.

Lot beheld what his flesh wanted him to see, and the sparkle of material gain so blinded his eyes that he could not see the things which are spiritual, and made his ears so deaf that he could no longer hear the Word of God.

So he departs from Abram, and breaks with the Church and all that that implies!

He journeys to the east, pulling up his tent stakes! In itself a beautiful picture of the child of God who is called to be a stranger and a pilgrim in the earth, but only to set up his tent in the camp of wickedness, yea, much worse, to get rid of his tent and every semblance of a pilgrim only to purchase or build a house as a place of permanent abode. (Gen. 19:2-4).

Alas, dear reader, is not this exactly what many children of God are doing today? Seeking material prosperity because the pastures are green and lush, and they desire a life of ease and pleasure, and choose not to live in tents in the arid and stony places where most usually the Church of Christ is found? And is it not so that the doctrine of the antithesis, according to which the Church is to live in the world but never of it, is almost wholly forgotten, or even negated by another philosophy that the Church ought to be some kind of a salt that is going to make the rotten and putrid meat of the world better, or the philosophy that God in His so-called common grace makes the Sodomites good people with whom the people of God may go arm in arm? On the basis of this philosophy has not the Church today lost her distinctive character, and given to her members the license to go hog-wild after the things which are below, so that they have no longer a desire for the things which are above?

Now the story of Lot was not divinely included in the infallible Scriptures simply to tell us what happened to Lot. Rather, it was preserved for our instruction upon whom the ends of the age have come. Nor was this story preserved for us to simply teach us how far a child of God may go without being eternally lost. Rather, it was written that we may learn not to go in the direction Lot went. Indeed, Lot, the child of God, was saved, but it was as by fire in the most literal sense of the word.

Positively, this portion of Scripture teaches us to seek not the things which are perishing, be they ever so intriguing and tempting; but the things which are above, which have abiding value; and to live antithetically, in loving obedience to the will of God, and hating that which is evil as God hates it. And surely not to separate ourselves from the purest manifestation of Christ's Church, but abide in it as living members – even if by being faithful we shall be required for a time to live with Abram in the dry and rocky places.

Editorials

EDITOR'S NOTES

Pre-publication Sale. Accompanying this issue is a handy envelope to make it easy for you to take advantage of the pre-publication sale of "Behold, He Cometh!" I cannot recommend this thorough and beautiful exposition of the Book of Revelation too highly. And therefore I urge you to send in your pre-publication order promptly. Fill in the information in the flap of the order-envelope, enclose your money, and mail your order today! If you wait until this February 1 issue is buried in your magazine rack, you will forget. And if you forget, you will regret!

* * * * *

Of special interest in this issue is a report from our Mission Committee. Be sure to read it. This is one of the periodic reports which the *Standard Bearer* presents to keep our readers informed as to our mission activities.

In the near future we also hope to present a report from our Theological School Committee.

* * * * *

In future issues, if you like to know what is coming, we hope to present the department *Pages from the Past* more frequently, so that our readers can maintain better continuity. The editor's docket for the near future has on it: More On The School-Aid Issue, Developments in the Netherlands, The Christian Reformed Church and Kuitert's Views, The Lost Art of Expository Preaching. These, plus all our regular departments, should keep you among our interested and informed and *international* (see Church News Dept.) readership.

* * * * *

A Question: What have you done to increase the outreach of the *Standard Bearer* lately?

The Erring Views of Dr. H.M. Kuitert (12)

An Evaluation of Kuitert's Dogmatical Views (Continued)

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Christ and Creation: A Weakness In Reformed Theology?

In an earlier issue (Dec. 15) I promised to answer three questions in connection with Dr. Kuitert's severe indictment that Reformed theology has been unable to establish a proper connection between creation and Christ, and his suggestion that this is due to the literal interpretation of the creation record. The first question I have answered; and I have demonstrated, I believe, that as far as the main line of Reformed theology is concerned his charge is not true. Moreover, I have pointed out in detail that in our Protestant Reformed theology, as it was richly developed by the late Herman Hoeksema, we have long enjoyed a beautiful and Scriptural insight into this relationship.

The second question which I promised to consider was this: if there is any failure among Reformed theologians to establish a proper connection between Christ and creation, is this due *inherently* to a weakness in the traditional conception of creation and of Genesis 1-3, that is, due to a literal and historical understanding of the creation record?

In answer to this question, while I maintained that Kuitert's blanket indictment of the Christian church in general and of Reformed theology in particular is not true (and proved my contention), I nevertheless made

some concessions. I conceded that Reformed theologians do not always present a view which is in all respects satisfactory and that they do not develop properly the riches of Scripture's presentation. In the second place, I conceded that one can find some very sterile dogmatics on this score, which is content to find the significance of creation in general in the fact that it serves the revelation of God's glory, and which makes a rather mechanical distinction between God's work in creation and His work in redemption. I also suggested that some Reformed theologians who have a very strict and orthodox view of the Genesis record nevertheless fail properly to see the relation between Christ and creation in its full dimensions because they view Christ and His work of redemption as a kind of repair work which became necessary when sin and the devil and Adam's fall spoiled God's first work.

Hence, there is a weakness on this score.

However, it is an altogether different question whether this weakness is due to maintaining a literal interpretation of the creation account, as Dr. Kuitert suggests. This I deny categorically.

First of all, let me point out that Dr. Kuitert neither proved nor attempted to prove this contention. He simply made a claim. With a wave of the hand he simply dismisses all of traditional theology as inadequate, as a

failure; and he attempts to place the blame on a so-called traditional view of creation. Now I would like to sound a serious warning against this kind of thing. It seems to be the vogue in our times, not only in theology but in virtually every sphere of thought and life, to be dissatisfied with the old, to be non-conformist, to propound new and radical and upsetting ideas. This is true in the realm of theology too. Sometimes one gets the impression that these propounders of new and radical ideas take a certain delight in seeing how much they can "upset the apple cart." Scholarship is confused with being radical; freshness and development are confused with being different. One is reminded of the Athenians in the apostle Paul's time, who spent their time in nothing else than either to tell or to hear some new thing. The old and tried and true ideas, which have long ago met the test of Scripture and have stood the test of time, are lightly thrown out. In fact, sometimes the very fact that something is traditional is sufficient reason to condemn and reject it; and traditional views receive the blame for just about everything that is really or imaginarily wrong in church and world.

In one of the Dutch papers I recently read a reference to "learned provo's." In the Netherlands the provo's are comparable to some of the youthful rebels found in our own country in such groups as the hippies and the yippies. They are rebellious and anti-social dissenters. In referring to the agitation by theologians from the Free University in the Dutch churches, this article states (I translate): "As — learned — provo's they put no stock in the ecclesiastical 'establishment,' and they try to gain a following for their new ideas. Of course, in order presently, supported by their adherents, to turn the 'establishment' about in their own spirit." (*Tot Vrijheid Geroepen*, November, 1968, page 212) This, I think, is a rather apt description of today's rebel theologians and their tactics and goals. And they are bold and cocky and conceited, and in only too many instances successful, usually because no one seems to have the courage to call their bluff, lay down the law to them, and then proceed to enforce it. Now I am taking this little editorial excursion to warn against this kind of thing, especially in the church and in the realm of theology. No one deserves a medal, much less a hearing, merely for being a theological radical and upstart. Theology is not an adventure, and the church should not follow new ideas just for the sake of being adventuresome. It is grossly conceited to "pooh-pooh" and to question and cast aspersions upon all that is traditional in theology, — for the very simple and obvious reason that the church in the past has enjoyed the guidance of the Spirit of truth, Who has always led the church into all the truth. He, therefore, who would be inclined to reject something of the past must tread very carefully and must be certain that he is guided by the only safe road-map in blazing new trails, that of the Scriptures. He must make very certain that he is not removing old land-marks, but that

his new paths are no more than *extensions* of the old.

After that little excursion, let us return to the question.

And then I want to point out, in the second place, that there is nothing in the so-called traditional doctrine of creation-in-six-days as such which would make it impossible to establish a connection between creation and Christ. There is nothing *inherent* in that doctrine which would prevent the establishment of such a connection. This is what Kuitert would have to show in order to prove his point. And indeed, if this could be proved, then even apart from any exegetical questions, this would certainly be enough to call in question any dogmatics which clung to a literal understanding of the creation record. But what could there possibly be in the so-called traditional doctrine of creation which would prohibit viewing creation in connection with Christ? Mark well, the question is not whether *some* theologians have in a measure failed on this score. The question is not even whether at times theologians have been so preoccupied with defending the doctrine of creation as such that they failed to pay attention to this connection and tended to isolate the doctrine of creation and separate it from the rest of dogmatics. This may have happened upon occasion; and it is a mistake too. But it is the fault of theologians, not of their theology. My answer is that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, in the doctrine of creation as such which lays it open to Kuitert's indictment. There is nothing, theologically considered. And historically, as I have already pointed out, it can be readily proved that Reformed theology has seen and has even richly developed this connection.

But, in the third place, I can conceive of much more cogent reasons why in some instances theologians have failed to see and to develop the truth of this connection between Christ and creation.

First of all, I would suggest that the failure to view the whole of God's works in the light of His sovereign counsel and purpose, and especially in connection with His purpose of election and reprobation, has something to do with the failure to see the connection between creation and Christ. I will leave out the question of supra- and infralapsarianism in this connection, although I firmly believe that infralapsarianism leaves something to be desired on this score. But the tendency to view the work of Christ as a repair work in relation to a first work of God which was spoiled and marred through sin, the tendency to view Christ and redemption as a divine second thought, or after-thought, — this tendency in its very nature eliminates the idea of an inherent connection between Christ and creation. It presupposes that if only God's first work, in Adam, had not been spoiled, if only the so-called covenant of works had not failed, then Christ and His work of redemption would not have been necessary. And this tendency to view Christ as a divine after-thought is basically due to a failure to view the work of God, and the unity of that work, in the

light of His sovereign and eternal counsel, and especially, I say again, in the light of His sovereign predestination. In other words, it is the old, old story that election is the heart of the church and the heart of the truth. And also with regard to the doctrine of creation, if the heart-beat of election is not clearly discernible in it, you may depend on it that that doctrine will not be properly understood and maintained.

And is it not more than passing strange that exactly in the circle of this "new theology" in the Netherlands the tendency to deny and to reformulate the doctrine of predestination is very strong also? And is it not just possible that, consciously or sub-consciously, this very denial of sovereign predestination is leading also to a dissatisfaction with the so-called traditional view of creation, and that instead of going to the real dogmatic root of the problem, these theologians are discarding said doctrine of creation and trying to fill the void with something new? And is it not possible that the real cure for all the theological ills which are plaguing Reformed churches is a basic and vital and vigorous return to that central truth, that heart-truth, of God's sovereign predestination? This I, for one, consider highly likely. Perhaps it is difficult at this stage to trace any overt connection between these things. And I certainly am not saying that this connection is consciously and deliberately made. But I consider it highly likely, although it is not always easy actually to trace root-causes. I consider it likely in view of the unity of the truth. And I consider it likely in the light of the fact that history has abundantly shown the centrality of the truth of sovereign predestination and the devastating

results for theology of any departure from or de-emphasis of it. In any event, we may keep this in mind. Perhaps in the future this connection will become more clear.

The second reason for this failure to connect Christ and creation is rather closely connected with the first. It is the *theory of common grace*.

I do not now have in mind the well-meant offer of the First Point of 1924. This is also a very serious error, and I would never minimize its seriousness. It is principally Arminian, not Reformed.

But I refer now to the *theory of common grace* in the Kuyperian sense. Moreover, I do not now have in mind the fact that the common grace theory has resulted in an attempted synthesis of worldly philosophy and Reformed theology, although this also enters into the picture very really. What I have in mind is that there is a *theological* connection between the common grace theory as Kuyper propounded it and the failure to teach the unity of creation and the work of Christ.

I am well aware that there are some who bristle at every criticism of the common grace theory. I am also aware that some think that Protestant Reformed theology simply makes a general whipping-post of common grace. But as I view today's scene, I become more and more impressed with the far-reaching consequences, evil ones, of the common grace theory for all of doctrine and life. I am convinced that these consequences are much more far-reaching than the fathers of the theory ever dreamed they would be.

The importance of this theory in our present discussion I will attempt to make clear next time, the Lord willing.

All Around Us

A Sample of Current Seminary Instruction A New Foundation for the Free University Life in College

Prof. H. Hanko

A SAMPLE OF CURRENT SEMINARY INSTRUCTION

In the January 6 issue of *Lutheran News* appeared a photographic copy of an article which had originally appeared in *Lutherans-Alert* a conservative ALC Lutheran publication. In it was recorded the reports of students being instructed in Seminaries of the denomination of what they are being taught. The quotations give evidence of the apostasy of current Lutheranism and show the present teachings of higher critics in the

Seminaries of the nation. One wonders in how many Seminaries these views are being taught; and whether Reformed Seminaries are not also teaching these same ideas. Below follow scattered quotes from the article.

I (Student _____) sent to him (Professor _____) to ask whether Satan really existed, and he said, "Well, let's go to the Bible and I'll see if I can explain it to you." ... He opened the Bible to the passage where Jesus ... was led into the wilderness to be tempted. He said, "Well, we can't really take this to

mean what it says; it's in symbols He really wasn't led into the wilderness by the Spirit of God. He just went there by Himself because, you know, He was having trouble understanding whether He was God or man So He fasted up there and then He started thinking, and you know how you can talk to yourself. You can say, 'Well, do I want to do it or don't I want to do it?', and that sort of thing when you're wondering about some action that is about to be done in your life. So He said to Himself, 'Well, am I the Son of God, or am I not the Son of God?' He kind of had a mental battle; there would come a Bible verse that would say, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from the top of the pinnacle of the synagogue and the angels will carry you up and won't let you strike your foot on the ground.' Then He would say something else; He would use another Bible passage to off-set that and say, 'Well, that isn't right.'"

. . . They talked about the Bible being a myth, especially the Pentateuch as having a lot of mythological references and myth involved

He (Professor _____) summarized (the idea of a myth) with a statement from C. H. Dodd, "A myth concerns not what happened; a myth concerns what happens." This, he said, made it simple to understand what God had really said in the Pentateuch: "God is still creating and man is still falling. It's what happens, not what happened. Adam, therefore, was simply the first man to fall and ever since then we've had one more fall of Adam as each person comes along and falls on his own; and so it's possible for a person to be perfect as they are born, and then as they grow up they fall just like the first Adam.

"This mythological business," (the professors) said, "could be compared to the Epic of Gilgamesh, which also speaks about a serpent, evils, the flood and other archeological things that happened I found (the student said) that it gave me a completely new attitude toward how the Bible was put together, an understanding of the Word of God. I found out that the Bible wasn't such a significant writing after all; it was just another form that had been written down at the same time in history as many other myths, therefore, it just didn't hold water!

According to Prof. _____, Genesis 1-11 is not history, which is a narrative of interpretative events: there is little or no archeological evidence for it being historically factual. It can't be verified. It's not a saga; it's not a fable, with the exception of the portion which tells about Eve and the serpent; that's a fable. It's not a fairy tale; it's not legend, with the exception of Genesis 6 to 9 where the flood account is recorded; this idea came from the Mesopotamian people while the Jews were in Babylonian captivity The Tower of Babel was a story taken as a legend; there are many towers like this all over the place in the Mesopotamian area

Professor _____, according to Student _____, ascribed the awesome holiness of Isaiah's description of God as coming from an Oriental conception that the King is able to cut off your head The Books of Jonah and Ruth were actually

protests written to oppose the move of Ezra and Nehemiah to separate the Jewish community from the heathen population All Hebrew writings in the Bible received their final form after the exile. The story of the burning furnace with Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego was a folktale, along with the many others. If Daniel was written when he says it was, then the Bible would be magic

Professor _____ stated . . . "All prophecies of the Old Testament weren't fulfilled; there is actually the possibility that the New Testament writers, in their zeal to see the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ were actually writing down these references to the Old Testament just to fulfill these Old Testament prophecies. We really can't know that these were historically fulfilled; there is no way to prove it." When Student _____ asked him, "Why couldn't these prophets prophecy 500 years in advance things that were going to happen, by the Spirit of God?", the Professor replied, "If it is true that they could do this, they must have looked into their crystal balls or had a set of playing cards, or something; it would have been like a Gypsy; it would have been spiritualistic and mystic, and the Word of God condemns that!"

. . . The New Testament is not historically correct; it is not history, but theology completely influenced by later developments. Whole meanings of Christian proclamation come from the vindication of Jesus. We're using the Gospels for a purpose they weren't intended for

Professor _____ stated in class "We can't take everything in the New Testament as the Word of God; we have to take some things as Peter's idea of what God said, and Paul's idea of what God said, and so forth." . . . Student _____ said, "Well, how do you know that the Koran isn't also the Word of God?" and he replied, "I can't be; in fact the Koran may have some of the Word of God in it."

This is just a sampling of what happens when the Bible is rejected as the infallibly inspired Word of God. At last everything in Scripture is questioned. It is subjected to the superior and scrutinizing power of man's reason. And it is rejected. The result is that even the Koran of the Mohammedans has the Word of God in it. Presumably the same is true of the writings of Confucius and Plato. But the people of God have no firm rock on which to base their hope.

A NEW FOUNDATION FOR THE FREE UNIVERSITY

In various periodicals especially from the Netherlands and Dutch immigrant groups comes news of a discussion underway in the Free University to change the basis. The idea is to change the Reformed basis of the University to a generally Christian basis. This means, evidently, (although the specific changes under discussion have not been published) that the purpose is to take from the basis of the University those elements which mark the school as standing in the Reformed branch of the Protestant and Calvinistic Reformation and give to it a basis which will attract people from

every branch of the Reformation including Lutherans, Remonstrants and others. From the discussions which have appeared up to this point it seems as if the idea is also to strike down any differences between the *Gereformeerde Kerken* and the *Hervormde Kerken* and give the University a true ecumenical flavor. One wonders if those who are advocating these changes have their eyes also on Roman Catholics. Surely they too are "generally Christian".

In a sense, there is something honest about all this. The recent liberal tendencies in Scriptural studies and theology among the members of the faculty of the Free University indicate that already the University has drifted into a "generally Christian" position in distinction from a Reformed position. The trouble is that this generally Christian position is, today, outright modernism. A change in the basis, however, would only be honest recognition of what has, in fact, actually happened.

But a change in the basis would be acknowledgment of the fact that the Free University is longer *officially* Reformed. It has deliberately thrown aside its Reformed heritage and has abandoned all that it has stood for in the past. Any kind of return to sound Reformed instruction and any possibility of a "house-cleaning" in the University would be forever impossible.

One wonders what the position of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* would be overagainst the University should this change be made. After all, in a unique sense, the Free University is the University of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. There the future leaders of the Church are trained. There the ministers who serve the pulpits in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* receive their preparatory instruction. Will the *Gereformeerde Kerken* have the strength to sever its relations with the Free? Or will the Free alter officially the character of the denomination which it serves? From this perspective, it looks like the latter possibility is more certain. The present leaders in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* (and they seem to have their hands firmly on the reins of power) are alumni of the Free. They were trained in a University which for some time now has not been Reformed. They surely will exert this "generally Christian" influence in the denomination as well.

LIFE IN COLLEGE

In two recent articles in *Newsweek* present trends in college life were discussed. These articles had nothing to do with the hippies, yuppies, college rebels, members of the free speech movement, or anything of this sort. These articles had to do with something far more insidious. The first article dealt with the growing influence of astrology among college students. Interest in astrology is not limited to college students, of course. But increasingly the followers of horoscopes are to be found among youth of this age group. It is estimated that there are some 10 million "hard-core adherents" with another 40 million who dabble in the stars in this

country alone. Almost three-fourths of the nation's daily newspapers carry horoscopes along with millions of magazines.

The idea of astrology is that the twelve signs of the zodiac determine the personality of those born under their influence. And that various movements of the stars and the planets affect life to such an extent that a study of these movements can be used to predict religious and secular affairs in the lives of individuals.

An interesting side-light was the prediction of the nation's leading astrologer that Jackie Kennedy would never re-marry. When she did, the astrologer responded with the words: "The marriage is obscure. It is not a love marriage, but something else. Many factors are involved: the collapse of the Kennedy family; her own power of love, the fact that she was somewhat rejected in the United States and the shattering effect of the assassination of Robert Kennedy."

At any rate, the interesting feature of it all is that as our country becomes more and more scientific and relies more and more on the authority of human reason and objective reality, so also appears this strange anomaly: the country becomes increasingly superstitious. Some explain the current interest in astrology as a "strong approach to God." Others speak of it as a "decadent game played by a corrupt society." One leading psychologist speaks of astrology as a refuge. "When concrete day-to-day life becomes increasingly harder, people turn to the occult forces. Once a horoscope has been cast, the 'inner world' is settled for a while. Astrology takes the load off people. They are sharing their fate with outside forces."

Astrology is idolatry. When men do not put their trust in the living God they turn to superstition and put their trust in foolish idols just as the heathen did. We have not outgrown the idolatry of Baal and Ashtaroth. Astrology is of Satan. It must be feared by God's people as they value the salvation of their souls.

The other article in *Newsweek* had to do with the fact that "College students have gone to pot." Evidences of its wide-spread use are plentiful. Many students make their living by selling marijuana. On many campuses, as high as 50% of the student body admit to having tried it. In some schools the kitchens of the dorms are used to prepare marijuana for use. The drug has become a unique Christmas present which college students send to each other with season's greetings. While many college administrators acknowledge that the use of the drug has reached almost epidemic proportions, what is especially disconcerting is the fact that marijuana smoking has become socially acceptable in many parts of the country. There was a time not so long ago when use of drugs and dope was limited to a few who did their evil work in private. They were frowned on by the majority of people. This is rapidly changing. Drug use is becoming a status symbol. It is no longer condemned in colleges, in homes and among many social groups. It is

becoming as acceptable as social drinking. How rapidly are the morals of this country breaking down. One is reminded of the words of God at the time of the building

of the tower of Babel: "And now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do," Gen. 11:6.

In His Fear

A Song in the Heart – CONT.

Rev. John A. Heys

You have a heart murmur.

Let it be stated to every reader of these lines that he has a heart murmur.

This is not a physician's diagnosis of a physical condition. It may or it may not be true in that sense that you have a heart murmur. With most of the readers of these lines this undoubtedly is not true. With those among whom it may be true it still does not mean that they have anything about which to worry, and that this condition indicates future heart trouble or heart failure due to that murmur.

But it is Scripture's testimony that every man, woman and child that dwells upon the face of this earth, or ever breathed the air of this globe, has a heart murmur. Even then Scripture does not say that this is a spiritual affliction, but Holy Writ simply states it as a spiritual reality. The statement is found in Psalm 19:24, where our English translation (The Authorized or King James Version) employs a different word. In that translation we read, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." We can read it another way, and we prefer to read it that way, wherein it becomes, "Let the words of my mouth, and the murmuring of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." The root meaning of the verb is "to murmur."

We take the liberty, however, to change that still further to, "let . . . the song (or the singing) of my heart be acceptable to Thee, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." For the word is used that way, as to the idea, in Psalm 35:28 and Psalm 71:24. In both verses we find this expression, "My tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness." But in the setting of Psalm 35 there is added, "And of Thy praise all the day long." In Psalm 71 the connection is that of the preceding verse, where the psalmist says, "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee." Psalm 35 in its preceding verse had said, "Let them shout for joy and be glad." The setting of both texts then is that of a joyful heart that does not simply say a few nice words but sings God's praises. The murmuring of the heart of the regenerated and redeemed child of God is a song of God's praise surging through that heart and moving the lips to either speak

or sing. The heart has a song in it, even as the murmuring brook sings its constant song of praise to God.

It does make a great deal of difference what song is in the heart. There will be a heart murmur, but what does it say within us? Is it a murmur of joyful praise to God? Or is it a growl and grumble of dissatisfaction? David, the author of the 19th Psalm, has a heart murmur or song of praise. His natural eye has seen the heavens and the heavenly bodies of the firmament. And the glory of God which they declare – for thus he begins the Psalm, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth His handiwork" – has been reflected by his regenerated and sanctified soul to cause a song of the glory of God to dwell in his heart. Likewise has he seen, with his spiritual eye, the beauty of God's Word. And this causes a second stanza to that song in his sanctified and regenerated heart to be present.

With and in the natural man the opposite is true. He sees the glory of the creature. He speaks of the beauty of the heavens and of the vastness of the firmament. And his heart murmurs with a proud song of what man will do and how he will conquer this outer space. He sees no glory of God, but he does see a challenge to get glory for himself. God's Word and God's law he curses, and he has in his heart nothing but a song of the lust of man's flesh. He murmurs after the baser things of life. On the one hand he reaches ever upward toward the moon; and on the other hand he rushes to the depths of filth and immorality. His murmur in his heart is not acceptable in the sight of God. He has a serious heart condition which will bring him to the torments of hell. And his mouth therefore spouts forth cursing and blasphemies instead of songs of praise and blessings to his Creator and God. These go together even as the Psalm indicates. The words of our mouths are acceptable in God's sight only when the murmuring of our hearts is acceptable in His sight. That murmur produces the words. The song in the heart determines the song on the lips. And when men hypocritically sing the songs of God's praise, this too is due to the fact that the heart murmurs with hatred of the living God. And God Who hears that murmur judges the words of the lips in the

light of that song in the heart.

It is essential then that we have a song of praise in our hearts. And it is also revealing when we have other songs on our lips. Likewise is it true that our songs reveal our belief concerning the living God. When we freely and repeatedly sing songs that are a perversion of the truth concerning God, we reveal that our hearts do not know the truth of God's Word or else despise it. Then there is a dangerous heart murmur within us, and we need a spiritual heart transplant. Tragic it is when we defend such heart murmurings that direct the praise and glory to man and that express disgust and irritation at His Word and law.

That does not mean that unless we sing a song that is a versification of the Word of God we reveal that there is something spiritually wrong with our hearts. Then there is something wrong with these hearts also when we compose our own prayers and do not make a versification of those found on the pages of Holy Writ. But it certainly does mean that our songs and prayers must be based solidly upon what the Scriptures declare. When we deviate from that line in our songs or in our prayers and praise the creature, or express desires contrary to God's law, it means that there is a wrong murmur in the heart. It means that we have a serious heart ailment.

It is then important for our personal life; it is important for our home and family life; and it is important for our church life and its worship that our hearts murmur as David's does in this Psalm so that our lips perform works acceptable in God's sight. This means, then, that we will need the pure preaching of the Word and sound instruction for our children. It means that those who preach and teach in our midst and before our children must be men whose heart's murmur is the truth. And it means that God must give us a heart that can receive that truth in love and that is under the influence of His Spirit of truth. It may mean that we have to discard not only some of our songs which we have been singing personally, in our homes and in our churches, but also that we have to clean out that heart of old beliefs and preferences. And if we love God, we will be glad to examine what we have been singing with our lips to see whether these words actually express the murmur of our regenerated hearts and render to God the praise we want to give Him, or whether they deny Him that glory which the speechless heavens yet do declare.

Then, too, a living and growing child of God will add new stanzas to the song of his heart. Of course the Word of God has something to say about this. The psalmists make mention of this fact. The psalmist of Psalm 96 speaks of a *new* song when he urges us, "O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; shew forth His salvation from day to day." Psalm 96:1,2. As is evident from these words, the psalmist means the song of salvation when he speaks of a new song. The old heart murmur

has been replaced with a new murmur. The old song of the flesh has been replaced by a song of salvation and of the Spirit. That is the wonder of regeneration. It is mentioned also in Psalm 40:3, "And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." David says it again in Psalm 144:9 and 10 among many other passages in the Psalms, "I will sing a new song unto Thee, O God; upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praise to Thee. It is He that giveth salvation unto kings; who delivereth David His servant from the hurtful sword."

Mention is made here in these passages of salvation and of a song because of that salvation. The murmur in the heart, then, is a new murmur because of a new work of God in that heart. The song of unbelief, the song of hatred against the living God, the song of rebellion, the self-seeking song has been replaced with a new song of praise to God for salvation which is full and free. This song is so different from the one taught Adam and Eve by that viper, whose poison was under his lips. Romans 3:13. Satan became our choirmaster. He picked out our song and approached us with it in the garden. He taught its words not only but got us to receive it into our hearts. And every child born in this world has that song of rebellion and of hatred against the living God issuing forth from his heart to move his lips to songs of the flesh. But God put enmity in the hearts of His own against Satan, his children and his ways and thereby gave us a new song in our hearts, one of praise to God: the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Truly we have a new song, an entirely new song. The rhythm is new; the harmony is new; the words are new; for the Composer, the Choir Director and the heart are all new.

This song is new also in the sense that it is one that Adam and Eve could not sing before the fall. A song of praise they could raise to God on high. They could sing of the heavens and their declaration of God's glory, of the firmament showing forth His handiwork. But they could not sing of salvation, for they knew no such thing, nor could they comprehend it. But in the way of the fall and the salvation begun by God within them very shortly thereafter, they could sing a new song, an entirely new song. For now they could sing of God's grace! That song of Moses and of the Lamb is a song of grace! And we ought to go through our hymn books and search our hearts to see whether our song is one of works. If so, it is not a song of God's praise, and it is not a new song. It is the old song of the devil, the old song of Adam and Eve with their fig-leaf-apron works. Arminianism and Pelagianism are not that new song which God has put in our mouths. Satan put that one there by putting it in our hearts to be our natural heart murmur. The new song is a song of praise to God.

Away then with our songs that present a helpless though willing Saviour, Who goes away disappointed because we did not work and did not let the Almighty (?) have His way and was frustrated by a speck of dust!

Away with all songs that place man and his will before the Christ and His will and power. Sing a new song, the one that extols that Christ for His power, grace, wisdom and a love that will not let us go.

But we may also add stanzas to that song of salvation. And it is to this that the psalmist refers in Psalm 40:3. He had stated in verse 1 and 2 that he waited patiently for the Lord. His patience was rewarded, for God inclined to hear his cry and brought him up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and He set his feet upon a rock and established his goings. That gave him a new song. New blessings bring new songs of praise. New

revelations of God's grace add new stanzas to that song in the heart. New mercies produce richer harmonies of that song of the redeemed. And that is why, when all this weary night of sin and death is over and the mists are rolled away, our song shall be full; and we will sing a new song that was impossible in such richness in this life. For we shall sing with Christ as fully taught by Him and as fully controlled by His Spirit. The old murmur will be gone completely; and our lips shall speak pure praise. We shall sing in His fear. For we shall then stand in holy awe and reverence before Him Who is the theme of our song.

Contending for the Faith

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

THE THIRD PERIOD — 730-1517 A.D.

GOTTSCHALK

Rev. H. Veldman

Compromise decisions, always the result of being afraid to maintain the Scriptural truth of God's absolute sovereignty, are never conducive to the welfare and real peace of the church of God. At the synod of Chiersy, 849, Gottschalk had been condemned as an incorrigible heretic, deposed from the priesthood, publicly scourged for obstinacy, compelled to burn his books, and shut up in prison. However, at the synod of Valence, 855, in opposition to Hincmar and the four chapters of the synod of Chiersy, the main positions of the Augustinian system were endorsed, although with such qualifications and distinctions as seemed necessary to save the holiness of God and the moral responsibility of man. But the synod of Langres, 859, although repeating the doctrinal canons of Valence, omitted the censure of the four chapters of Chiersy, and thus prepared the way for a compromise.

In connection with the doctrine of an ABSOLUTE AND TWO-FOLD PREDESTINATION, Schaff has yet the following:

We may briefly state the system of the Augustinian school in the following propositions:

(1) All men are sinners, and justly condemned in consequence of Adam's fall.

(2) Man in the natural state has no freedom of choice, but is a slave of sin. (This, however, was qualified by Remigius and the Synod of Valence in the direction of Semi-Pelagianism.

(3) God out of free grace elected from eternity and unalterably a part of mankind to holiness and salvation, and is the author of all their good deeds; while He leaves the rest in His incruitable counsel to their

merited damnation. (incidentally, this is also the infralapsarian position —H.V.)

(4) God has unalterably predestinated the impenitent and persistent sinner to everlasting punishment, but not to sin, which is the guilt of man and condemned by God. (this, too, is the infralapsarian position; the infralapsarian begins, in the counsel of God, with the fact of sin and the corruption of the whole human race —H.V.)

(5) Christ died only for the elect.

Gottschalk is also charged by his opponents with slighting the church and the sacraments, and confining the effect of baptism and the eucharist to the elect. This would be consistent with his theory. He is said to have agreed with his friend Ratramnus in rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation. Augustin certainly did not teach transubstantiation, but he checked the logical tendency of Predestinarianism by the Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and of the visible historical church as the mediatrix of salvation.

So, Gottschalk is accused of confining the effect of baptism and the eucharist to the elect! What else can possibly be true? Of course, the spiritual effect and benefit of the sacraments is limited only to the elect. Besides, we teach and maintain that this is also the positive purpose of the Lord. Grace is not general, and this also applies to the sacraments. Secondly, although Augustin taught that the visible historical church is the mediatrix of salvation, this must not be understood as if that church father taught, as the Roman Catholic Church would maintain, that this visible historical church is to be identified with the present day Roman Catholic church.

A second contending theory on Predestination is the doctrine of a **CONDITIONAL** and **SINGLE PRE-DESTINATION**. Concerning this doctrine, Schaff has the following, Vol. IV, 534 ff:

Rabanus and Hincmar, who agreed in theology as well as in unchristian conduct towards Gottschalk, claimed to be Augustinians, but were at heart Semi-Pelagians, and struck a middle course, retaining the Augustinian premises, but avoiding the logical consequences. Foreknowledge is a necessary attribute of the omniscient mind of God, and differs from foreordination or predestination (*praedestinatio*), which is an attribute of His omnipotent will. The former may exist without the latter, but not the latter without the former. Foreknowledge is absolute, and embraces all things and all men, good and bad; foreordination is conditioned by foreknowledge, and refers only to what is good. God foreknew sin from eternity, but did not predestinate it; and so He foreknew the sinner, but did not predestinate them to sin or death; they are simply foreknown, not predestined. There is therefore no double predestination, but only one predestination which coincides with election to eternal life. The fall of Adam with its consequences falls under the idea of divine permission. God sincerely intends to save all men without distinction, and Christ shed His blood for all; if any are lost, they have to blame themselves.

This is interesting. So, foreknowledge is a necessary attribute of the omniscient mind of God, and differs from foreordination or predestination, which is an attribute of His omnipotent will. Foreknowledge is absolute, embraces all things and all men, good and bad; foreordination is conditioned by foreknowledge, and refers only to what is good. In His foreknowledge God saw beforehand the sinner, but did not predestine him to sin OR DEATH. God sincerely intends to save all men without distinction, and Christ shed His blood for all. However, this is not the Scriptural presentation of God's foreknowledge. According to the Word of God, God's foreknowledge is not simply a seeing beforehand, but the eternal knowledge of the Lord that has sovereignly determined all things from before the foundation of the world. And, of course, to teach that God's foreknowledge has not pre-determined the death of the sinner, leads to the heresy that Christ died for all men. Hence, the denial of God's absolute two-fold predestination, election and reprobation must lead to the denial of the particular character of the suffering and death of Christ. And we also see this in our present day and age.

Hincmar secured the confirmation of his views by the Synod of Chiersy, held in presence of the Emperor, Charles the Bald, 853. It adopted four propositions:

(1) God Almighty made man free from sin, endowed him with reason and the liberty of choice, and placed him in Paradise. Man, by the abuse of this liberty, sinned, and the whole race became a mass of perdition. Out of this *massa perditionis* God elected

those whom He by grace predestinated unto life eternal; others He left by a just judgment in the mass of perdition, foreknowing that they would perish, but not foreordaining them to perdition, though He foreordained eternal punishment for them. This is Augustinian, but weakened in the last clause.

(2) We lost the freedom of will through the fall of the first man, and regained it again through Christ. This chapter, however, is so vaguely worded that it may be understood in a Semi-Pelagian as well as in an Augustinian sense.

(3) God Almighty would have all men without exception to be saved, although not all are actually saved. Salvation is a free gift of grace; perdition is the desert of those who persist in sin.

(4) Jesus Christ died for all men past, present and future, though not all are redeemed by the mystery of His passion, owing to their unbelief. (we recognize, of course, in this statement the heresy of Prof. H. Dekker of our present day —H.V.)

The last two propositions are not Augustinian, but catholic, and are the connecting link between the catholic orthodoxy and the Semi-Pelagian heresy.

Hincmar defended these propositions against the objections of Remigius and the Synod of Valence, in two books on Predestination and Free Will (between 856 and 863). The first is lost, the second is preserved. It is very prolix and repetitious, and marks no real progress. He made several historical blunders, and quoted freely from the pseudo-Augustinian Hypomnesticon, which he thought presented Augustin's later and better views.

The two parties came to a sort of agreement at the National Synod of France held at Toucy, near Toul, in October, 860, in presence of the Emperor, Charles the Bald, King Lothaire II, and Charles of Provence, and the bishops of fourteen ecclesiastical provinces. Hincmar was the leading man, and composed the synodical letter. He still maintained his four propositions, but cleared himself of the suspicion of Semi-Pelagianism. The first part of the synodical letter, addressed to all the faithful, gives a summary of Christian doctrine, and asserts that nothing can happen in heaven and earth without the will or permission of God; that He would have all men to be saved and none lost; that He did not deprive man after the fall of free will, but heals and supports it by grace; that Christ died on the cross for all men; that in the end all the *predestinated* who are now scattered in the *massa perditionis*, will be gathered into the fulness of the eternal church in heaven.

Here ended the controversy. It was a defeat of predestinarianism in its rigorous form and a substantial victory of Semi-Augustinianism, which is almost identical with Semi-Pelagianism, except that it gives greater prominence to divine grace.

Practically, even this difference disappeared. The mediaeval church needed the doctrine of free will and of universal call, as a basis for maintaining the moral responsibility, the guilt and merit of man, and as a support to the sacerdotal and sacramental mediation of salvation; while the strict predestinarian system,

which unalterably determines the eternal fate of every soul by a pre-temporal or ante-mundane decree, seemed in its logical consequences to neutralize the appeal to the conscience of the sinner, to cut off the powerful inducement of merit and reward, to limit the efficacy of the sacraments to the elect, and to weaken the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

With this we must agree. The forces of predestinarianism in its rigorous form had certainly suffered a defeat, and the forces of Semi-Augustinianism, practically identical with Semi-Pelagianism, had won the victory. And this need not surprise us. The maintaining of the absolute sovereignty of God must always take place only with the greatest difficulty. We see it also in our present day. However, Schaff ends this section with

the observation that, while churchly and sacerdotal Semi-Augustinianism or covert Semi-Pelagianism triumphed in France, where Hincmar had the last word in the controversy, it was not ecumenically sanctioned. Pope Nicholas, dissatisfied with Hincmar on hierarchical grounds had some sympathy for Gottschalk, and is reported to have approved the Augustinian canons of the Synods of Valence and Langres in regard to a "two-fold predestination" and the limitation of the atonement. And thus the door was left open within the Catholic church itself for a revival of strict Augustinianism, and this took place on a grand scale in the sixteenth century.

The Lord Gave The Word

The History of Missions Paul The Apostle To The Gentiles

Rev. C. Hanko

Any discussion of mission work in the early church after Pentecost must necessarily include some reference to the apostle Paul.

Concerning his early youth he tells us, "I verily am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, (a citizen of no mean city), but brought up in this city (Jerusalem) at the feet of Gamaliel, circumcized the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee." Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:5.

Saul's parents belonged to the Jews of the dispersion, so that he had personal and intimate acquaintance with the gentiles. His father had obtained the rights of a Roman citizen, so that Paul was a free-born citizen, which was later to his advantage. Even though Saul was brought up in a gentile environment, his parents were Jews according to all the traditions of the elders. They taught their son the trade of tentmaking, but they also sent him to Jerusalem to be taught "according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers." Acts 22:3. He was an outstanding student of the law, superior to his fellow-students, because of his great zeal for the traditions of the past. Gal. 1:14. He also proudly maintained those traditions, living after the strictest sect of the Pharisees, and could boast that he was blameless as touching the righteousness which is in the law. Acts 26:4-6; Phil. 3:6. He was present at the stoning of Stephen, not as a mere by-stander, but as one who understood all that Stephen believed, and therefore was "consenting unto his death." Acts 7:58, 8:1. The

martyrdom of Stephen became the occasion for a widespread persecution of the church, in which Saul took a very active part, always "kicking against the pricks," as he tried to convince himself that he was doing God an honor. Zeal can be very wrong when its motive is wrong, as the apostle humbly confessed later. Willful ignorance of the truth of the Scriptures and proud unbelief made him "think verily within himself that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Acts 29:9. With remorseful allusions to the past Paul refers to himself as a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," and therefore always considered himself as "the least of the apostles, and not worthy to be an apostle, "because I persecuted the church of God." I Tim. 1:13; I Cor. 15:9.

In Acts 9 we are told of Saul's conversion and call to the apostleship. While on his way to Damascus, "still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Jesus," the Lord appeared to him. But let the apostle tell it in his own words, as he told it to Agrippa, "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and

a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Acts 26: 13-18.

After spending some time in Arabia where he received instruction through visions and revelations from the Lord, Saul returned to Tarsus to await the call of Christ to enter into his ministry. By this time he had acquired the threefold requisite of the apostleship: He had seen the risen Lord; he had been personally called of Christ to witness in His name; and he had received the Holy Spirit to speak and write the infallible Word of God. The Lord did not keep Saul waiting very long, for soon Barnabas came from Antioch to seek his assistance in the work that was being carried on there.

Antioch in Syria was the third largest city of the Roman empire with about a half million inhabitants. A large congregation arose there consisting of both Jews and gentiles. This church God chose as the new center for mission labors. To this church came the mandate from the Holy Spirit, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Acts 13:2. The church immediately responded by ordaining these men with the laying on of hands, and sent them forth in the ministry of Christ.

Thus Barnabas and Saul start out on what is known as Paul's first missionary journey. They were accompanied by John Mark, but before long he turned back, possibly because of the bitter opposition that they met. Although it is impossible to enter into all the details of this first journey, there are certain things that should be noted. One soon notices that at the outset Barnabas is mentioned first, but soon Saul becomes the main speaker and Barnabas falls in the background. God used Barnabas to introduce Paul into the work, even to the extent that they began their labors on the island where Barnabas was acquainted, since it had been his former home. But Paul is the apostle, and Barnabas proves to be his able assistant. It is also evident that the apostle changed his Hebrew name Saul into Paul, the Greek form, since he will be laboring mainly among the gentiles who spoke the Greek. And then it also strikes our attention that Paul and Barnabas begin with the Jews. They enter, wherever possible, the Jewish synagogue first. After the Jews have taken their stand for or against the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul feels justified to turn to the gentiles. This practice was followed throughout his ministry. From Cyprus Paul and Barnabas proceed to the mainland of Asia Minor, beginning in the center of that area. They go from Perga to Antioch of Pisidia, and from there to Lystra and Derbe, establishing churches as they go. When the opposition became too severe for profitable labor in a certain place they moved

on to another city. The churches that were organized were very likely very small at the outset, and the opposition from Jew and gentile was very bitter, yet Paul carried on with the confidence that "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Acts 13:48. He knew that not man, but Christ gathers His church by His Word and Spirit. It was Paul's privilege to be Christ's instrument in the work. John 10:16; Acts 2:47. After spending a short time in the area of Lystra and Derbe, and experiencing for the first time an attempt to take his life, the apostle retraced his steps to Antioch of Pisidia, and then on to Perga and Attalia, to return to report on their labors to the calling church at Antioch of Syria.

Paul's second missionary journey is often considered the most important of all from the point of view of the new field that was reached. Barnabas did not accompany him on this journey, because of a disagreement about John Mark. Paul did not want to take John Mark with them, evidently because he had faltered on the first journey. Barnabas insisted on taking him along. And so the ways of those two men parted. Barnabas carried on the work by going with John Mark to the island of Cyprus. Paul took Silas, also referred to as Silvanus, with him to visit the churches that had been established in Asia Minor. At a later date John Mark did join Paul in the labors, since the apostle writes concerning him, that he is "profitable to me for the ministry." II Tim. 4:11. After visiting and strengthening the churches that had already been established, Paul had intended to continue his labors in a broader area of Asia Minor. But wherever he went he was prevented from laboring there by the Holy Spirit. Christ had something else in mind for the apostle, but did not immediately reveal that to him. Evidently Paul had to learn to trust the guidance of Christ in all his labors. Thus the apostle found himself at Troas, the far extremity in the northwest of Asia Minor, as it were, without a field of labor. There he received the vision of the Macedonian man, saying, "Come over and help us."

I must pause here a moment to point out that Timothy had joined Paul and Silas already at Lystra. This spiritual son of the apostle proved to be a faithful servant in the ministry for many years. Luke also joined Paul and his companions at Troas. It is always interesting when reading the Book of Acts to notice how Luke makes his presence known by that significant "we." As the author of the book he can show that he joined the company of the apostle by inserting that "we," and dropping it again when his other duties call him away. Acts 16:10-13; 20:5,6; 27:1.

In Macedonia Paul labored mainly in Philippi and Thessalonica. This was the first mission work on the mainland of Europe. At Philippi, as you know, Paul saw positive fruit on his labors in the conversion particularly of Lydia and of the jailer. In both Philippi and Thessalonica churches were established. From there Paul was forced by opposition to go to Berea, from Berea to

Athens; and from Athens he went to Corinth, where he spent a year and half in intensive labor. At one time when his courage faltered, the Lord encouraged him to remain there because He had many elect that had to be gathered in. Acts 18:10. Making a short stop at Ephesus with the promise to return, if the Lord willed, the apostle hastened to Caesarea and thence to Antioch, the calling church.

Paul's third journey covered approximately the same area as the second, except that he went almost directly to Ephesus, as he had promised. He spent three years there, "serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews," and "have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Acts 20:19,27. It was evidently during his stay at Ephesus that the churches mentioned in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation were organized, referred to often as the seven churches of Asia Minor. During this time he also wrote his epistle to the Galatians and the first epistle to the Corinthians, bearing upon his heart "the care of all the churches." II Cor. 11:28. From Ephesus Paul went into Macedonia, and even down into Corinth, where he spent the winter. On these visits he was collecting gifts for the needy in Jerusalem, and he also found time to write his epistle to the Romans and Second Corinthians. It was as he was returning that the Holy Spirit informed him that suffering and bonds awaited him at Jerusalem. Therefore his visits became a final farewell which was indeed difficult, but the apostle was ready not only to suffer imprisonment, but also to die for the faith of the gospel.

Even during his imprisonment in Jerusalem and Caesarea, during his voyage and shipwreck, and during his stay in Rome as a prisoner for the gospel, the apostle did not cease to preach and to write concerning the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ entrusted to him.

A few concluding remarks:

We have been able to touch only briefly on the vast amount of work that was accomplished in a few short years. The Book of Acts tells us far more that can be read with the keenest interest.

Paul had learned, as he also taught the churches, that "through much suffering we must enter into the kingdom." His main opposition came from his own kinsmen according to the flesh, and yet there was far more that he suffered for the faith. As he tells it: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. II Cor. 11:24-27.

But what a change was wrought through his ministry by the Lord. Churches were organized, elders and deacons ordained, believers were strengthened in the faith. The small mustard seed of the upper room at Pentecost had grown into a large tree. And that by the power of Christ Who gathers His church by His Word and Spirit.

A Cloud of Witnesses

ABSALOM'S RETURN

Rev. B. Woudenberg

Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom.

And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead:

And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him, So Joab put the words in her mouth . . .

And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.

II Samuel 14:1-3,21

David fell short in a way only too common to the children of God. Like Eli and Samuel before him, he

was not able to evaluate and discipline his own children. When it came to other people and to other people's

children, he was hardly to be excelled in this respect; but with his own he failed badly. The result of this was his gross mis-evaluation of his son Absalom.

Absalom had always been a much more dearly loved child to David than Amnon had ever been. Judging from what we know of Amnon he was probably always a crude and rough child, one who offended almost everyone he met, including even his own parents. Absalom was different. He had many characteristics that to this day would commend him. He was a child of rare and unusual beauty to begin with. But in addition, he had a quick and clever mind, a personal warmth that attracted people on all levels to him, he possessed a self-confidence about him that was contagious and attractive to many, besides the fact that he was willing to go to any extreme, even in dishonesty, to establish himself in the favor of any that he wished to impress. These characteristics David had detected from the child's earliest years, so that he loved to have Absalom with him whenever he could. What he refused to take note of was that underneath Absalom was as hard and ruthless as Amnon, and even more so. But David loved the child and his heart went out to him as it did to hardly any other person.

It was Joab, keen and perceptive man that he was, who first detected the real situation and its importance. It was evident to all that the slaying of Amnon had thrown David into a fit of deep depression. This was a serious matter, particularly as Joab saw it. He realized full well that the tremendous successfulness of David as a leader and king was to be found in his radiant enthusiasm and spiritual warmth which attracted the best element in Israel and solidified them in a united nation behind David. To his mind it was a crisis of most serious proportions if David would not soon come out of this fit of dark depression that hung heavy about him and seemed to drain the strength from his royal life. Moreover, Joab understood also the real reason for David's mental depression. It was not that he was mourning, as many might think, for his slain son and heir to the throne, Amnon. It wasn't even that he felt so much the shame of this great scandal that had marred the reputation of his family. No doubt he felt these things too, but by far the overwhelming burden for him was the fact that his favorite son Absalom was gone from his presence and would in all likelihood never return. This was more than even David's strength of character could bear.

It was not that it had been unnecessary for Absalom to have fled. It had been. David was too much a man of law and justice to have left such an outright act of murder to go unpunished even if it was his favorite son who had done this. Absalom himself had realized this and wisely had taken himself to his mother's family in Geshur. But, at the same time, it was not that the feelings of David's heart agreed with the verdict of his mind. He loved his son Absalom as he did no other, and

he found it impossible to forget that this beloved child of his was gone away into exile and could not be returned. It was worse than if the child were dead, just to know that he was living and yet could not be regained. The whole of three years passed by and the sorrow of David was not abated.

It was Joab, always the man of action, who finally determined that something had to be done for the sake of the sanity of David and for the sake of the nation.

Carefully as always, and with as much attention as though he were planning a major military campaign, Joab laid his plan.

Well known to him in the city of Tekoah was a woman whom he summoned to help him in his scheme. She was an extremely clever woman, warm of personality and attractive, with a peculiar ability to tell a story in a most convincing way, a good actress we would say in our day. It was particularly this latter ability which Joab needed to bring across his plan. For the sake of the nation, he thought, he had to convince David that it was quite permissible to bypass his convictions of justice and merely listen to the longings of his heart. If this could be done, David's joy would return, and the strength of their nation would be retained.

Thus it was that on a certain day, having been thoroughly instructed by Joab, the wise woman of Tekoah presented herself in the court of the king. Evidently it was the custom in those days, that if there was any one in the kingdom who was in the need of judgment or redress for some wrong or protection from some enemy, he might enter the royal court on certain days and lay his case before the king. Thus this woman also came in the pretense of being a widow, the mother of two sons, and the case as she presented it was as follows. Approaching the throne of the king, she did the proper obeisance, and said, "Help, O king." And the king said unto her. "What aileth thee?" and she answered, "I am indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead. And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and there was none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him. And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth."

It was a difficult case which the woman presented; Joab had designed it so. Here again was a case, in all probability, of outright murder, although it was vaguely enough presented so as not to be necessarily and disgustingly so. Meanwhile, overagainst this was an appeal to one of the dearest principles in Israel, the need to maintain the name of every family in Israel as far as possible on into the future promise of the nation. But this was not the whole story: the appeal to the principle

of inheritance in the future of Israel was only a bolstering point to maintain and strengthen the overwhelming factor in this case, the love of a parent for her child which simply could not let him go no matter what his sin.

Behind this, of course, was all of the calculating cleverness of Joab's mind. He knew that what kept David from recalling Absalom was his utter dedication to justice regardless of personal consideration. So deep was this commitment that, if Joab would have gone to argue the point directly with David, he would have gotten nowhere. But Joab also knew that David as a man of strong intellect was one who abhorred all contradiction, particularly in his own life. Thus, if in a parallel case, Joab could get David to decree that justice might be bypassed in consideration for the love of a mother and her dedication to the future of Israel, then he would have a point of leverage upon which he could argue that David, for the sake of consistency, ought to be willing to do the same in his own case.

Likewise, the fictitious case which the woman of Tekoah presented was cleverly designed. Its parallel to the case of David's was there, although not too evidently so. As with David, this woman's case concerned a son who had killed his brother in a manner demanding punishment; and as with David, there was an overwhelming flow of parental love which sought to have the punishment canceled. The difference was that in this instance the need for punishment was not quite so clearly established, while the love of the parent had more reason to demand consideration. It was like a clever debater's trick, one only too often used to assault the principles of God's law. If through the presentation of a most difficult case, it can be established that justice does not always rule, that by moving on step by step the importance of following justice can be destroyed completely.

David felt immediately upon hearing this case that there was a most difficult point involved. Accordingly, his first impulse was to go carefully and take time to think the matter over. So he answered the woman with an indefinite promise, "Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee."

It was here where all the cleverness of this woman from Tekoah was called upon. To allow David to ponder the case at length, and maybe even begin to investigate details, would ruin the purpose of Joab completely. She had to move the king on to a quick and final decision. Accordingly she replied to the king, "My lord, O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne be guiltless." It was a daring thing to do, to argue with the command of the king; but this was a woman of courage and of confidence in her own appeal. But it was also effective. Drawn to the woman in sympathy, David gave in and said, "Whoso-

ever saith ought unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more."

The point was now gained, and the courage of the woman was sufficient to be able to move in still further even to bringing the king's own personal practice into question. Rather than turning to leave, she went on to say, "I pray thee, let the king remember the LORD thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son." She was determined first to drive the point which she had established home; and she did, for David replied, "As the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth." So she proceeded, "Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak one word unto my lord the king." Again he answered, "Say on", and she did, saying, "Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished. For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him. Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, it is because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid. For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man that would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God. Then thine handmaid said, The word of the lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee."

At last David came to see through what it was that was happening. Quickly he said to the woman, "Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?"

Again all the cleverness of this woman was called upon. Carefully she explained, "As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid: to fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth."

If there was anger in David at the discovery of the fraud, it was overcome by the open frankness of the woman. Besides, David's heart cried out for the conclusion to which Joab was trying to lead him. Calling his captain to him, he said, "Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again." It was a decision that both David and Joab would live to severely regret.

Mission Report

OUR MISSION ACTIVITIES

Rev. J. Kortering

Some time ago we informed our readers that approximately \$3,000.00 was deposited in Barclays Bank in Jamaica, an amount collected by our churches to be used for the poor. Some of this amount was distributed by Rev. Heys and Mr. Feenstra while they worked there last summer. Distribution of the balance however, awaited further decision by the deacons of Hudsonville in consultation with our emissaries.

After prayerful consideration, Rev. Heys was instructed to write a letter and enclose a check for 40 pounds or \$96.00 which was to be sent to each of the 21 churches that are affiliated with the Protestant Reformed Churches of Jamaica. These checks were made payable to the minister and elder or deacon of the church. They were instructed to consider the needy in their congregations and use the money for the widows, sick, or needy entrusted to their care.

Nine of these churches have replied to date. We consider it proper to share some of the expressions of gratitude for this help given in the name of Christ to those who are our brothers and sisters in the faith. Since all our people have contributed towards the poor in Jamaica, these expressions should likewise be forwarded to all our readers.

Rev. J. E. Frame of the congregation at Lucea responded, "I have received all the moneys you send . . . I was to bring all the Deacons of the churches (5 of them) to the Barclays Bank here at Lucea to get the checks cashed, so then I had to go to each congregation with the Deacons and Elders to discuss the matter how the money should be divided. The money was divided among the poor, the sick, the orphans, and the widows. They were very glad. I could remember seeing them hold up the money they received and say, thank God, thank God for the Prot. Ref. Church . . . There is a young man in one of the churches here in Jamaica interested in getting in the ministry, his ambition is good, and he is very much intelligent, what should I do about such a matter?"

A brief excerpt from a letter received under the signature of Deacon Dahey of the Galloway church, "To all the Ministers and Elders and Deacons of the Prot. Ref. Churches in America. Thank God we the Elders and Deacons of the Prot. Ref. Churches in Jamaica. We are sending you all our greetings. Hoping the Lord's Blessing to all and our brethren say to tell thanks for what the Galloway Church has received, 40 pounds, and we have shared it among the brethren in the church and every one says thanks for the help."

Deacon Theophilus Davidson of the Fort Williams church wrote, "We hope and trust that God may richly bless you in all your labors and that we may live by the rules of the church and be obedient, that we may be able to receive all the benefits that you and the brethren from the U.S.A. desire to give unto your poor brethren in Jamaica."

The representative of the Santa Cruz church, Deacon Binns wrote an interesting letter. "Sincere greetings to you and the family also the brethren of the Prot. Reformed faith of the U.S.A. Pastor Heys, the thanks that we the brethren in Jamaica and of the Santa Cruz church can give you is life everlasting, we cannot name the brethren name by name. But the good Lord knows the sincere prayer that has gone up to heaven for you and your family also the brethren of the Reformed faith. Rev. Heys we have returned you many thanks for the wonderful donation that you have sent to us by Rev. Rudduck, he also take it to us and gave it to us tonight. Rev. Heys, we the brethren of the Santa Cruz church are very happy to have Rev. Rudduck in our midst because God chose him to take over the church, we can also see the difference in the church. Rev. Rudduck is a true man of God. One thing I can prove for myself is that if the good Lord willing for you to come back to Jamaica which we the brethren of Jamaica Prot. Ref. Church would love to have, Rev. Heys, to live in Jamaica with us. Dear Rev. Heys we pray that the Lord from heaven will ever bless the Prot. Ref. faith of America unto us, let us work in one love Pastor Heys, we are trying to have a rally in our church in Santa Cruz in view of installing electric lights in the church. Our rally will be on the last Sunday of December, we need the lights badly, because the tilly lamp is giving plenty trouble and the light is so near the church as you know. Dear Pastor Heys, we are working very hard to build the Reformed faith in Jamaica, as strong as how it is in America. I know by the help of our soon coming King He is going to give us what we are praying for. Rev. Heys how health fails me, I decide in my mind to work for Christ, I would also love to reach at that Pleasant Place that He has gone to prepare for us all and I would love to be there, but I know it calls to sincere work. May God's richest blessings be bestowed on you all."

From Deacon Spence of Shrewsbury congregation came this expression, "Sirs, we do highly appreciate your kind hospitality in sending us this great help. We do take great pleasure by saying 'thanks alot'. Although we were a little doubtful to ask your help to us, we can see

where God's Word never fails. He said when we are in need of help He will send us help from afar. Sir, this money was divided among widows, and the needy ones that cannot work, those who the church has to bear their burdens. We now close with the richest blessing of God to you and a lot of thanks for your kind help to us all."

Elder Leslie Johnson responded in behalf of the church of First Hill Lucea, "May I say happy greetings to you and Lady Heys. Also the brethren in Christ. In the precious name of Jesus, sir, thanks very much for the money which you have sent to us. I have received 40 pounds from you through the hand of Rev. Frame. Sir, I and he went to the bank and got it changed then I distributed it the best way I think. I gave to the sick ones, the widows, and all who I see in great need. Sir, we express our gratitude to you all in the name of our Lord and Master and trusting that we will live in the same faith and love until our soul is called."

Finally, Elder Wright expressed thanks on behalf of the Reading Church, "Holy greetings to you and all the brethren of the Prot. Ref. churches in America. We are ever giving thanks to God for the Reformed faith which brings the truth to us here in Jamaica We divided the 40 pounds as follows, to 3 sick, 4 pounds ten shillings each, to five weak ones, 2 pounds 10 shillings each, to other ten, 1 pound each, to other eight, 10 shillings each. God bless the Mission Committee hoping by the help of our God this Reformed truth goes throughout the world." Elder Sluece of Latium concluded his word of appreciation by saying, "We pray that the Lord will bless every cheerful giver, hoping that you will come to us in Jamaica soon by the help of the Good Lord."

We trust that these excerpts will encourage our people to remember the cause of benevolence in Jamaica. Almost all money collected to date has been distributed.

The following items concerning Jamaica may be of interest to our readers:

1. The Standard Bearer is now being sent directly into the field. Rev. Frame receives 5 copies for distribution, likewise Rev. Ruddock 4 copies, while 16 copies are sent directly to the readers on the island.

2. The Reformed Witness Hour tapes are being sent to the ministers and replayed to certain congregations.

3. Rev. Heys is presently corresponding with the Ministry of Home Affairs concerning the required "work permit" for our emissaries who travel to the island. Evidently there is no obstacle in securing them.

4. First Church of Grand Rapids has been instructed to prepare a trio from the gross list submitted to them by the Mission Committee. The purpose for this is to call a missionary to labor full time on the island. Since this is of interest to all our people, we should likewise remember this need before the throne of grace in our congregational prayers. The work is definitely limited if

not hampered without such a man. May God provide the churches of Jamaica with the man of His choosing.

5. Plans are being considered by the Jamaican sub-committee to send emissaries to the island prior to the next Synod. Details of this still have to be worked out.

6. Often times the question is raised by societies and individuals concerning a specific need in Jamaica for which they can contribute money. There is of course the need for church buildings (this is being handled by our Synodical treasurer, C. Pastoor). Any specific use of this money awaits a decision on securing the land, a matter being taken under advisement with a retired judge, Mr. Graham who lives in Kingston. The care of the poor constitutes a large and persistent need. This is being handled by the Deacons of Hudsonville Church. There still is need for more Bibles Psalters that can be distributed to various churches. If it is desired that money be designated for this purpose, contact Rev. Heys who knows where they can be sent. Finally, it was suggested that a fund be started for covering the cost of educating future ministers. Attending high-school on the island requires more money than these young men have. Besides, it is possible that they could attend school in Kingston for some of their instruction in languages. Perhaps Sunday Schools could consider contributing to this fund or even Consistories designating the catechism collections for this purpose.

Work on the home front is also progressing.

First of all, the sub-committee on radio broadcasting is investigating the entire set-up of broadcasting. Of primary interest is the station WNAX of Yankton. Synod decided to instruct the Mission Committee to investigate whether this station is a good investment. To determine this the Consistories of Hull, Doon, Edgerton, Isabel, and Forbes have been contacted for advice. This investigation is of interest since the present set-up absorbs the entire amount of money allocated by Synod for radio work, thus preventing any addition of new stations in "virgin" territory.

The Mission Committee decided to request Southwest Consistory to release Rev. Lubbers for work in Pella for a six week period beginning in January. This is to be followed D.V. by Rev. H. Veldman laboring there for six weeks, Rev. C. Hanko for the next six week period and finally by Rev. D. Engelsma for the next six weeks. The idea is to have these brethren labor in a consecutive period of time, thus allowing for preaching every Sunday, lectures during the week, catechism instruction for those who have children. The Lord is blessing this work, for also in Pella he adds daily to His church.

We conclude this report by expressing thanks to God who lays it upon the hearts of our people to be busy in this work. This task is demanding. It takes great resources to be able to do even a "little" in this vast calling of bringing the truth to those who are outside the sphere of our own church home. Yet, the King of the Church provides for us. He gives our ministers the

strength to give much time and energy to carry on this work, both at home and abroad. He lays it upon the hearts of our Consistories to release ministers in order that they may focus their full attention on the needs of these people; even their elders and deacons must bear the additional burdens of the local congregations them-

selves. He places zeal within the hearts of all our people to gladly contribute financially and prayerfully for this work.

May God so bless this work that His church is gathered and thereby His holy name glorified.

COME YE APART . . . AND REST A WHILE

Rev. C. Hanko

I will stand in my watch tower.

I will be alert as I observe all that goes on round about me.

I will seek the solitude, the quiet of my tower to be alone with my God, to watch, to pray, and . . . to wait for His answer.

That was the intent of the prophet Habakkuk, as he informs us in the second chapter of his prophecy. Do you care to join him there?

Ominous times the people of God were experiencing. Judah, the only remaining evidence of God's church upon the earth, had fallen into deep and grievous sins. The prophet counts these sins off on his finger tips in mournful lamentation: iniquity, perverseness, spoiling, violence, strife, contention. It sounds as if he were speaking of the days of Noah before the flood. It even sounds like the evils reported in our daily papers concerning this "Christian" nation.

A faithful remnant still cried to God, but there came no promise of any reform that would bring improvement in the sad state of affairs. Still worse, the Lord spoke of that mighty power, Babylon, that was sweeping as a mighty whirlwind across the land, leaving death and devastation in its trail. Judah would fall victim to this power also because of all her abominations that cried to heaven for just judgment.

Yes, the faithful remnant knew that ultimately also this great world power must crumble in the dust before the mighty Hand of the Most High. After all, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and what mere creature of the dust can vaunt himself before HIM, and live?

But in the meantime, what will happen to the faithful remnant and their children? Wouldst Thou, O Mighty God destroy Thy church, Thy covenant people along with the wicked? "Art not Thou from everlasting, O Lord, my Holy One?" "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil."

It is the same familiar complaint that arises so often from the lips of God's saints throughout the ages:

I asked in fear and bitterness,

Will God forsake me in distress?

Shall I His promise faithless find?

Has God forgotten to be kind?

Has He in anger hopelessly

Removed His love and grace from me?

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." Hab. 2:1.

Speak, Lord! Hear my complaint and answer me. Yes, reprove me according to all my doubts and unbelief.

The answer was not long in coming.

It was a message, simple, yet pregnant with meaning: *The just man shall live by his faith!*

Life! Life in the midst of devastation, judgment, death! Survival under the righteous judgments of the living God!

A promise of God to the just man. For the promise is so very personal: The just man shall live. He shall live by his faith.

While the wicked perish forever in their sins in torments of remorse and grinding of teeth, there is one who can be assured of life. The just man will certainly not perish with the unjust. God is from everlasting, purer of eyes than that he should do evil.

But who is that just one? I?

Habakkuk must have felt as I do, and likely as you do. Before God's holy law no man is justified; and then certainly not I.

Therefore the Lord gave him a vision. From the watch tower the prophet looked far out into the hazy future. He saw a Babe born of a virgin; the wonder of wonders. He saw the shadow of a cross upon a lonely hill. And beyond that, a tomb that had been rent open and the Lord of Glory standing as the Just One before God to receive the kingdom, power and glory from the Father, even forever.

And he felt himself one with Him; one by the mystical yet divinely established bond of living faith. One with Christ in His death, one with Him in His resurrection, one with Him in His righteousness, one with Him in His LIFE.

And he understood the word of the Lord: The just man shall live.

He shall live by his faith.

Go, tell it on the mountains. Let the runners read and carry the message far and wide over hill and dale to the ends of the earth.

The Lord gave the Word. Great was the company of

preachers. For it is the same Word of the Lord that always finds the response of faith in the hearts of the believers of all ages.

Although your sins be as scarlet, he that confesses and forsakes his sins finds mercy.

Let those who hear it take courage, even in the grimmest hours of history.

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines. . . . Although the days come when father finds no work and mother has no food for the

children. . . . Although we lose homes and are imprisoned for Christ's sake, — it can happen, you know. . . .

Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

As humanly impossible as that may seem, the Word of the Lord still says that the just man shall live by his faith.

Now. And afterwards the crown.

Contribution

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Editor, *The Standard Bearer*

Esteemed Brother in Christ:

After I lived almost 40 years in the Netherlands, excuse me when my writing is a mixture of Dutch and English (I have taken the liberty of translating the Dutch expressions, HCH). You wrote in the last *Standard Bearer* that comments are welcome on the article of Prof. Meeter.

I had the privilege that my parents had the financial means to send me to college; that gives one a broader view of life. For the average people Prof. Meeter's article is too "high." The average American is not interested in reading. Moreover, this article breathes a different spirit than the *Standard Bearer* does. As far as I am acquainted with the different spirits in America, the *Standard Bearer* is the only magazine that defends "the faith once delivered to the saints." Prof. Meeter points out the urgency of Christian literature, but as far as I can understand it, he failed to show the possibility. Towards the end of his article he mentions Christian teaches and writers. And then I have a question. What about it, if there are almost no Christian teachers and writers left? I don't know if Prof. Meeter will call this a silly question. I shall try very briefly to defend my question. In Luke 12: 56 Christ tells us to discern the signs of the times. And I am convinced that the times in which we live are characterized by this: "upon us are the ends of the ages come." This is to be proved by many instances from the Bible. I will mention only one. The white horse of Revelation 6 has almost finished his course. For instance, Western Europe, once the cradle of Christianity, is falling back into "modern heathendom." In the Netherlands there is apostasy like the swift running down of waters: Hepp — Berkouwer — Kuitert.

Gog and Magog are coming up from the four corners of the earth. I know that the Lord figures with other dimensions than we small earthly creatures. Look at the so-called church world in this country. And then I read my Bible again: II Thess. 2: 3; II Timothy 3: 1-5; I Cor. 10: 7. Look at the development of science.

We have the privilege (?) to live in the "Calvinistic"

Zeeland area. We have 5 daughters; and the oldest one (21 years old) said to me, "Are there any Christian boys left?" Where, today, are the Enochs, Jude 14, 15. I know it, the Dutch says it so beautifully:

Gods verborgen omgang vinden
Zielen, daar Zijn vrees in woont;
't Heilgeheim wordt aan Zijn vrienden,
Naar Zijn vreeverbond getoond.

(A Dutch versification of Psalm 25: 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant.")

The Protestant Reformed pulpit is almost the only place where is preached yet "the faith once delivered to the saints." The Protestant Reformed Seminary is almost a reproach to the so-called church world. I always maintain that, spiritually speaking, by the grace of God the teachers in our Prot. Ref. Seminary are higher than any church leaders from their shoulders and upward.

Election is the heart of the Reformed doctrine. The Lord brought us back to the place where we hear not only the message of the gospel (Berkouwer), but much more the revelation of God in Christ, that Scripture is the written record of the Word of God, not the Word of God in its total conception.

In conclusion, I don't know if Prof. Meeter will endorse this all. I enjoy the *Standard Bearer*; but Prof. Meeter's article brings back to me memories from the old country. I always maintain that the church is only as strong as their homes are. I always pray that Jehovah will bless our feeble efforts to instruct our children in the aforesaid doctrine. The Bible is an endless source. History always repeats itself. That Word of God was already foolishness for the Greek, and is today still a stumblingblock for many in the so-called church world.

And it is my prayer and I hope the prayer of many that the teachers of the Prot. Ref. Seminary can write what Paul wrote to Timothy in I Tim. 1: 12-14. Then you will hear the Word of the Lord, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

With Christian greetings,
Herman Woltjer

BOOK REVIEWS

Prof. H. Hanko

SPURGEON, HEIR OF THE PURITANS, by Ernest W. Bacon; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968; 184 pp., \$3.95.

The author believed it was time to write a new biography of C. H. Spurgeon in order to show how Spurgeon carried on the Puritan tradition. His purpose is to demonstrate that a return to Puritan theology as exemplified by the "Prince of Preachers" would cure most, if not all, of the ecclesiastical ills afflicting our modern age.

The book is written by an admirer of Spurgeon. This is also its weakness. There was no evil which Spurgeon could do. All is sunshine and light. The "Prince of the Preachers" comes through in the book as a sinless saint. The adoration of Spurgeon becomes almost abject and degenerates into pathos at times.

But the book is valuable in that it shows the connection between Spurgeon and earlier Puritan thinkers. I have found its chief value in the presentation of Spurgeon's theology. While the author has no criticism of this theology, it becomes apparent that Spurgeon was only mildly Calvinistic and surely not Reformed. In fact, it becomes increasingly apparent that Spurgeon did not hold to the strict Calvinism of the earlier Puritans — although the author denies this.

That he was a tremendously influential preacher cannot be denied. That he adapted his theology to popular demand on occasion is equally evident. The author repeatedly classifies him as an "evangelical". This is probably correct in the sense in which that term is used today.

It is a book easy to read. It is interesting. It is a worthwhile addition to home and Church libraries.

ECUMENISM AND THE REFORMED CHURCH, By Herman Harmelink III; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968; 112 pp., \$2.45 (paper).

This book is the first volume in a projected series of books dealing with the history of the Reformed Church in America. It is written by the chairman of the General

Synod's Committee of Interchurch Relations. It is intended to treat the history of the ecumenical endeavors of the Reformed Church from the beginning of her history to today. Its purpose is adequately summed up in the foreword:

This history is offered with the hope that as people grow in an awareness of the interplay of events that have shaped their past, they may be more able to understand the interplay of events in which they must make their own decisions.

The author is an unabashed proponent of Church union — apparently on any kind of Church union. He is pleased with the union of the Reformed Church in foreign missions. He rejoices in the membership of the Reformed Church in the National Council of Churches. He bemoans the many times the Reformed Church has stayed away from organic union with other Church bodies in this country. The failure of the Church to enter into organic union with other denominations is, in the author's opinion, to be explained by the fact that in the 18th Century there was a determination on the part of the Church to preserve her Dutch language and heritage. A century later, when the Church was at last ready to take an active role in American life a new wave of Dutch immigration filled the Church with people who were suspicious of any kind of union because of the experiences of secession in the Netherlands. These people mostly settled in the Mid-west and were strong enough to outvote the more ecumenically minded East. Harmelink finds this Western conservatism appalling. He hopes that the present merger proposals will go through; should they fail, he fears the end of the Reformed Church is near.

Members of the Christian Reformed Church will probably not like his curt and sometimes disdainful treatment of them in the places they are mentioned.

Recommended to those who are interested in the ecumenical movement especially in the Reformed Church.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet on March 5, 1969, in South Holland, Illinois, Lord willing, at 9:00 A.M. Material for the Agenda must be sent to the Stated Clerk thirty days before Classis convenes. Delegates in need of lodging should inform the clerk of the South Holland consistory of their need.

Rev. David Engelsma
Stated Clerk
Classis West

ANNIVERSARY NOTICE

On January 27, our beloved parents,

MR. & MRS. JOHN BLANKESPOOR
celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our Covenant Father for the blessings bestowed upon us and them these many years. As they have in the past, may they in the rest of their days experience that: "The Lord is good: His mercy is everlasting: and His truth endureth to all generations." Psalm 100:5

Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Blankespoor
Mr. and Mrs. James Blankespoor
Five grandchildren
Thirteen great-grand children.

News From Our Churches

Jan. 14, 1969

Upon the request of the Mission Committee Southwest's Consistory has granted their pastor, Rev. Lubbers, permission to labor for six Sundays in Pella, Iowa. Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers' plan was to be gone from home from Jan. 10 to Feb. 18. Rev. Veldman, of Hudsonville, was obtained to teach the two mid-week catechism classes on Tuesday evening and the Elders were assigned the Saturday classes.

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Hudsonville's Mr. and Mrs. Society scheduled an unusual after recess activity for their January 1 meeting — a tour of the new Covenant Chr. High School.

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The Deacons of Hope Church remembered the Hoeksema Memorial Library of our Seminary with an offering received at their New Years Day Service.

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Here are the names of some of the clerks of consistories appointed for 1969: Southwest — Jay Boone, 1319 Den Hertog S.W. 49509; Southeast — R. Teitsma, 1659 Shangrai La Dr. S.E. 49508; First — J. M. Faber, 1123 Cooper S.E. 49507.

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A very interesting report from Mr. H. Vander Wal, business manager of the *Standard Bearer*, came to our desk this week and we would like to share with you some facts regarding the mailing list which we found to be an eye-opener. The bulk of the mailing goes to our own people in Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, North and South Dakotas, Minnesota, Washington and California, but our magazine also finds its way to thirty-one other States, including Hawaii. New Jersey, alone, receives 18 copies each mailing. The amazing thing is that it reaches 14 Foreign Countries; 23 copies to Jamaica, 13 to the Netherlands, 19 to Canada, 7 to England, 3 to India, 2 to New Zealand, 2 to Japan and single copies to readers in Brazil, Germany, Hungary, Switzerland, Tasmania, Nigeria, and South Africa. One wonders how these folks came into contact with our publication and then deemed it worthwhile to subscribe to it. The Jamaican contact we all understand, but wouldn't it be interesting to hear the answers to those questions directly from the other 53 Foreign readers? This page would be an excellent spot for some news from Hungary or Tasmania or any of the other far-off mailings. We wonder how soon we could expect a response on this Feb. 1st issue.

Here is a "first" found in Hudsonville's bulletin: "The newly organized Covenant Christian Booster Club will hold its first meeting in the High School on Thursday, Jan. 1 at 8 P.M. All men interested in becoming members and giving the athletic department a boost are invited to attend."

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Department of confusion: We have three churches in our denomination which go by the name, "Hope Prot. Ref. Church." The first one, so named in 1925, has a Grand Rapids mailing address, but is not in Grand Rapids; the second is in Redlands, Calif. and the last one is in Isabel, S. Dakota. To avoid confusion this page calls the Grand Rapids one "Hope Church", and identifies the other two by the name of their city. Clear?

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A Memphis, Tenn. minister wrote Rev. Woudenberg that his tapes are helping him in his ministry, and added, "The sermons on 'Human Depravity' and 'The punishment on Sin' are two of the best I've ever heard." And a lady in Pompano Beach, Fla. writes to encourage Rev. Woudenberg to continue sending her his pamphlets. Those travel from the northwest corner of our land to the southeast corner!

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Lynden's Old and New Year services had to be cancelled because of the weather (as were many others) and the installation of office bearers had to be rescheduled for Jan. 5.

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The Young People's Federation Board sponsored a toboggan party in the Grand Rapids area. Refreshments and games were furnished by the Board but the toboggans had to be furnished by the boarders.

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Southwest's Young People's Society, in their first meeting of the year, featured an after-recess paper by Karen Kuiper on, "What is the difference between pastors and evangelists, and why was the latter omitted in the Protestant Reformed Churches?" No doubt that any of our pastors would claim to be one of that class of teachers in the early church next in rank after apostles and prophets, but each one of our pastors would insist that he is an evangelist, a preacher of Good Tidings.

..... see you in church

J.M.F.