

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE

Meditation

The Righteous Scarcely Saved

Editorial

The OPC and the “Free Offer”

Christian Liberty

(see: The Strength of Youth)

Eschatology – In The Old Testament

(see: Contending for the Faith)

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Meditation

The Righteous Scarcely Saved

Rev. M. Schipper

"And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

I Peter 4:18.

It should be evident to the most casual reader of this text that the apostle has said more, to which these words are most intimately connected, and without reference to which the above text cannot be properly understood.

The text is closely connected to the preceding verse and is a further explanation of it. There the apostle writes: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

Here the apostle emphasizes three things: first, the time of the coming judgment is at hand. The judgment that is imminent is not the judgment we expect at the end of this age, but it undoubtedly refers to a time of

intense persecution which was about to break over the church, and which would try men's hearts and test the faith of the members of the church. Of this the apostle speaks in verses 12 and 13, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." And, again, in verse 16, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." Secondly, it is also to be noticed, that the apostle stresses the point that the judgment begins at the house of God. This is the church of God in the world. It is quite natural that the judgment of persecution

should begin with the followers of Christ. Historically the church of Christ has always borne the brunt of persecution; for the church is the manifestation of light in the midst of darkness, and darkness always militates against the light. Thirdly, the apostle emphasizes that the unbelievers shall melt away in this judgment. There is also a judgment for them that has its end in the destruction of the unrepentant and unbelieving.

Indeed, if the righteous scarcely be saved, there is no hope for the ungodly and sinner!

Perhaps the apostle had in mind the Word of God in Proverbs 11:31 when he penned our text: "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." Here also the righteous go not unnoticed in this life. They have their reward. But it is just as true that the ungodly shall swiftly be recompensed.

The righteous scarcely saved!

Notice, first of all, that though the righteous are scarcely saved, they nevertheless are surely saved!

We must not be misled by the interpretation of some who would find in our text a ground for their contention that it is possible for the righteous to be lost. They explain our passage in such a way that God is said to provide the prize for all. Accordingly, there are many who set their feet on the path to run for the prize. But alas, the majority fail ultimately to reach the crown. God, as it were, opens wide the gate of the eternal city for all to enter. He stands with open arms beckoning all to choose the divinely prescribed way to righteousness and life. O, it is admitted that you will always find some who utterly disdain this glorious way, and who despise these eternal values to their own destruction. But in spite of this there are many who strive earnestly for the goal and the prize. But through temptation by the devil and the world, they are side-tracked, and fail to reach the proffered prize. Again, there are others who do not possess enough of the grace of patience, who, when trials and troubles arise, lose heart and fall by the wayside. So the righteous are scarcely saved, which means that only few there are who ever obtain eternal salvation.

If this were true, salvation would indeed be a precarious thing. No one, not even the righteous can with certainty know whether he will be finally saved. It is much like the hymn goes: Almost — but lost!

Such an interpretation militates against all that Scripture teaches, and contradicts the experience of every sincere child of God. If this interpretation were true, then all true believers in our Lord Jesus Christ would have to conclude that they are yet in their sins, and of all men most miserable.

Nay, all Scripture declares in no uncertain terms that the salvation of the righteous is very sure. It is as sure as God is the living God. Listen to Paul in Romans 8, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life,

nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And hear what Peter says in I Peter 1, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." According to this, not only is our salvation sure, but we may also be sure of our salvation. This is the tone of all Scripture, not only in the New Testament, but also in the Old. The psalmist in Psalm 73 found it hard to understand this, until he went into the house of God. Then his eyes were opened, and he saw not only the end of the wicked, but also his own end. The Lord would guide him now by his counsel, and afterwards take him to glory.

The surety of the salvation of the righteous rests also upon other considerations, based upon the Word of God. Upon the basic truth of eternal and sovereign election. Concerning this truth Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," John 6:37. Again He said, "My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of hand . . ." John 10:27-30. Moreover, with this basic truth which certifies the salvation of the righteous and is a fruit of it, we have the fact that we have been purchased by the blood of Christ. He laid down His life for His sheep, not for goats. Through that blood the elect become righteous. It is atoning blood. It delivers us from the wrath of God. It gives us the right to eternal life. For His people Jesus is Jehovah, Who saves. With their righteousness they have the adoption unto sons, and the right to an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away. And for that inheritance they are kept by the power of God through faith.

Indeed, the righteous are surely saved!

Yet the text says, they are scarcely saved! What does the Word of God here mean by the righteous? And what is to be understood by the fact that they are scarcely saved?

The righteous are they who are upright in life and walk. They conform to the perfect will of God which always judges them. Righteousness is that grace of God in them according to which they are in harmony with His holy will in all their thinking, willing, and acting, and that, not according to their own judgment, but according to God's judgment which is constantly over them.

You ask: Where shall they be found who possess this

righteousness? Do not the Scriptures declare there is none righteous, no, not one? Is it not rather true that all men are totally depraved, and altogether filthy and corrupt?

And the Word of God answers, indeed, in all the race of Adam there can be found no one who is righteous in himself, except One, our Lord Jesus Christ. He conformed perfectly to the will of God. He declared it was His meat and drink to do the will of God. And this holy and righteous Child Jesus God sent into the world to make all whom the Father had given Him righteous as He is righteous. He Who knew no sin was made sin for us, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He was delivered for our offenses and raised because of our justification.

So, and not otherwise, there are righteous! Surely, they are never righteous because of any work which they accomplish. In themselves they are hopelessly lost and unrighteous. But in and through Christ they are made righteous. The cross of Calvary is witness to the fact that God dipped the pen of His good pleasure in the fountain of Jesus' blood, and cancelled all our debt, and writes the sentence of our perfect righteousness in Him. The opened grave in Joseph's garden is God's testimony to us that our sin and guilt is vanquished, and the seal of our righteousness before God. All our righteousness is in Christ. Those in Christ are the righteous indeed!

Who are scarcely saved!

That the righteous are scarcely saved means that they are saved with great difficulty. The road to their perfect salvation is narrow, and beset with much tribulation. They are surrounded constantly by many enemies, the greatest of whom they carry under their own waist-coat, their own sinful flesh, their old man of sin within them. The good they would do, they do not do; and the evil they would not, they do. Their flesh wars against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Because of this they often must cry out with the apostle: "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this flesh?" They are righteous only in principle. Then, too, along the way to salvation they meet many enemies that seek to pull them back and make it difficult for them to attain to their final salvation. The devil battles hard against them. The world tries to engulf them, and ensnare them to

destruction.

Would you see clearly how the righteous are scarcely saved, you need only to look to our Saviour, the Captain of our salvation. O, how He battled His way to salvation! In His human nature He nearly succumbed in the garden of Gethsemane, where His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. On the cross of Calvary He exclaims: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Think also of the persecution and trial He endured at the hands of wicked men. There on the cross it appeared that not He, but the devil and the world of darkness was victor. Yet He knew that He, the Righteous, was saved. On the third day He arose, victor over sin, death, and grace. And in His ascension He entered into the glory of perfect salvation.

As He was, so are the righteous in this world, only with this difference: while He, the righteous, was the sinless One made sinner; they, the righteous, are sinners who become righteous through His grace.

Indeed, the righteous are scarcely saved; yet by grace, they overcome, and at last enter into the glory of their salvation. They are saved in glory!

This is implied also in the rest of the text!

There the question is asked: "Where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

The *ungodly* are the impious, wholly destitute of reverential awe towards God and things holy. The *sinner* is the same impious one who always misses the mark of God's law. Together they are the impenitent wicked who go on in their way of sin and rebellion to destruction. It is not, nor shall it ever be well with them. Let them know that their day cometh, when they shall be consumed as in an oven. The wrath of God abideth upon them, even though they appear to prosper in the world. The children of darkness who persecute the righteous shall surely fall into the pit they have digged.

But the righteous, who are saved with great difficulty, shall enter at last into heavenly glory!

They that touch the righteous to hurt them, touch the apple of God's eye. The righteous Lord Who delivers the righteous, will destroy all their adversaries, while He saves His people through the way of difficulty.

Here is the unspeakable wisdom and grace of God!

Gift idea? Give good books. Give RFPA publications!

Editorials

Editor's Notes

Apology. In the August issue of our magazine there appeared a contribution consisting of a rhymed version of the Ten Commandments. It was unsigned. Not only is it against our policy to place unsigned contributions, but it is also rude to the contributor. And I did not intend to be rude. I had thought that the copy submitted to our printer was clear; but inadvertently a signed letter which accompanied this little contribution was omitted from the *Standard Bearer*. The contributor was brother Thys Feenstra of Redlands, California. And in his letter he indicated that he sent this in with the idea that it might be nice for some parents to teach their children. *Peccavi*, brother Feenstra!

* * *

Call for Help. We repeat the request to our readers

to send in any pictures or other memorabilia connected with the history of our *Standard Bearer*, for use in connection with the observance of our fiftieth anniversary. If you *think* something might be of interest, but are not certain, please send it in and let the committee judge. Send all materials to: Prof. H. Hanko, 4665 Ju-Le-On Dr., S.W., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49504.

* * *

Bound Volumes. This is the last issue of Volume 49. In this issue you will find an index of the entire volume. This index is prepared, of course, for those who save their *Standard Bearers*, and especially for those who subscribe to the bound volumes. If you should be interested in obtaining Bound Volume No. 49, or earlier ones, contact our business office. You will find information on this in the masthead.

The OPC and the "Free Offer" (4)

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema
Contrary to the Confessions
(continued)

We now continue to demonstrate from the Westminster Confession of Faith that the offer-theology set forth in the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet, *The Free Offer of the Gospel*, is inconsistent with our Reformed confessions.

In Chapter III, 5 we read (and again, I insert the references to the Scriptural proofs, which the Confession quotes in full):

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory (Eph. 1:4, 9, 11; Rom. 8:30; II Tim. 1:9; I Thess. 5:9), out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto (Rom. 9:11, 13, 16; Eph. 1:4, 9): and all to the praise of His glorious grace (Eph. 1:6, 12).

This article teaches that God's grace and love were toward His elect in Christ from eternity. And, in the light of what this same Confession teaches concerning reprobation, it teaches that God's grace and love are for the elect *exclusively*. The Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet teaches that God is filled with lovingkindness toward the reprobate. It teaches a grace for all that is revealed in the gospel. And no amount of mental gymnastics can harmonize the two or even persuade a man that both positions are possible.

For note that in Chapter III, 7 the same Westminster Confession states the following:

The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice (Matt. 11:25, 26; Rom. 9:17, 18, 21, 22; II Tim. 2:19, 20; Jude, ver. 4; I Pet. 2:8).

Now let us notice, for the purposes of this discussion, that this article speaks infralapsarian language: for it speaks of the *passing by* of the reprobate. This only strengthens our argument, and it prevents anyone from claiming that the controversy about the offer is one of *supra* against *infra*. This has been claimed upon occasion in the past, as though basically *infra* is more sympathetic to the Arminian position than is *supra*. Anyone who claims this either does not understand infralapsarianism as over against Arminianism — and at the same time betrays little knowledge of the history of doctrine (it is the infralapsarian Canons of Dordrecht, after all, which controvert the Arminian heresy!) — or he is deliberately twisting the truth. No sound and consistent infralapsarian could possibly agree with the offer-theology of the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet.

Notice, secondly, that for all its *infra* language, this article emphasizes very clearly that reprobation is

sovereign and unconditional:

- 1) It speaks of God's good pleasure: God "was pleased . . ."
- 2) It speaks of the fact that God extendeth or withholdeth mercy "according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will."
- 3) It speaks of the fact that He reprobates "for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures."
- 4) And note very carefully that it speaks of the fact that God was pleased "to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin." Notice, please, that the phrase "for their sin" does not belong with the words "to ordain." That would be conditional reprobation: reprobation on the basis of foreseen sin. That is the Arminian position. And that is the only consistent position which the offer-theology can take with respect to reprobation. But the words "for their sin" belong with "dishonour and wrath." This also explains how the Confession can add at this point: "to the praise of His glorious justice."

Now the position of offer-theology is in direct contradiction of the above article of faith. The protagonists of this position may expostulate again and again that when they speak of the offer of the gospel, they are not referring to the decretive will of God, while at the same time they claim that they are not referring simply to "the bare preceptive will of God." This is a ruse by which no one — least of all, they themselves — can be convinced. The fact remains that they attribute to the will of God two totally contradictory desires:

1. God wills the damnation of the reprobate: He has ordained them to dishonour and wrath.
2. God has a real disposition of lovingkindness toward the reprobate, according to which He wills their salvation.

And it is impossible for any rational mind to hold both positions.

Next we call your attention to Chapter III, 6:

As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto (I Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:4, 5; Eph. 2:10; II Thess. 2:13). Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ (I Thess. 5:9, 10; Tit. 2:14), are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified (Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:5; II Thess. 2:13), and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation (I Pet. 1:5). Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only (John 17:9; Rom. 8:28-end; John 6:64, 65; John 10: 26; John 8:45; I John 2:19).

This article connects the whole of our salvation, both objective and subjective, with the decree of election. The foreordination of the elect includes not only their appointment unto glory but also "all the means thereunto." And these means include the work of Christ *for* us, that is, His redemption, and the work of Christ *in* us: calling, faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, and preservation. Notice, too, that there is a strict limitation in this article, in the form of an *exclusion*: "*Neither are any other* redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, *but the elect only.*" (emphasis added) This is worthy of special note. Sometimes it has been claimed that this element of *exclusiveness* is not found in the Westminster Confession. But this is obviously not correct.

But an article such as this presents insurmountable difficulties for the offer-theology. In the first place, if the redemption of Christ through the cross is for the elect only, it is evident that there was in God no desire to save all men and no disposition of lovingkindness toward all men when He gave His only begotten Son: for then He would certainly have redeemed them all, something which He did not do. In the second place, if Christ died and paid the price of redemption for the elect only, and for none other, then God has no salvation to offer the reprobate. The benefits of the cross were purchased only for the elect. How, then, can it be truthfully said — not only by the human preacher, but by God Himself — that He offers salvation to all and that He desires the salvation of all? Such an offer cannot possibly be *bonafide*! In the third place, what kind of God does the offer-theology presuppose? A God Who desires the salvation of all, but Who does not provide for their salvation? A God Who is able certainly to save whomsoever He desires to save, and Who claims that He desires the salvation of all and is filled with lovingkindness toward all, but Who nevertheless neither redeems, nor calls effectually, nor justifies, nor adopts, nor sanctifies, nor preserves? Among men anyone who would thus conduct himself would be called a cruel fraud and deceiver! And how much more is this true of such a God! Yet this is the God of the offer-theology!

This concludes our quotations from Chapter III of the Westminster Confession.

* * *

Note: In my previous editorial on this subject a mistake was made by the printer. On page 460, 2nd column, following the words, "In Chapter III, 3, 4, we read," the next two paragraphs should have been indented as a quotation from the Westminster Confession of Faith.

All Around Us

A Computerized Isaiah Deciding the Unthinkable

Prof. H. Hanko

A COMPUTERIZED ISAIAH

Higher critics have for a very long time insisted that the book of Isaiah was not written by one man, but by two or three. This idea has become rather generally accepted — even within Reformed circles. I recall an article several years ago in a Reformed periodical which defended this view. While it is not always admitted, the main difficulty for scholars is the prophecy of the last half of the book which predicts the return of the children of Judah under Cyrus, an event which did not take place until over a century after Isaiah prophesied of the event. The question is therefore one of prophecy itself. Did Isaiah predict, as the Word of the Lord, the return of the captives of Judah more than a hundred years before this event took place? The higher critics insist this was impossible and, doing so, deny prophecy. And this in turn involves a question concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures. It is a very old question.

The problem has recently been attacked with the assistance of computers. A recent article in *Newsweek* describes what was done.

Of all the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah is the most revered by Jews and Christians alike. The Book of Isaiah ranges prodigiously over the turbulent reigns of four Judaeen kings whom Isaiah served — with dizzying changes of role — as chastizer, comforter and remorseless lobbyist for social justice. For Christians, his verses on the Suffering Servant herald the coming of Christ.

The book of Isaiah is, in fact, so protean and so diverse that scholars have long wondered whether there were several Isaiahs. One problem is historic; the time span covered in the book is about 200 years. A second is literary; one segment is expansive, full of biographical detail about the author, while another segment is cryptic, in which the author never mentions his name. Now, sophisticated electronic gadgetry has been enlisted to try to solve the Isaiah enigma. Yehuda Radday, an Israeli professor of Bible studies at Haifa's Technion Institute, has fed the Book of Isaiah into a computer.

While the prophet's shifts in subject matter might simply reflect a natural evolution of ideas, Radday reasoned, Isaiah's use of language should remain constant. So Radday analyzed the linguistic properties of the book's 18,000 words. To measure stylistic patterns, he selected 29 criteria such as sentence length, syllabification, vocabulary richness

and eccentricity. He chose as Isaiah's norm the first twelve chapters, commonly accepted as of unitary authorship, and programmed two computers to compare these with the rest of the book.

Check: Radday was convinced that the results would confirm his own belief in "one and only one" Isaiah. But the Elliot 503 and IBM 360/50 computers reported that no fewer than three authors had been at work on the complex verses of Isaiah. Astonished, Radday sent his material to West German physicist Dieter Wickmann for a second computer check. Wickmann estimated the probability that the latter half was written by the author of the first half at 1 in 100,000.

Despite his own statistical evidence, Radday remains skeptical. "I would not like to suggest," he says, "that the problem of Isaiah has been solved. My results are only probabilities." But for all his scholarly caution, the 59-year-old professor clearly found his methodology promising. Next on his list for computer analysis is the Book of Judges.

This reminds me of a story which appeared in the public press some years ago. There was a man in England who tried the same thing as Prof. Radday; only he concentrated his attention on the epistles of Paul. After careful and lengthy analysis with the aid of computers, he concluded that only a very few (I have forgotten the exact figure) of the epistles traditionally ascribed to Paul were actually authored by him. The difficulty was that this Englishman was a very prolific writer. Some wag took all his writings and, using the same formulae as the Englishman, subjected this Englishman's writings to computer analysis. The results were that the Englishman actually wrote only a small fraction of what he had claimed to write, and there were easily detectable, by computer analysis, at least four or five different authors who had a part in the writings of this man. So much for computer analysis.

But there is a more serious side to this matter. To subject any part of Scripture to computer analysis with the purpose of learning authorship is to deny the divine authorship of Scripture. Granting that the Lord God, in His inscrutable wisdom, used men to give us the Holy Scriptures, it nevertheless remains a fact that such futile exercises as described above are, in effect, subjecting God Himself to the analysis of a computer. This is evil.

DECIDING THE UNTHINKABLE

The apostle Paul writes to the Church at Ephesus warning them about the evils in the world and admonishing the Christians at Ephesus to flee these sins. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." Ephesians 5:11,12.

One has the strong impression that this observation of the apostle has had very little effect in recent years in the Church of Christ. Paul observes that it is a shame even to speak of the wicked things done by the ungodly. People not only speak of them today; ecclesiastical assemblies discuss them and make decisions about them. And, even worse, ecclesiastical assemblies pass decisions which more or less approve of these very things.

I refer, of course, to the recent decisions of the Christian Reformed Church on homosexuality. One dislikes writing about these things. It would be better not to mention them. The sin is too great, too monstrous, too horrible even to discuss. This is why there is something unutterably sad and hopeless about the fact that the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church even spent time discussing the matter. Even apart from the fact that a decision was taken, apart from the question of what the decision was, even if the whole matter had been totally condemned by the Synod, there is something hopeless about the mere presence of such a question on an ecclesiastical assembly. If the Churches have declined spiritually to such an extent that such a question can even come up and be seriously entertained, then there is something very hopeless about the ecclesiastical situation.

We do not intend to discuss that decision in this article. It is lengthy and involved; the matter is too clear to warrant extended discussion — after all, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for exactly this sin. But we do want to call attention to a basic presupposition in the whole chain of argument which is of wider application than this decision, but which is spiritually and ethically evil.

The decision has created no little stir in the Christian Reformed Church, as well it should. Various meetings have been held, at least in the Grand Rapids area, as some attempted to explain to the people of the Church the meaning and correctness of the decision — as well they might. There has been some misunderstanding about the whole matter, I presume. Some have said that the Synod approved of homosexual acts; they did not do this. But even though it is true that this was not done, nevertheless, the decision is so wrong that one wonders how it is possible for a Reformed body to come to such a decision — and that by an overwhelming majority vote.

To understand the position which Synod took, one must understand that Synod made a distinction

between "homosexual," "homosexuality," and "homosexualism." The first term refers to a person with homosexual "tendencies" or "inclinations," though he need not necessarily commit the act. The second term describes the condition of a man who has homosexual tendencies. The third designates the act itself. The third term therefore is a reference to the overt sin. This was condemned by Synod.

However, Synod took the position, upon the advice of the study committee that a man or woman may be a homosexual by reasons of birth or environmental influences. The pertinent paragraph reads: "As we have seen in the earlier part of this report, we have learned from the sciences that homosexuality often is a condition which is rooted deeply in biological and psychological aberrations that create a disorder for which the individual can be held only partly responsible, if at all."

If this means anything at all, then the following conclusions must be drawn from this statement: 1) The sciences are regulatory in this matter even when they contradict the Scriptures. The Synod was prepared to accept the findings of science rather than the clear and unequivocal statements of the Word of God. 2) The condition of homosexuality is found in some because of biological and/or psychological aberrations. That is, a person is born this way, or he becomes this way through adverse psychological influences. This is what science tells us. 3) This condition is not therefore rooted in a sinful nature; it is not itself sin; it has nothing to do with sin or total depravity. It is biological or psychological aberration. 4) A person is not responsible therefore, for being this way (or perhaps, only minimally responsible). It is a twist of fate, a matter of the genes, something he cannot help, something for which he need not give account, a cross to be borne, a burden to carry.

It is no wonder then that Synod concluded that such a person, as long as he does not commit the act, is to be accepted into the Church, is to be treated with love and compassion, is to have the sympathy and understanding of the body of the saints, and is even to be allowed to hold office. "By the same token, churches should recognize that their homosexual members are fellow-servants of Christ who are to be given opportunity to render within the offices and structures of the congregation the same service that is expected from heterosexuals."

We have no time nor inclination to deal with this sophistry in detail. But a few observations are nevertheless important. At the very heart of the matter lies the whole question of sin. Is sin *sin*? There is altogether too much denial of this in our day. One can find this same approach in practically every mental institution. When a person, so it is said, commits adultery, robs a bank, murders his father, this is not sin; it is biological or psychological aberration. The

man does not need the admonitions of Scripture to repent; he needs psychiatric care. This whole theory is now carried over into the area of homosexuality. But the evil of it all is that sin is denied. More and more there is no such thing as sin. There is sickness; there is aberration; there is abnormality; but there is no sin. And, of course, if there is no sin, there is no need for repentance and conversion. And, worst of all, there is no need of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ died, not to save abnormal people and those with biological aberrations (although salvation is certainly from all the afflictions which flow from sin); Christ died to save sinners. And the cross is for those who turn from sin and flee for forgiveness to the blood of atonement. How comfortable for the homosexual: he needs not repentance and conversion; he needs medical treatment. And yet how cruel: he needs not the cross; he needs the doctor of psychiatry.

Can a woman be a whore by birth and never have committed fornication? Can a murderer be such from birth and never have hated in his heart and killed? Can a fornicator be made into one by his environment and never have lusted or committed fornication. Can a drunkard be such because of biological aberrations and never have tasted a drop of liquor? What kind of sophistry is this?

Scripture presents quite another picture. Whatever terms one may want to use, homosexuality is a terrible sin. It is the kind of sin which apparently stands in a class by itself in the Scriptures. It is one of those sins which it is a shame to speak of — also for ecclesiastical assemblies. It is a sin which brings fire and brimstone from heaven upon those who do such things. It is a sin which Paul in Romans 1 describes as being a special kind of judgment of God upon those

who change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like unto corruptible man. But it is a sin which flows forth from a nature depraved and corrupted. And it is the kind of sin which results not from biological and psychological aberrations (science may know about these, but Scripture does not), but from inordinate lust. The lust is already the sin — long before the act is committed. The depraved nature of man is capable of terrible crimes — even against nature. And when a person gives himself over to these sins, he becomes a slave of them.

This is the point that needs remembering. Sin is a monster. It is a most cruel and heartless tyrant. It has power beyond our comprehension. When a person sets himself on the pathway of drunkenness, he willingly and willfully gives himself over to sin. When a person lets lust enter his life, he becomes a slave of lust. When a person turns to unnatural lust, he invites the tyrant of lust to rule in his life. And when this happens, then these sins become so completely masters that change is impossible. The chains are too tightly bound. The shackles are too heavy. The tyranny of sin is too complete. A man invites this upon himself when he enters sin's service. He ceases to be anything else but a wretched slave of his sins, and from them there is no escape.

No escape, that is, except through the power of the cross. For grace is greater than all sin. Not sympathy is required and loving acceptance of the sinner, all the while excusing his perversity; but grace and the power of the Lord Christ. Not psychiatric treatment and excusing of sin, but conversion and repentance. For the blood of the cross cleanses from all sin.

Synod turned away from the cross and turned the sinner from the cross. How terrible!

Question Box

Going Into The Streets And Lanes Of The City Luke 14:21

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Question

From a Michigan reader I received a letter in which a brother poses a problem of interpretation which arose in the context of a discussion about Key '73 evangelism. But this reader asks me to formulate his question. Evidently the language of Luke 14:21-23 was quoted in support of mass evangelism and even of door to door evangelism. And my correspondent felt that this was not the idea of the parable in Luke 14, but was unable at the moment to furnish the proper

interpretation. So the question comes down to this: does this passage teach that we are literally to go out into the streets and lanes of the city and into the highways and hedges of the country to evangelize? And if not, what is the significance of the passage?

Reply

First of all, a word or two about the connection of this question with Key '73 evangelism. For one thing, our objection is not to *evangelism* as such. True evangelization is the calling and duty of the church of

Jesus Christ in the midst of the world. The denial of this would be tantamount to a denial of the very nature of the church. Moreover, the church is called to proclaim the gospel *promiscuously*, that is, to all, elect and reprobate, to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel. However: 1) The gospel which must be proclaimed must be the gospel of the Scriptures, not the pseudo-gospel of Arminianism, of offer-theology, and of crusade-evangelism that is so widespread today. The church is called to proclaim promiscuously a particular promise. 2) As has been so admirably explained by Rev. Engelsma in his recent lecture on Key '73, the ecumenistic evangelism of Key '73 is not true evangelism. 3) It is not the calling of Tom, Dick, and Harry to be little evangelists. The church is called to proclaim the gospel, and does so through her God-ordained and officially called ministers.

In the second place, a word about the interpretation of parables. Not only must one be careful to discern the particular point of comparison and lesson in each parable; but one must also guard against interpreting the figurative language of the parables literally, or even mixing elements of the literal and of the figurative. Thus, for example, everyone recognizes (from the Lord's own interpretation) that the Parable of the Sower is not about literal farmers, literal seed, literal soil, but about the preaching of the Word and about the different kinds of hearers of the Word. So also here, in the Parable of the Great Supper, everyone recognizes that this parable does not intend to teach about a literal, earthly supper and about being bidden to that supper. All recognize that it has to do with the call of the gospel to the "feast" of the kingdom of heaven. But then, to be consistent, one must not switch to a literal interpretation of the streets and lanes of the city, the highways and hedges of the country, nor even the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind that are mentioned in this context. To press these details literally and to their extreme will only result in reducing the whole matter of preaching the gospel to absurdity. I would certainly not advise anyone to preach the gospel on Interstate 80 or Interstate 96 where the cars go whizzing past at 70 or 80 miles per hour. Nor would I advise one to preach the gospel literally in the hedges — not if he expects to have hearers. This is simply not the point of the whole parable.

In the third place, a few words concerning the significance of the Parable of the Great Supper:

1) In general, this parable is by no means the same as the Parable of the Wedding Feast of the King's Son in Matthew 22. The reader may compare the two. And indeed, the two have certain likenesses, and in certain respects are also complementary. But they are not to be identified.

2) The supper prepared is the fulness of blessing in the kingdom of God in the new dispensation. It denotes the supreme blessing of the covenant-fellowship of God, together with all the blessings implied in that fellowship: the forgiveness of sin, righteousness, adoption unto children and heirs, sanctification, the nourishment of faith and hope and love — all the spiritual blessings of the kingdom. These had been promised all through the old dispensation, but they were not "ready." Now, in the new dispensation, they are ready, prepared by God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ready in Christ.

3) To come to the supper implies that we long for God's fellowship and love and favor, desire it and seek it above anything else — as is clearly implied in the contrast of those in the parable who "all with one consent began to make excuse" and who placed their own things before the importance of coming to the supper. And it implies, therefore, that we are sorry for sin and that we hunger and thirst after righteousness, that we sincerely put away from us every evil way, every sin that we love, all of self and of our own interests, that we seek our all in the finished work of God in Christ.

4) Notice, further, that the servant is sent out to call them that were bidden. Here you have the call of the gospel, the external preaching of the gospel. And this call comes, first of all, to them "that were bidden," that is, in general, to the Jews, who had the Word of God and to whom the gospel must always be preached first. Bear in mind, in this connection, that historically the point of the parable is that of the new dispensation, when "all things are ready." Note, too, that this call cannot be declined without great loss: "none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." But note also that in the light of Scripture this call is more than a mere, kind invitation. It is a *command*, implying a solemn obligation; and to refuse this *command* brings the penalty of death. This is sharply emphasized in the Parable of the Wedding Feast of the King's Son in Matthew 22. And note, further, that this is very definitely the outward call of the gospel — the call which reaches many, while few are chosen. For it is plain from this parable, too, that not all who are called actually come. (Again, compare the parable in Matthew 22, where the Lord specifically concludes with the words, "For many are called, but few are chosen.")

5) A three-fold distinction is made among them that are called to the supper. In the first place, there are those who were bidden. This denotes, we said, the Jews, in general. But more particularly it points to the chief priests and elders, the scribes and Pharisees, who considered themselves to be the elite in Israel, in distinction from the common people, who "knew not the law" and who were "accursed." They were in their

own estimation the ones who were called to the feast and who had a proper place at the supper. They were the children of Abraham, who claimed knowledge of and loyalty to Moses — in their own estimation. But when Jesus came in the fulness of time, and when the supper was all prepared, they “all with one consent began to make excuse.” And, by the way, do not overlook the fact that the Lord Jesus spoke this parable at “the house of one of the Chief Pharisees” and “on the sabbath day” when they “watched him” — evidently to see whether He would heal on the sabbath day (vss. 1-5) — and when they were all concerned about choosing out the chief places at this dinner! In the second place, there are those who are called by the servant from the streets and lanes of the city: the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. These represent, in distinction from the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” of the *city*, the theocracy. They are the spiritually sick, the spiritually needy, the despised and the outcast, who should enter into the kingdom of God rather than the “wise and prudent.” And, in the third place, there are those who are called from the highways and hedges, outside the city. These denote the Gentiles, the heathen, who in historical

order are called last.

6) Finally, note the purpose and effect. On the one hand, none of those that were bidden shall taste of the supper. On the other hand, the house must be filled with guests. This certainly does not denote, in the light of the rest of Scripture, that the filling of God’s house is haphazard or that God first intended that certain men should be guests and that when this failed, by “hook or crook” somehow He would fill His house with guests at the supper of the kingdom. But it emphasizes that the Lord surely fulfills His purpose of filling His house through the preaching of the gospel — all, of course, according to His purpose of election, which certainly cannot be frustrated by those who disobey the gospel. And, in the second place, it emphasizes that to reject the call of the gospel is indeed a heinous sin, which incurs the fierce anger of God and which can only have the dire result that those who reject it have no place at the supper of the kingdom, no part in the fellowship of God’s covenant and in the blessings of the feast that is ready.

I hope that I have shed some light on my questioner’s problem; and if I have missed his point, he is welcome to call again.

The Strength of Youth

Christian Liberty (1)

Rev. J. Kortering

This subject takes us into an arena.

This arena is not for spectator sports, rather for battle.

It’s not the nicest place to be. It spells out many harsh words between young people and their parents. It has caused division among brothers and sisters in the household of faith. Why? Because in the exercise of Christian liberty one Christian says *no*, and sometimes another says *yes*; and there is supposed to be a place for both within the church. And that on moral judgments.

In Bible times it assumed the form of circumcision or non-circumcision, of meats offered to idols — to eat or not to eat. Today it assumes the form of dress codes, athletics, television, contemporary music, smoking, drinking, and what not. It always seems as if young people are on one side of the confrontation.

LIBERTY

It is paradoxical that such a beautiful word has to be viewed against such a hostile background. Liberty! The word itself tingles with openness, with abandon. And so it should be, if viewed properly.

We are speaking of *Christian* liberty. This must be considered in contrast with the wild abandon of licentiousness which marks so much of the foolishness of modern youth. The drug cult, the sexual revolution, Woodstock and its byproducts, detail for us the worst form of bondage. Truly, man is born in sin and as such brings himself into greater expression of sin and death. Here is how God describes it, “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death,” Rom. 6:20,21. Do not confuse Christian liberty with licentiousness, lawlessness.

Rather, liberty for a Christian is to be conformed to the law of God and to rejoice in that law. Let’s listen to Scripture for a moment. “And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts,” Ps. 119:45. Here the Psalmist joins liberty and law. Further, “Jesus answered them, Verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed,”

John 8:34-36. Here we learn the added fact that liberty is in Christ, the Son of God; He must free us. That from which He frees us is pointed out in Rom. 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The content of the liberty is given to us in II Cor. 17:18, "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This then is the liberty of the Christian. We pass from a servant of sin unto one who acknowledges the glory of God.

THE SCOPE OF LIBERTY

So far there is no controversy.

Inevitably, we have to face the question how far does this liberty extend. To phrase it differently, in how far does the law of God bind the conscience of every child of God? What should be considered as dictated by the law of God (including all the moral teachings of the entire Scripture), and what should be included in liberty of conscience to be determined by each child of God? We must allow for both areas of Christian judgment.

We face two real difficulties here.

On the one hand, we recognize that the Scriptures form moral judgments which must be obeyed. We usually consider them to be summarized in the ten commandments, as Christ did in Matt. 22:37-39. The Bible indicates that certain moral conduct is wrong and exhorts us to proper behavior. These must be upheld by every Christian, and within this area there is no room for equivocation. These include such things forbidden as drunkenness, fornication, murder, stealing, etc. We are exhorted to moral purity, to assist our neighbor, etc.

Besides this area, there is also indicated in the Scripture certain things which must be left to the individual judgment of the Christian. Each Christian must take the general principles of the Scriptures and apply them in some instances differently. As we cited before, the two most well known examples of Paul are with the circumcision of Timothy and the non-circumcision of Titus (Acts 16:3, Gal. 2:3). Also Paul explained the use of meats offered to idols, I Cor. 8. In both cases there was a *yes* and a *no*, and Paul determined what it should be in each instance on the basis of his Christian liberty. He was criticized for his decision, but he defended his action on the basis of his freedom to decide.

The double difficulty to which we made reference is this. If, on the one hand, we try to legislate ecclesiastically on certain issues which properly belong in the area of Christian liberty, we do wrong and go beyond the teaching of Scripture. To do this undoubtedly leads to Phariseism: we would have a

long list of *dos* and *dont's* which if observed externally, would make a fine "Christian" but which Christ calls a white washed sepulchre. The church would then tempt the Christian by transferring his moral calling to judge moral issues to the church and freeing him from his duty as a Christian. The other difficulty is to extol Christian liberty to such an extent that everything falls under this category, and the doctrine of Christian liberty becomes an umbrella under which sin is condoned within the Christian community: church, home, school, and society.

John Calvin puts this problem into perspective:

Moreover, though it has already been occasionally adverted to, there was an advantage in deferring the fuller consideration of it (that is, Christian liberty) till now, for the moment any mention is made of Christian liberty lust begins to boil, or insane commotions arise, if a speedy restraint is not laid on those licentious spirits by whom the best things are perverted into the worst. For they either, under pretext of this liberty, shake off all obedience to God, and break out into unbridled licentiousness, or they feel indignant, thinking that all choice, order, and restraint are abolished. What can we do when thus encompassed with straits? Are we to bid adieu to Christian liberty, in order that we may cut off all opportunity for such perilous consequences? But, as we have said, if the subject be not understood, neither Christ, nor the truth of the Gospel, nor the inward peace of the soul is properly known. Our endeavors must rather be, while not suppressing this very necessary part of doctrine, to obviate the absurd objections to which it usually gives rise. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, chapter 19, page 131.)

SCRIPTURAL DIRECTIVES

It is not easy to define what comes under the heading of Christian liberty. In general, we have in mind those things not specifically condemned in the Bible nor commanded. Sometimes these are called "adiaphora" or "things indifferent." It gets this designation because of the fact that you cannot go to the Bible and find direct proof whether they are right or wrong. We believe there are, however, Scriptural directives which help us in understanding how to handle things included in Christian liberty. We consider three of them.

First, strictly speaking, there is not such a thing as a thing indifferent, or that it doesn't make any difference how we act. Simply because everything has moral value, it demands of us careful and responsible decisions. Before God, we must make the right decision in everything we do. We can use our Christian liberty for good or evil. Everything comprehended in this area will also enter into judgment, "But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," Matt. 12:36.

Secondly, our Christian liberty must be used to the glory of God. Not only must we not sin by things we do, but we must serve God! Listen, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another," Gal. 5:13, 14. Peter warns, "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as servants of God," I Peter 2:16. John Calvin correctly comments:

They say there are things indifferent: I admit it provided they are used indifferently, but when they are indulged in luxurious profusion, things which otherwise were in themselves lawful are certainly defiled by these vices. Paul makes an admirable distinction in regard to things indifferent: "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled," Titus 1:15. (*Institutes*, Book III, chapter 19, page 136)

Rather, we are to use our Christian liberty in serving God, "But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruits unto holiness and in the end everlasting life. Rom. 6:18.

In addition to the foregoing, we can add a third element, that our exercise of Christian liberty must also be for the good of our neighbor. Correctly Paul warns, "But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to them that are weak," I Cor. 8:9. He adds later, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient, all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not," I Cor. 10:23; We must ask ourselves whether our conduct may offend our weaker brother. The idea of offend is not

"to make him feel bad or react unfavorably to our conduct"; rather, "to cause him to stumble and fall into sin." This touches upon an important area of our Christian liberty. We may not simply say, "It is all right for me; I don't see anything wrong in what I do." We have to ask also, "Will my doing this give occasion for my brother to sin? Will I be a bad example, or give excuse for evil?" More positively, we may also add, our conduct must always be a good example and serve as a living testimony of the power of the living Christ. All things must edify, build up spiritually. This idea moves Paul to say in the Holy Spirit, "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant of all that I might gain the more," I Cor. 9:19. Sometimes it is the Christian duty to go the "extra mile" to avoid offense and render spiritual direction by avoiding something that may seem "indifferent" and replacing it with something wholesome and worthwhile.

We suggest that if we are going to come to honest understanding in the area of Christian liberty, we have to deal with all three of these elements. The way we dress, our use of television, drinking, smoking, sports, have to be viewed in light of these things. It makes a difference before God as to our motive, do we do these things not out of empty pleasure (license), but truly as servants of God, and that by their use we are not causing our neighbor to sin, but are helping him be a better Christian. Surely there is an area of liberty, but that area must pass the scrutiny of the Word of God.

In our next article we will consider, D.V., why this seems to be such a crucial area in the life of young people.

Contending for the Faith

Eschatology — In The Old Testament

Rev. H. Veldman

Concluding our discussion of the doctrine of Eschatology as taught in the Old Testament, we now would call attention to two other phases of this doctrine as held before us in the Scriptures of the Old Dispensation. First, the Word of God certainly comforted the Church of God in the Old Dispensation with the truth of the resurrection of the dead. The passages of Ps. 16:8-11 and Job 19:25-27 are very familiar. Ps. 16:8-11 reads as follows:

I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life:

in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

It is true, we understand, that this passage refers specifically to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, although it is true that the passage refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, it nevertheless speaks of the resurrection of the dead. And, secondly, the Word of God surely also teaches us that this resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the blessed pledge of our resurrection of the dead.

And in Job 19:25-27 we read the following very beautiful passage:

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in

my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

Here the afflicted saint of the Old Dispensation gives expression to his faith in the resurrection of his body in the last day. He writes that he shall see God in his flesh. We understand that this does not mean that he will see God in his present earthly flesh. Does he not declare that the worms shall destroy this body? It is obvious, therefore, that Job refers to his body, that he is speaking here of the resurrection of his body, and that he with his eyes shall see God although his reins be consumed within him. This is the Old Testament believer's faith in the resurrection of the body.

Finally, the Old Testament Scriptures also call our attention to the truth of the final judgment. This, we know, is taught throughout the Word of God. We need not quote now from the New Testament Scriptures. We are undoubtedly familiar with such Scriptures as 2 Cor. 5:10 and 2 Pet. 2:4-9, where we read that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and also that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. But we also have references to this truth in the Old Testament Scriptures. We read in Jude 14-15:

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

Now it is true that we have no reference to this Word of God in the Old Testament account as held before us in the book of Genesis, in the days prior to the flood. We do read of these ungodly speeches, as expressed by the godless Lamech, contemporary with Enoch, the father of Jubal, Jabal and Tubal-Cain. However, this, of course, does not nullify that Enoch prophesied against the wicked of his day, as recorded here for us in the book of Jude. This saint of God, the seventh from Adam, certainly spoke here of the Judgment Day.

And in Daniel 7:9-11 we read:

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, Whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

Here we have a vivid description of the final

judgment. Daniel was given to see the development of the kingdom of God throughout the history and ages of the world, also the Day of Judgment. And in Ps. 62:12 we read: "Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for Thou renderest to every man according to his work." And this is in harmony with the word of the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 5:10 and with the word of Christ in Rev. 22:12.

Turning our attention to the Scriptures of the New Testament, particularly the four gospel narratives, we cannot escape the conclusion that the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, as prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the day of Pentecost, were premillenarian in their conception and expectation of the Messiah and His kingdom. There are those who are of the opinion that the apostles, also after the day of Pentecost, were of the opinion that Jesus was returning soon after His ascension to heaven, and that this opinion was generally held by the church of God during the early years of the New Dispensation. Now it is true that there are passages in Scripture to the effect that Jesus is coming soon. In Rev. 22:12 we read that our Lord Jesus Christ is coming quickly. In James 5:8 we read that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. And in the following verse, verse 9, we read that "the judge standeth before the door." And in Rom. 13:12 we read that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." Upon these and similar passages the conclusion is based that it was generally believed in the church of God that Christ was coming soon. In answer to this, we may observe the following. In the first place, it may have been true that the people of God were generally of the opinion that the return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven could be expected momentarily. Perhaps they were of this opinion. In the second place, it is surely impossible to believe that this opinion was also held by the apostles. It is undoubtedly true that, prior to the day of Pentecost, they were premillenarian in their conception and expectation of the Messiah and His kingdom. But it is surely difficult to believe that they continued in this expectation after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Endowed with the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, Who led them into all the truth, they certainly knew that Christ could not return upon the clouds of heaven until all things had been accomplished. They certainly knew that the gospel must be preached to all nations, that wars must come and rumours of wars, also pestilences and famines and earthquakes, and that the final return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven would be preceded by the antichrist, the son of perdition. Thirdly, however, it surely does not make a particle of difference what the opinion of the church may have been, and what the personal opinion of the apostles may have been. We believe in the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. It is not important, therefore, to know what their personal opinion may have been. The only question of

importance is: what is the meaning of these Scriptures and of the Holy Spirit Who inspired them? It is certainly true that the language of the Word of God is adapted to the time and age when it was composed. But the Comforter of the weary, of Whom we read in Is. 50:4, surely speaks a word of comfort to the weary, also in season, and the Word of God is applicable to the people of God throughout the ages. And we certainly know that these various passages of Holy Writ do not speak of an early return of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the clouds of heaven, although this expectation may have lived in the consciousness of the people of God during the early years of the New Dispensation.

That the disciples of our Lord were premillenarian in their conception of Christ and His kingdom can hardly be doubted. It was immediately before our Lord's transfiguration upon the mount that He began to teach His disciples in regard to His approaching suffering and death. And we will recall that the apostle Peter took our Lord aside and said to Him that this would not happen unto Him. Is this not strange? Had not the Old Testament Scriptures spoken plainly of the Messiah's suffering and death? Does not Isaiah speak of Him, as in ch. 53, as of the suffering Servant of Jehovah? And notice what we read in Is. 50:5-6: "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." These passages are surely easy to read and understand. And yet the disciples resented this reference of their Lord to His suffering and death? Why? O, if Jesus had told them that He would die in a spectacular fashion, that He would miraculously lay down His life and just as miraculously take it up again, publicly and in the sight of all men, they probably would not have objected. Did not all the sacrifices of the Old Dispensation speak of a sacrifice that was to come?

But, of course, the element of Jesus' instruction which they resented was the reference to the manner in which He would die. They resented the element of suffering. They objected to the element of shame. They could not understand why their Lord, Who had power over all things, also His enemies, would be willing to subject Himself to such a shameful humiliation. And that they opposed Him was also due, undoubtedly, to their carnality. At least, Jesus rebukes them, as in Luke 24:25, in connection with His appearance as the risen Lord to the travellers to Emmaus, because they were fools, that is, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken of Him. And that they were slow *of heart* surely indicates the factor of carnality for which they were responsible and for which they are rebuked by our risen Lord. They did not understand the way of suffering and shame because they were carnal and clung to the things that are below.

These disciples were certainly earthly in their conception of the Messiah and His kingdom. They resented His teaching with respect to His falling into the hands of sinners. As often as He would speak of His approaching humiliation at the hands of sinners, they would be debating among themselves who would be the greatest in the kingdom. They were angry at two of the disciples when these two disciples, undoubtedly inspired by their mother, asked Him for a place in His kingdom, one at His right hand and the other at His left, cf. Mark 10:35-41. In fact, as late as when Jesus ascended to heaven, His disciples ask Him, according to Acts 1:6: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" And what these disciples meant we all understand. O, it is certainly true that the disciples were premillenarian in their conception of the coming kingdom of the Messiah. But we may certainly believe that they were relieved of this earthly and carnal conception when they received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

From Holy Writ

Exposition of Hebrews 11:29

Rev. G. Lubbers

The writer to the Hebrews now presents Israel in its complete triumph over Pharaoh, his armies and all his horse-men. We hear the Song of Moses at the sea, "The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and host hath he cast into the sea." (Ex. 15:3,4) And we take note of Miriam, Moses' sister, who answered in glad refrain, "Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse

and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." (Ex. 16:21)

Surely here we see faith in operation as it passes from glory unto glory as by the Spirit of the LORD.

Israel passes through the Red Sea as upon dry ground. This was an act of faith in the promises of God, an act of faith that follows whithersoever the LORD did lead by His pillar of fire by night and by his cloud by day. It is really following the Lamb

whithersoever He did lead. And this example, too, was written for us upon whom the end of the ages is come, that we might press these same foot-prints of Abraham's children in faith.

The text in Hebrews is very brief and beautiful. It reads as follows in the KJV, "*By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.*" (Heb. 11:29)

AN HISTORIC EVENT (Exodus 14)

Were it not that there are legions in our day who deny the historicity of the Old Testament Scriptures we would not need to reemphasize that what we read of in Exodus is a matter of history. It came to pass in world-history. That is the clear testimony of the book of Exodus and as such it is quoted in many passages of Scripture both in the Old and New Testaments. (Joshua 2:9-11; 4:23; 9:9 Jeremiah 50:21; Psalm 78:13,14; 136:13,15; 109:7; Isaiah 43:9,10; 51:9,10) In all of these passages the Spirit of Christ is pointing out in the Word the great implication of the once-and-for-all deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by His mighty outstretched arm. It is the pattern of all the mighty doings of God with His people and of His triumph over all His and Israel's foes. Surely this was an historical event! Only wilful unbelief denies it!

However, what is more, it is also an *historic* event. This means that it was a determining point for Israel's history, as a blood-sprinkled people. It is momentous and has far-reaching consequences. It is an historical type of baptism into Christ. It was what Paul calls a "baptism unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (I Cor. 10:2) This means that they could be baptized because they were under the blood of the Passover Lamb. This seems to be suggested in the text here in Hebrews 11:29. The subject "they" refers to the former verse 28 where the "sprinkling of the blood" is mentioned to protect Israel against the "angel of death, the destroyer." All the firstborn of Egypt were killed but none of Israel. Israel is God's first born son. (Exodus 4:22) Hence the "they" are those who are under the blood; and now they have the sign of this protection of being delivered from the house of bondage to serve God, in this passage through the Red Sea as on dry ground. Truly, this was an historic event, great in the annals of the Sacred Scripture, as we have already pointed out.

Another element that points up Israel's victory over Egypt as being an historic event is that it was the fulfillment of the predictive prophecy and promise of Jehovah. Israel does not simply walk out of Egypt straight for Canaan, the promised land. It was not self-liberation, a declaration of independence; nor was it a taking up of arms against Egypt. It was simply a demonstration that "I am the LORD." Pharaoh and Egypt must know that Jehovah, Israel's God, is God alone. Hence, Israel is enjoined to "be still" and "I will

fight for you." Some four hundred years earlier the LORD had spoken to Abraham that He would deliver Israel from Egypt in the words, "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in the land that is not theirs and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve will I judge; and afterwards they shall come out with great substance . . . but in the fourth generation they shall come hither again . . ." (Gen. 15:13-16) Not one of these words can fall to the ground, even though heaven and earth pass away. The LORD was fulfilling these words to Israel by the hand of Moses. (Exodus 3:10)

And now the historic moment has come that God may show all His power in Pharaoh's hardness and proud rebellion. Pharaoh will make his last bold and all-out attempt to destroy Israel here at the Red Sea. The LORD hardens, makes strong his heart. He pursues Israel at the Red Sea. The LORD did not cause Israel to go through the land of the Philistines, but at Etham He led them Southward toward Pihahiroth between Migdol and the Sea. God deliberately led Israel into a place and position where only a miraculous deliverance of God could be of any avail. He deceived Pharaoh into concluding that Israel was trapped in the wilderness and was an easy prey to slaughter with his horses and chariots. So he pursues after them with 600 chariots and horses and with all his army to slaughter the church of God, a congregation of men, women and children, old and young. His great moment has struck to deliver the fatal blow!! Truly, it was a very historic moment also for Egypt.

A MIRACULOUS ACT (Exodus 14, Hebrews 11:19)

The text says, "they passed through the Red Sea as upon dry ground." Israel must "go forward." That is the divine command to Moses. The people of God are indeed in dire need and in a terrifying position. Picture this in your mind's eye: before Israel is the Sea, on either side are the mountains and behind them is coming at full speed the entire army of the Egyptians. Israel cries out to the LORD. (Exodus 14:10; Joshua 24:7; Neh. 9:9; Psalm 74:13) It was also a cry such as never had before been heard in Israel; it was the cry of faith and hope, although it was not perfect faith and all did not believe. Yet, Hebrews 11:29 says it was "by faith." It was the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen! Without this faith Israel could not please God. They must believe in this moment of deepest trial that "God is, and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

No, it was not perfect faith. All seem to have also doubted the wisdom and the love of God in Moses' delivering them out of Egypt. They recite their words once more to Moses which they spoke to Moses and Aaron when Pharaoh increased their tasks and burdens upon Moses coming to Egypt to deliver them. (Ex.

5:21; 6:9) They murmur and say, "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." (Exodus 14:12) It was not perfect faith on the part of the true Israel of God; it was stark unbelief on the part of the reprobate element, who later will indeed die in the wilderness. They will die not because of the hand of the LORD being shortened, but rather "because of their unbelief." (Hebrews 3:19) This unbelief is also recounted on the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures. (Psalm 106:6-12) That God saved Israel at the Red Sea was not because of any worthiness of Israel. The Holy Spirit gives us that answer Psalm 106:7,8, "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the Red Sea. *Nevertheless* he saved them for his name's sake, *that he might make his mighty power to be known.*" (italics added) The glory of God's power both in grace and in judgment is at stake. His promises cannot fail. It is sovereign grace here; it is not of works but of redeeming mercy under the blood. And although faith is not perfect, God leads this faith to greater heights by his Spirit causing Israel to obey his word to "go forward." And their faith was rewarded so that the following morning Israel sees the dead bodies of the Egyptians on the shore. The Psalmist tells us, "And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then *believed* they his words." They were confirmed in their faith. They had passed over in faith; now their faith is strengthened.

That seems to be the correct interpretation of their passing over in faith!

It was faith in God's miraculous work! It was faith before crossing, and all during the crossing, all the night; and faith in the morning when with Moses they sing the triumphant song. Had not God performed His wonder of grace in this night. Was His gracious

presence not symbolized in the Pillar of Cloud which went before them to lead them on the way, and which was a pillar of fire by night. Was this not the glory of God which rested later on the mercyseat in the temple? It was the glory of the Shekinah of God. It represented the gracious indwelling of God with his people as the glory of grace. On the one hand this was a light and protection for Israel, and it was also Israel's defense against the Egyptians all through the night. For in His glorycloud the Lord made a separation between Israel and the Egyptians all through the night, after He had made a wide path for Israel through the Red Sea, causing the waters to stand as a heap on both sides. And the cloud was a light and sun and shield to Israel, while it was a light which was hidden from the Egyptians so that the latter had to walk in the darkness of eternal night! They did not see the miraculous work of the LORD'S grace! Yet it was a miraculous work of grace indeed for Israel.

EGYPT HAS NO FAITH

Faith is the gift of God. This faith was withheld from the Egyptians as well as the promises. They were not told the LORD'S war strategy. Hence, they were taken in their own craftiness, as the wicked ever are. They had only worldly wisdom which is made foolishness by the Lord. The Lord fooled them into following into the dry river-bed of the Red Sea. However, they did not do so upon God's command but were impelled by their lust to destroy Israel. And God caused the waters of the sea to return upon them, to swallow them up. It was a horrifying and terrifying experience. They knew it was no mere law of nature. The LORD looked through the cloud with a light more brilliant than the sun; they saw the face of the LORD against them in this cloud. Their chariots went hard, the wheels were removed, and the waters swallowed up Egypt. They could not please God; they walked not in the faith of Israel.

Let us as Israel by faith cross the Red Sea without murmuring at the ways of the Almighty!

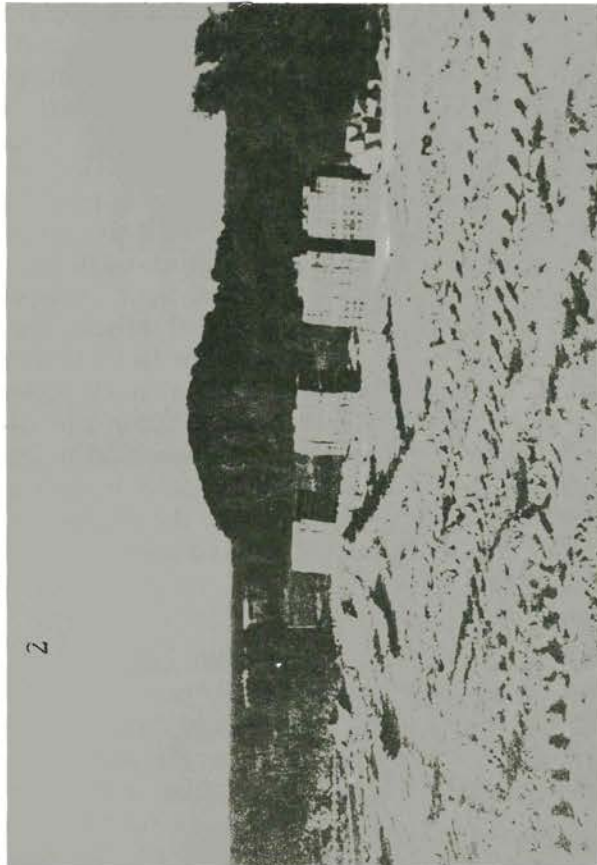
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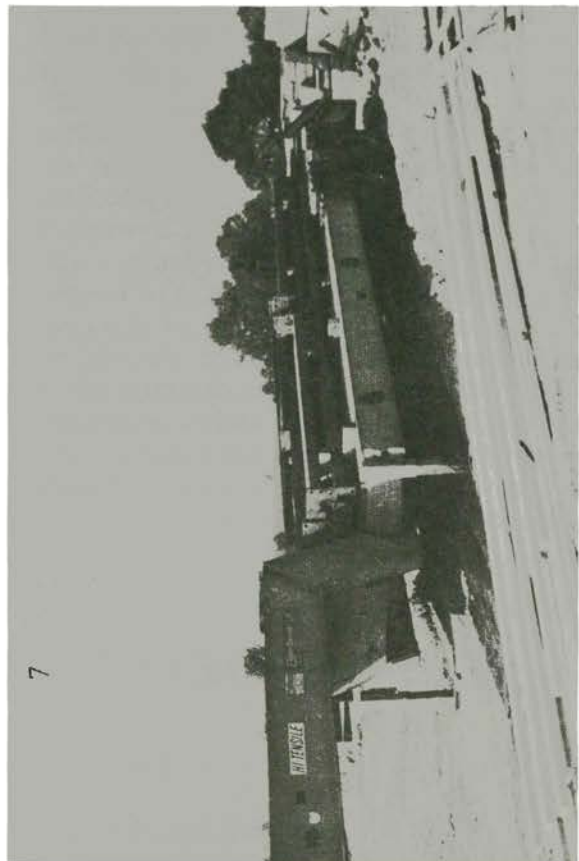
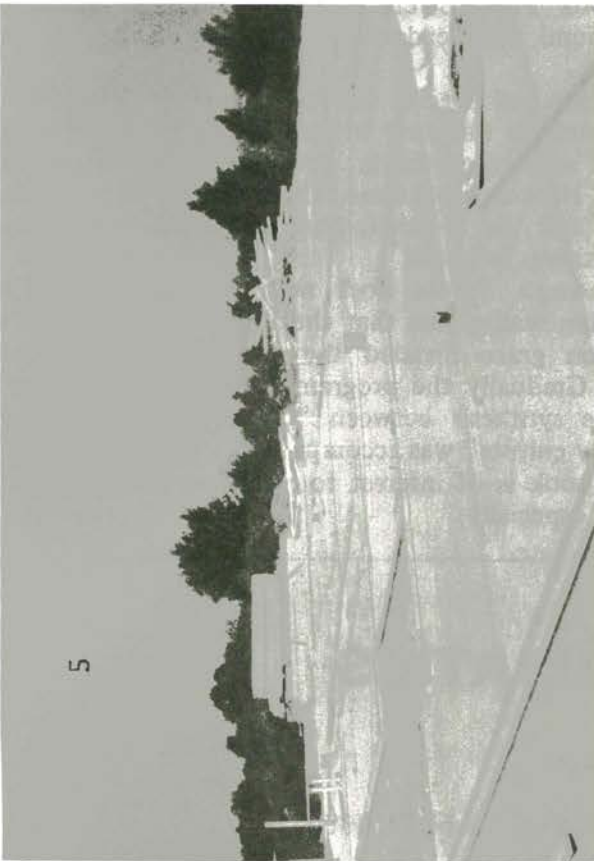
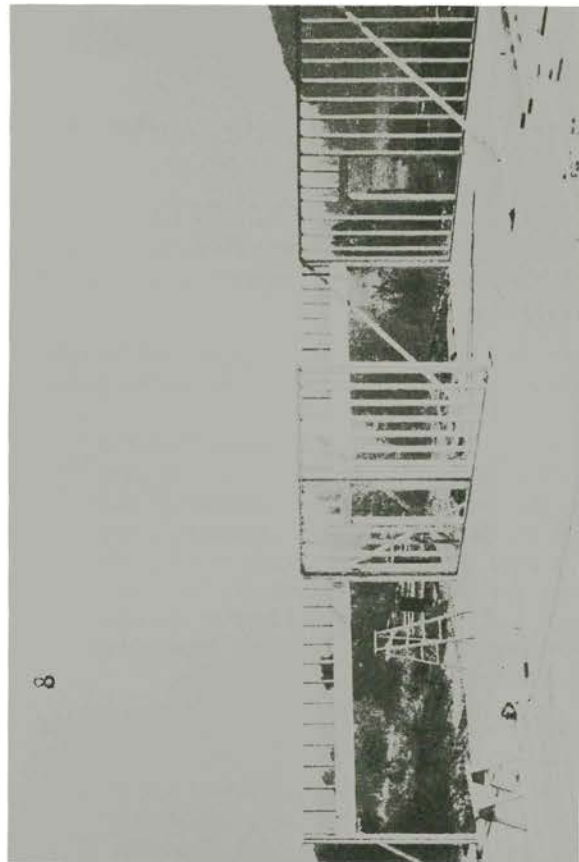
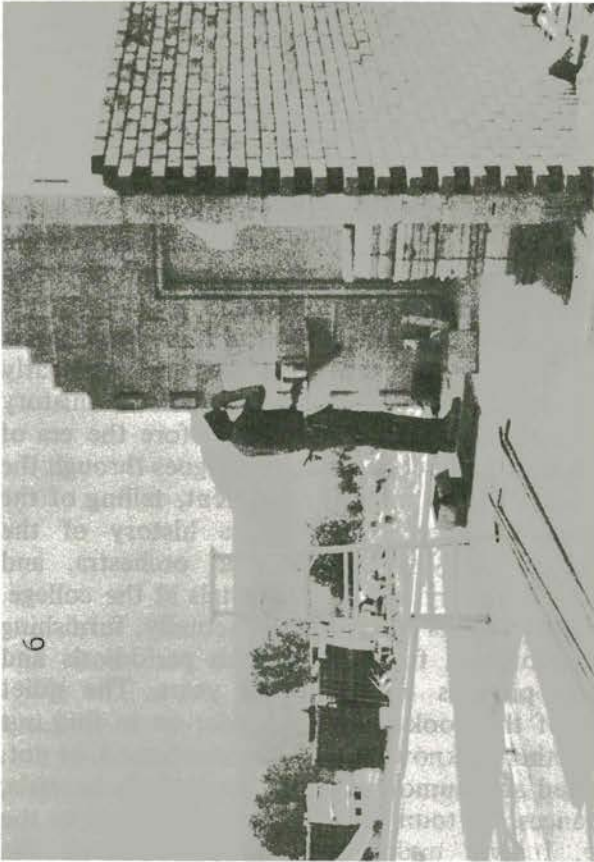
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Seminary Building Pictorial Progress Report

Seminary Building



1. This sign faces Ivanrest Avenue in the 4900 block.
2. Footings and concrete walls in and sand-filled.
3. Under-floor plumbing and heating work completed.
4. Concrete floor being poured.



5. The floor is in.
6. A section of the brick wall is up. (Time out for a drink for one of the carpenters!)
7. A trailer-load of steel beams waiting to be erected.
8. In the process of being framed in.

Book Review

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

FIFTY YEARS OF MUSIC AT CALVIN COLLEGE, by Seymour Swets; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.; 260 pages, \$5.95 (paper). Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The author lived through the 50 years of musical history at Calvin College which he reviews in this book. In the Introduction he says:

It will be our purpose to trace the earliest music at Calvin, both vocal and instrumental, and to present briefly the elements in our cultural background that prevailed at the time when the writer became the first full-time teacher of music and speech in 1923. We will trace the slow development of the music department ... (1923-45) ... and how in the next twenty-two years (1945-67) the music department grew from a one-man staff to a faculty of ten.

In the Foreword, Dr. Wm. Harry Jellema, furnishing background for understanding Prof. Swets' account, traces the history of the Christian Reformed Church as it had its beginnings in the Netherlands. First he discusses the Secession of 1834 and describes it as separatistic in the sense that it eschewed all forms of worldliness, preached total depravity and a salvation through sovereign grace, with the result that it emphasized consecrated lives of thankfulness to God. In short, they emphasized particular grace, their whole life was dedicated to the service of God, and their only real interest was in the church. Next, Jellema describes the Secession of 1886 under Abraham Kuyper. Although Dr. Kuyper stressed the same cardinal doctrines of salvation as did the Separatists, this movement "meant a break with the basic theoretical and practical stipulation that distinguished Separatism." For Kuyper and his adherents adopted the theory of common grace, whereby they aimed "to reorient, reform, redirect the cultural achievements of (the natural) man to their proper end of glorifying God," and to reclaim for the Kingdom of Christ every area of human life. These two streams converged in the Christian Reformed Church in our country. This reviewer found it impossi-

ble to agree with Jellema's interpretation of 1834 and 1886. It is quite probable, however, that this interpretation lies behind the course of development at Calvin with respect to the arts and "culture."

Going back to the turn of the century, Prof. Swets describes the musical history of the CRC, particularly as it centered in Calvin College. He traces the history of Singing Schools in the churches before the era of formal music at the college. Then he goes through the lowly origins of the music department, telling of the development of vocal music, the history of the Oratorio Society, the band and orchestra, and instruction in theory and fundamentals at the college.

The author treats his material factually, furnishing many memorabilia from old church periodicals and interesting pictures from by-gone years. The quiet nostalgia of the book leads the reader on to find out more, whether he knows the people mentioned, or not. Unexpected and humorous incidents during rehearsals, performances, or tours lend a spark of interest to the history. It was undoubtedly largely through the author's efforts and by his capable leadership that the music program at Calvin developed richly. Though in the book Prof. Swets modestly retreats into the background, the reader can judge his efforts by the fruits.

An item of special interest to us of Prot. Ref. background is the song written for Corps, an all-male student society at Calvin, because it was written by student Herman Hoeksema. Three stanzas he wrote in Dutch, and the fourth (copying European university customs) was in Latin!

Although Swets does not comment on it, a discerning reader sees that the influence of Kuyper's common grace invaded the music department at Calvin. Gradually the programs became more secular, and the synthesis between "Christian culture" and "worldly culture" was accomplished.

The book is of interest to musicians and to Calvin Alumni especially.

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ATTENTION!

The annual meeting of the Permanent Committee for the Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature (the book publishing arm of the R.F.P.A.) will be held, D.V., Monday, September 24, at 8 P.M., at the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. All members of this organization, please take notice and plan to be present.

—D. Hauck, sec'y

NOTICE

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in regular session on October 3, 1973 in the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least ten days prior to the convening of this session.

Jon Huisken
Stated Clerk

ATTENTION!

The Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches has begun its 1973-'74 term. We commend the seminary and its needs to the continual prayers of our people and churches. Consistories are hereby reminded that requests for seminary pulpit supply and catechism supply should be addressed to the rector.

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema, Rector

ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT

On September 27, 1973, D.V., our beloved parents

PETER and DOROTHY DECKER

will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are grateful to God for the example of faith and godliness which they have left us. We pray that God will continue to bless them richly in their remaining years together so that they may confess: "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him." Psalm 28:7

Robert and Marilyn Decker
Carl and Mary Potjer
Kenneth and Doris Hoksbergen
James and Nancy Decker
Eight grandchildren

NOTICE!!!

The annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association will be held Thursday evening, Sept. 27th at 8 PM, in our Southeast church.

We urge all members, plus prospective new members to attend. The Board covets your support. Please mark the date on your calendar now.

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News From Our Churches

September 1, 1973

Rev. R. Decker and family planned to move to Grand Rapids the day after Labor Day. His installation into the office of Seminary Professor is scheduled for October 3, in First Church. Professor H. Hanko will conduct the service and Rev. G. Van Baren will read the Form for Installation. Following the service there will be a social hour in the basement.

On August 27 a Congregational Meeting was held in our South Holland church for the purpose of calling a minister from a trio which consisted of the Reverends D. Engelsma, J. Kortering, and G. Van Baren. Rev. Kortering received the call.

According to a Southeast Bulletin, Rev. and Mrs. Schipper returned from New Jersey on August 28. Rev. Schipper reported that it was "a most blessed experience to be privileged to bring the Word to a people that is hungry for the truth." He added that, "though a congregation was not organized, as was previously planned, we believe this will be accomplished in the near future."

From a Hope Church bulletin we learn that "Rev. Woudenberg has been going to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, every other Thursday for a Bible Study Class. He meets with about twenty people who are keenly interested."

Rev. Heys has declined the call to serve as Home Missionary.

Our Business Manager, who receives fascinating correspondence almost daily, has again forwarded a couple of letters to us. The first is a very favorable reaction to the *Standard Bearer* by a reader of our magazine in Northern Ireland. In requesting that we continue to send him the *Standard Bearer*, he submits the following:

"I must take the opportunity of thanking the editors and contributors for maintaining such a high standard of publication. I have read with great interest the articles on the 'Free Offer of the Gospel,' and I am particularly looking forward to following the series on 'Isaiah' and 'Hyper-Calvinism' that are beginning to appear."

"Being a Baptist I suppose from my point of view there are some 'faults' with your magazine, but not having magnifying spectacles I confess to finding very few. All in all I find the *Standard Bearer* very profitable indeed."

Then there's another letter, this one from The Netherlands. The letter contained a request that we by

all means *stop* sending the *Standard Bearer* to a certain address in that country. The writer noted that copies of our magazine were sent to an individual in Friesland, The Netherlands, "much to his surprise." The writer continued, "Now you invited him to subscribe to the *Standard Bearer*, but you will understand that he cannot do that and he hopes that you will *stop* sending more issues." The reason? Oh, yes, the reason — "He doesn't know a word of English!"

Building projects: At a July congregational meeting, Grand Rapids' Hope Church approved plans for building a new parsonage. At a June congregational meeting in our Loveland Church, the congregation decided to build a new parsonage on the church's property on E. 57th St. And, by the end of July, the construction of the new church building in Randolph had progressed to the point where "the entire structure is standing and is 'roughed in.'"

Before the current school year gets too far along, I ought to quote a little from a March, 1973, Covenant Christian High School Newsletter which has been in my box entirely too long. The newsletter included a list of "Did You Knows" which might be of interest to those of you who didn't see the letter. Following are some of them. Did you know that: CCHS has 120 students? draws its students from a 25 mile radius of the school? has 8 teachers (6 men, 2 women)? all the faculty members have an AB or MA degree in the field they teach? has 7 classrooms and about 14,000 square feet of floor space? has a library of over 3,000 books and 180 tape recordings? was built in 1968-1969, with an addition in 1971-1972?

Further "school news" comes by way of bulletins from Hull. On April 29 the parents there attended a meeting "to hear a speech on aspects related to organizing our own Protestant Reformed School Society." The June 24 bulletin announced that a "committee has been appointed to propose a constitution, after which the real business of making plans and discussing details can take place." In the July 22 bulletin it was reported that, at the school society meeting held on July 16, five board members were elected after "the constitution was adopted, spelling out the basis and formal organization of the Society for Protestant Reformed Education of Hull, Iowa." Needless to say, we follow these developments with deep interest.

D.D.