

# The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

## ***IN THIS ISSUE***

### ***Editorial***

**Key '73, And Then Key '75, And Then???**

### ***Meditation***

**Sight To The Blind**

### ***Taking Heed to the Doctrine***

**An Open Letter Regarding Christian Liberty**

### ***Feature***

**The Seminary Building — Progress Report**

**. . . and several others**

## CONTENTS:

Editorials —	
Editor's Notes .....	458
Key '73, And Then Key '75, And Then??? .....	459
The OPC and the "Free Offer" (4) .....	460
Meditation —	
Sight To The Blind .....	461
Taking Heed To The Doctrine —	
An Open Letter Regarding Christian Liberty ..	464
From Holy Writ —	
Exposition of Hebrews 11:28 .....	468
The Day of Shadows —	
God's Shut-in .....	470
All Around Us —	
Secession Among Southern Presbyterians .....	472
Conservative Victories in the	
Missouri Synod .....	473
News Items From The Netherlands .....	473
Billy Graham, Key 73 And The Jews .....	474
Evolutionism A Theory In Tennessee .....	474
Feature —	
The Seminary Building .....	475
Studies in Isaiah —	
Isaiah's Prophetic Vision .....	476
Book Reviews .....	478
News From Our Churches .....	479

## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## Editorials

## Editor's Notes

HELP! A committee from our Staff and from the Board of the R.F.P.A. is working on plans to observe the 50th Anniversary of the *Standard Bearer*. Our fiftieth year begins with the next volume, starting October 1. And plans are to observe this occasion throughout the year, building up to the actual anniversary at the end of the year. Volume 50, then, will be the 50th Anniversary Volume. In connection with these plans, the committee has a request for help. Do any of our readers have pictures or other memorabilia directly or indirectly connected with the *Standard Bearer* and its publication? Pictures of the former editors, particularly of "H.H." and "G.M.O." are wanted: not necessarily formal photographs, but also some pictures of "human interest." The committee wants these for a projected historical series. So if you have any pictures or anything else which you think might be of interest, send it in, please! And if you wish to have it returned, be sure that your name and address is on it. Send these materials to: Prof. H. Hanks, 4665 Ju-Le-On Dr., S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504. Please don't wait!

Sorry! Throughout Prof. Hanks's critique of Dr. Berkouwer's book in the August issue the author's name was misspelled. Neither Prof. Hanks nor I caught the mistake. In fact, I compounded it by spreading it in large letters on the cover. *Nihil humanum alienum mihi est!*

\*\*\*\*\*

Be sure to read the Progress Report by Rev. Van Baren. I may add that there has been more progress. The underground plumbing and heating work has been completed. Soon the floor will be poured, and then you will see the superstructure go up. In fact, you will already find a corner of brick up. Just a little anecdote in this connection. My usually precise colleague in his article made the seminary address 5101 Ivanrest. Curious, because I was sure the address was in the 4900-block, I asked him where he got the address. Reply: "I was just guessing that had to be it." So I went to "headquarters," and I learned that it is 4949 Ivanrest. How about all those 49's! 4949 Ivanrest, and it will be ready for use in the 49th year of our churches' existence.



# Key '73, And Then Key '75, And Then?

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In his recently published lecture, "Key '73 — What Must We Say About It?" the Rev. Engelsma made the point that Key '73 is not only a movement which aims at and effects a union of many churches, but that it is not a *temporary* movement. Writes he:

The leaders of the new evangelicalism who gave us Key '73 are going to give us much more after 1973 in order to perpetuate and strengthen the union begun in Key '73. For this reason, those in Reformed Churches who are opposed to Key '73 but who console themselves regarding their church's participation in Key '73 by supposing that Key '73 is a temporary evil are fooling themselves. Key '73 is only a beginning.

Rev. Engelsma goes on to point out that it is the purpose of these leaders of new evangelicalism not only to promote "cooperative evangelism," but also "to further transdenominational evangelical cooperation beyond evangelism."

What I now write is in confirmation of colleague Engelsma's point that Key '73 is not a mere temporary evil.

True, this is not evidence that this neo-evangelical movement plans "transdenominational evangelical cooperation beyond evangelism." But it is evidence that they do not intend at all that Key '73 will be an isolated effort. There is more in the offing — also more in the line of so-called "cooperative evangelism."

Already plans are being laid and efforts are being put forth for Key '75 — only now in Australasia.

Dr. Carl F. H. Henry writes about this in a recent issue of *Christianity Today* (July 6, 1973, page 38). In an article entitled "Key 75 For Australia?" one can find the same kind of neo-evangelical jargon which Rev. Engelsma cites in his lecture. Writing about the younger generation in Australia, Dr. Henry states: "... they realize increasingly that to gain wide hearing for the biblical good news Christians must mount some kind of *cooperative witness*," (emphasis added) And in his comments on one of the Graham crusades in Australia he writes: "The later crusade stimulated no fewer than 4,000 women's prayer groups to dedicated intercession and rallied evangelical forces to *cooperative engagement*," (emphasis added) And

again: "Today Australian Christians see the need for a national effort that enlists believers in every city and community in a *cooperative evangelical witness*," (emphasis added)

Significantly, it appears that a possible Key '75 down under will be the same kind of ecclesiastical hodge-podge as is Key '73. For in his concluding paragraph Dr. Henry writes:

Early interest in a cooperative transdenominational evangelistic thrust that enlists both clergy and laity was responsible for the invitation I received to meet with church leaders concerning Key 75 possibilities. Since Methodists and Baptists had already declared for worldwide denominational evangelistic emphases in 1975, and the Salvation Army in Australia is now also committed, a Key 75 thrust seems quite possible. Such proposals could be merged into a continent-wide effort that emphasizes a saving relationship to Christ above denominational relatedness, and maintains continuity with the identifiable Key 73 priority for personal evangelism. At the invitation of ecclesiastical VIPs, I ventured 27,000 flight miles and gave thirty-five addresses in seventeen days to clergy and church leaders, university students, and local congregations in nine cities. Hundreds of churchmen and lay workers long for a Key 75 type of evangelistic thrust, and their denominational decision-makers seem very open to the possibilities.

About a week before the above-mentioned article by Dr. Henry was published, we had a visit from brother Wm. van Rij, our agent for the *Standard Bearer* in Australasia, who also tries to keep us informed about ecclesiastical developments in New Zealand and Australia. According to his oral report, the proposed Key '75 movement down under has all the same characteristics as the Key '73 effort. He reported that in New Zealand Dr. Henry was insisting that there must be cooperation for this movement among evangelicals, liberals, and Roman Catholics — even to the point, according to friend van Rij, that Dr. Henry would have nothing to do with such a Key '75 movement unless there would be such three-way cooperation. We have not yet seen confirmation of this in writing, but the idea does not surprise us. In fact, it is quite in

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keeping with all that we have seen in the Key '73 movement.

All of this confirms what the Rev. Engelsma warned against in his lecture.

For our North American readers, let this confirmation serve as additional warning that this neo-evangelical movement is not a temporary, one-shot thing, and that no one should soothe his conscience about participation therein by imagining that it is temporary. The Key '73 movement is one of the most deceptive and the gravest dangers in today's

ecclesiastical scene.

And for our Australasian readers, we urge that they also be alert against the siren song of this sweet-sounding but deceptive ecumenism. Moreover, for their instruction we offer them the pamphlet by Rev. Engelsma. Already a large supply of these pamphlets has been shipped to New Zealand. But we will send even more, if requested, also to Australia. God's people are in need of sound and well-documented instruction such as this.

## The OPC and the "Free Offer" (4)

*Contrary To The Confessions*

In our second installment on this subject (prior to the section in which we made the point concerning basic exegetical method) we pointed out the twin contradictions in the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet, *The Free Offer of the Gospel*. We pointed out that the pamphlet does not only separate between the so-called will of God's decree and will of God's command (decretive and preceptive wills, or, secret and revealed wills), but it teaches a flat and impossible contradiction between the two. This position is basic to the whole offer-doctrine of the pamphlet. And, having made this contradiction, the pamphlet then proceeds to forget all about the will of the decree and to busy itself exclusively with the contradictory revealed will.

We have already pointed out that this involves Murray and Stonehouse in a denial of the simplicity of God. At this time we shall not belabor this point further, lest we complicate the entire discussion. There are so many facets to this offer-theology that one runs the risk of being side-tracked from the main issue and of complicating the discussion. Nevertheless, many of these facets are significant, too, and well worth discussing. And perhaps at a later date we can discuss some of them. There is, for example, the fact that the Murray-Stonehouse denial of God's simple will is in flagrant contradiction of Calvin (who is often incorrectly appealed to and quoted in support of the offer-theology). And there is the subject of the unity of God's will and of the distinctions between secret and revealed, decretive and preceptive will — a subject well worth studying. There is also the subject of so-called "hyper-Calvinism," a subject on which the Rev. Engelsma hopes to write in the future under "Taking Heed To The Doctrine." But for the present we must by-pass some of these subjects or touch on them only incidentally.

The twin contradictions which we found in the introductory section of *The Free Offer of the Gospel* were these:

1. God wills the damnation of the reprobate; God wills the salvation of the reprobate.
2. God from eternity hates the reprobate, and reveals Himself as such; and God is filled with a real disposition of lovingkindness toward the reprobate, and reveals Himself as such.

Of the two above statements, our Reformed creeds maintain exclusively the first half of each. The Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet *claims* to maintain both halves, but *in effect* teaches only the second half of each.

And the position of the pamphlet flatly contradicts the confessions. This I will demonstrate in the present article. And I will quote especially (for the benefit of Presbyterians), though not exclusively, from the Westminster Confession. My quotations are all taken from the edition published in 1970 by The Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. To avoid confusion I will designate the chapters by Roman numerals and the paragraphs by Arabic numerals.

In Chapter III (Of God's Eternal Decree), 2 we read:

Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions (Acts 15:18; I Samuel 23:11, 12; Matt. 11:21, 23) yet hath He not decreed any thing because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions (Rom. 9:11, 13, 16, 18).

Murray and Stonehouse are shut up to the position that God is filled with an earnest desire to save all men, except upon the supposed and foreseen condition that they refuse to accept the gospel invitation.

In Chapter III, 3, 4, we read:

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels (I Tim. 5:21; Matt. 25:41) are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death (Rom. 9:22, 23; Eph. 1:5, 6; Prov. 16:4).

These angels and men, thus predestinated, and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed,



and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished (II Tim. 2:18; John 13:18).

Did God have a sincere desire and was He disposed in His lovingkindness to save those whom He ordained to death? If the decree of reprobation was not motivated by such a desire to save the reprobate, could there be such a desire in God in time and in the proclamation of the gospel? Moreover, the number of the elect and the reprobate is determined by what God decreed from eternity. The acceptance or rejection of the gospel invitation has no effect on this – in fact, has nothing to do with this determination. There are no conditions attached to this determination. How, then, as Presbyterians, can Murray and Stonehouse in their pamphlet maintain a conditional desire on God's part to save the reprobate?

I must interrupt the discussion at this point, and continue the next time, D.V. But let me conclude by calling your attention to the fact that what is quoted above is indeed the will of God's decree, but is, according to the Westminster Confession itself, the *revealed* will of God. Did you notice the Scripture references? These are the official proof-texts which belong with this confession. I furnished only the references, to save space. A full edition of the Westminster Confession quotes all these proofs

verbatim. And this means that according to the confession itself, this is *revealed truth!*

As a footnote to the above, I want to acknowledge receipt of two important booklets on this subject. They are opposite in content, and they came to me from opposite parts of the world. One booklet, *The Free Offer of the Gospel* is by Pastor Erroll Hulse, of England. It was sent to me by one of our readers for critique. It is sub-titled, "An exposition of common grace and the free invitation of the Gospel." This booklet not only defends the offer-theology, but endorses the position of the "Marrow" men of Scotland. (Incidentally, our ministers will be receiving copies of this booklet from the same reader-friend who sent it to me. He only wanted to send it to men "who will criticize it.") The other booklet is an excellent and thorough-going critique of offer-theology published by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, Australia. The title is: *Universalism and the Reformed Churches – A Defence of Calvin's Calvinism*. The position taken in this booklet is very close to ours. To both of these booklets I hope to give detailed attention in the future. I will also try to furnish more information about the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, as soon as I receive some promised information. These brethren are much in agreement with us, and this contact is a promising one.

## Meditation

# Sight To The Blind

Rev. M. Schipper

*"And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.*

*And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."*

Mark 10: 51,52.

All the synoptical gospels record the narrative of the miracle, but the accounts differ in two respects. First, as to the number of men restored to sight. Matthew tells us there were two men. Second, as to the place where the miracle occurred. Luke places the miracle as taking place at Jericho, while Mark informs us that it took place as Jesus was leaving this city. None of these apparent discrepancies spoil the central importance of the wonder performed. We are satisfied to accept Mark's account as that of an eye-witness.

Important it is, for a proper understanding of what transpired, to form, if possible, a mental picture of the scene enacted.

Jesus and a great multitude are passing out of

Jericho on the way to Jerusalem. It was perhaps a day or so before He called Zaccheus out of the sycamore tree. And in another day or two He would be entering upon the last week of His life upon earth. And sitting along the way, and perhaps near the gate of the city, were blind men begging. This, we are told, is a common sight even to this day. Bartimaeus is one of these blind beggars. That Mark mentions his name, is not so much that he was notorious as a blind beggar, but most likely because this Bartimaeus later was to become known as a faithful disciple of the Lord. And as the multitude following the Lord jostled in the way, and were perhaps even singing His praises, Bartimaeus, learning the cause of the commotion, cries out his cry



for mercy, to which the Lord responds.

It is needless to say, that the awful condition of this blind beggar defies description. We who have never suffered want, can hardly imagine the lowly condition of this beggar. His poverty lay not only in the fact that he was dressed in rags, but along with this deprivation he bore the stigma of being a poor beggar. Along with his lowly condition he was also despised. As so much rubbish, he sat by the side of the road, hardly noticed, and if noticed, spurned by the passerby.

Such conditions ought not to have been allowed in Jewry. For the Lord God had commanded His people to care for the indigent, and never to allow their brethren to come to this awful plight. But Israel, when it forsook God, also neglected His people; and in their self-centered life each sought his own welfare, not that of others. Consequently, being forsaken of his own people, Bartimaeus was left to scramble in the dust for a bite to eat, or a stitch to wear.

Added to his affliction was the fact that he was blind. It is perhaps wrong to say that blindness is the most serious of physical maladies. Those with other afflictions which they consider worse, might challenge such a statement. Safe it is to say, that only a blind man knows the awfulness of his plight, and can appreciate the smallness of his world.

There he sits in his lonely world which is dark and dismal. Few are the faces of the blind that beam with smiles and laughter. Generally their faces reflect the sadness which coincides with the darkness which never leaves them. He is indeed, an object of pity!

But for Bartimaeus no pity is sent his way. Clothed in rags, his body evidently emaciated by hunger, his ears pricked for the slightest sound of tramping feet that would bring him an audience to which he could cry out for alms to relieve him in his suffering. Such is the scene as portrayed to us in the text with its context.

Before we proceed to consider what happened to this physical wretch, we pause to consider for a moment his spiritual antitype. Jesus, you may remember, on another occasion said: "All things take place in parables." That there is such a parable here, cannot escape our notice. Striking it is, too, to observe the fact that especially in Jesus' day, there were so many poor, blind, and sick. He Who was the Light, came into the world of darkness, poverty, and death, to draw all manner of men to the light.

Accordingly, Bartimaeus is a picture of man as he is by nature, — despicably poor. Verily, the natural man is clothed in the rags of corruption and sin. He is without God, and without hope in the world. True, he forsook God, his Benefactor, and deprived himself and all his posterity of all his original gifts, including the garments of righteousness. He lost God's image, and was banished from His presence, and gropes about in the darkness of sin and death. Disgraceful is his state

and condition. He is left a spiritual pauper. Even so, this does not begin to describe his awful plight.

Added to his spiritual poverty is the fact of spiritual blindness. O, indeed, not all are physically blind. Most of us are quite able to see in the physical sense. And with the sight of our eyes, the pride of life and the flesh is zealously cherished and sought after. One wonders sometimes whether it were better that we did not see so well. But though we see well with our eyes and perceive with our physical senses, each of us by nature is stone-blind in the spiritual sense of the word. Unable we are of ourselves to perceive the things of the kingdom of heaven. There is hope for the man that knows this.

Noticeably, according to the text, Bartimaeus knew his plight. He knew that he was poor, naked, and blind. His cry is evidence of this. It appears that he also senses that he was in need of mercy, — not merely the mercy that would cure his physical blindness, but the mercy that would forgive his sin, which he saw lay at the root of his physical condition. Surely, it cannot be denied that all of the affliction of this life is the gross result of man's departure from the living God. Blessed is the man who knows that by nature he is spiritually blind, a condition much worse than the plight of a man who has to walk with a white cane with a strip of red on it. Woe to the man who thinks he sees. There is no greater blindness than that!

But notice, too, a most blessed meeting which this blind beggar had with Jesus!

O, the matter was not so simple that all he had to do was cry, and he would obtain the audience he desired. There was a serious attempt to discourage him in his seeking for Jesus. We read that, "when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace."

The multitude were zealous followers of Jesus in the way, but little understood the Saviour and the purpose of His coming into the world. No, we do not consider them all to be constituted of Pharisees whom Jesus denounced as "blind leaders of the blind." Nevertheless they, too, were sorely in need of light. And they followed Jesus, perhaps in the same way many will follow a political leader, or attend one who has been signally honored in their race. In their estimation the Rabbi must not be disturbed, and surely not by one with so mean an occupation as the blind beggar. And so, they severely rebuked him for crying after the Master, and told him in no uncertain terms to keep his mouth shut.

Here we have something that happens frequently in a vivid way even in our day. Here is a sinner who knows, by the grace of God, his sin and spiritual blindness, and at the same time also the deep need of salvation as it is to be found only in Jesus Christ, who,



with this deep sense of need, cries out for mercy. But when he does so, men will turn on him and virtually do what the multitude did to Bartimaeus: tell him to be silent. O, we are not pleading for religious emotionalism, neither for a surge of fanatical revivalism. We are not asking for more "Amen's" and "Hallelujahs." Personally we are not a little irked by the superficial emotionalism one sees today, as well as by the hawking methods of revivalism that is thundered at us by radio and television. To us, much of it seems to be an attempt to put the sacred things of religion on a commercial scale. But we are pleading for a revival of religious fervor and the dissolving of religious indifferentism. When a sinner is brought by the grace of Jesus to see his sin and the need of the Savior, we despise the multitudes that would silence his cry, and plainly tell him to fall back into his darkness and poverty. And this is precisely what the multitude, wittingly or unwittingly, was doing to Bartimaeus. They understood not the sinner, nor the Saviour.

On the other hand, one who really understands his need, as this man did, is not to be silenced so easily. He will allow no obstacle to stand in his way of reaching the Saviour. What a wonderful insight this man had! Notice his address: "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." First of all, he knows Jesus, Whose name means: Jehovah is salvation, or Jehovah saves. That name means more than a mere appellation to distinguish one man from another. Even though He is also called Jesus of Nazareth in verse 47, this does not change the fact that the name, given to Him, not by his parents, but by God Himself at His birth, has the richest meaning. For when that name was given Him, it was said: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." And the apostle, in the Book of Acts, declares: "There is none other Name given among men whereby they must be saved."

Notice, too, that Bartimaeus is well aware of His true identity, for he adds: "Thou son of David." That means that he was conscious that this Jesus was the royal Son of David Whom God had said would come to sit on the throne of David forever. He was the promised Messiah, therefore, Whom Bartimaeus now recognized, not by physical sight, for he was blind, but by spiritual perception of faith. The very Messiah Whom the multitudes did not perceive, and Who later was rejected by them, Bartimaeus needs, because he realizes that alone in Him is to be found mercy and salvation. A wonderful insight, indeed, this man possessed.

Most importantly, notice how David's Son pauses in the way to call the blind beggar to Himself. As we suggested earlier, He is on the way to Jerusalem and the cross. On that way He must do the work given unto Him of the Father, — He must save those

ordained unto eternal life. Not one helpless, repenting sinner may He pass by. Right here, as the promised Messiah, He must also fulfill prophecy. Had not Isaiah predicted, "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness." And again, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." And once more he expresses what is expected of the Messiah, "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

So Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called.

Then said Jesus unto him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

What a searching question this is! The Saviour, conscious of His calling to save, draws from the sinner the cry for salvation, which He had first implanted in his heart. This is always the way He saves. We do not first sense our need of Him, and then look for Him to save. No, we are like Bartimaeus, whom Jesus came to meet. And when we meet Him He draws out of us the confession of our blindness, of our need. O, assuredly, Jesus knew what Bartimaeus wanted even before He asked. Had He not come the Jericho way expressly to give cure to this blind man? There can be no doubt of it.

Rabboni, that I might receive my sight!  
Wonderful meeting, indeed!

The Fountain of life and light, of mercy and grace, drawing near to the blind and halt, the miserable and wretched. And then, with bowels of compassion, asking the wretch to express in his own words his need. While the blind beggar, pouring out his soul in every word, replies: "Rabboni, I would see again." There is nothing on this side of heaven that is more wonderful than that!

Wonderful transition!

He, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus!

The beggar drops his rags, and you may understand here that he dropped everything else of self. He would hide behind nothing when he comes to Jesus. That's the way it must always be, sinner. Not with our own righteousness, which is but filthy rags. Just come naked, as you are. And then by faith cast yourself at His feet, and plead for mercy.

Saved by grace through faith!

"Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

Another way to be saved there is not!

And faith is a gift of grace!



## *Taking Heed To The Doctrine*

# **An Open Letter Regarding Christian Liberty**

*by Rev. David Engelsma*

Dear Brother A. M.,

Some time ago, I promised you that I would read the books and pamphlets condemning the Christian's use of liquor which you loaned me and that I would comment on their contention, shared also by you, that all use of alcoholic beverages is forbidden a Christian. Included among these materials are "The Christian and the Liquor Traffic" by Sam Morris (Wheaton, Ill.: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1951), "Christ, the Apostles, and Wine" by Ernest Gordon (Philadelphia: Sunday School Times Co., 1944), and "The Bible and the Use of the Word, 'Wine'" by Bertha Rachel Palmer (Evanston, Ill.: Signal Press, n.d.). I have now had the time to read these booklets and pamphlets and to study their argument. I trust that you have no objection to my answering you by way of an open letter. The question whether a child of God may drink liquor is one in which many have an interest, especially, because the issue of Christian liberty is involved, as you yourself pointed out to me.

In brief, the stand of these writings, and the stand which you defend, is that any use of drinks which could be abused so that drunkenness results is sinful. In other words, you contend that it is sin for a Christian to drink beer, wine, whiskey, or any beverage which, taken in excess, has the power to intoxicate. You condemn the position that, although it is sinful for a Christian to be drunk, a Christian may in good conscience use and enjoy liquor. Therefore, you are critical of Reformed churches in general and of the Protestant Reformed Churches in particular on this point, for Reformed churches do not teach total abstinence as part of a holy life, much less blow it up as virtually the essence of a holy life.

The only authority for determining whether a Christian must abstain from liquor is Holy Scripture. Listing one example after another of the ruin of lives, marriages, and homes by drunkenness has an emotional effect, but is not decisive for our question, whether all use of liquor is sinful. One could as well list all the misery that has resulted from the abuse of sex, in order to prove that all sex is evil and that all Christians must totally abstain. Only the teaching of the Bible may be the basis for our stand in this matter. For this reason, I will concern myself only with those sections of the books and pamphlets which you loaned me that allege to give the Biblical grounds for opposing liquor.

First, I will present Scripture's teaching regarding the Christian's use of alcohol. Then, I will consider the arguments raised against any use of liquor. The teaching of Scripture is clear. Scripture permits the Christian to drink a beverage, wine, which, if taken in excess, would make one drunk. Scripture nowhere forbids the Christian to drink an alcoholic beverage, but it forbids the Christian to be drunken. It should be most significant to you that never does the New Testament say to the saints, "Do not *drink*," but, "Do not be *drunken*." It does not forbid the *liquor*, but it forbids the *abuse* of it.

In Scripture, the alcoholic beverage spoken of and permitted to the saints is wine (in the Greek language, *oinos*). Now, I know that those who insist on total abstinence maintain that "wine" in the Bible refers, not to wine as we know it today, but to grape juice, that is, to a juice that would not be able to make a man drunk even if he drank a barrel of it at one sitting. But this interpretation of the word "wine" in Scripture is a pure fiction, nothing but a device by which they desperately try to avoid the plain teaching of the Bible that wine, a liquid that could intoxicate if taken in excess, is permitted to the saints. Grape juice simply is not wine, not in the usage of Scripture either. Never in the Bible does the word "wine" refer to grape juice. It always refers to the fruit of the vine which has the power to intoxicate. We need not chase here and there, from one obscure, secular authority to another, to discover whether in Bible times "wine" really meant "grape juice." The Bible itself makes plain that when it speaks of wine, it means *wine* — a drink from the grape that will make a man drunk if he drinks too much. Ephesians 5:18 is conclusive: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." "Wine" here is not grape juice, for it is something that a man could possibly get drunk on. "Wine" is an intoxicating drink, liquor. The apostle does not command the saints not to drink wine, but he commands us not to *get drunk* on wine (or, by implication, beer, whiskey, or any liquor). The reason for the prohibition is that in drunkenness is "excess." Literally, the word translated "excess" is "debauchery" or "profligacy." Inherent in drunkenness is dissoluteness of life. The saint who becomes drunk gives himself over to the power of his sinful flesh and thus sees to it that he behaves himself, whether in thought



and desire or in deed, as an unsaved man. But Paul's prohibition of drunkenness implies the right of a Christian to drink wine, an alcoholic beverage. In our drinking of wine, we must guard against becoming drunk.

This passage shows what the New Testament means by "wine" in every case. Jesus made wine at Cana, according to John 2:1-11. Apart from the evidence already presented that "wine" in the New Testament means an alcoholic beverage, how contrary to sound interpretation of Scripture to understand "wine" in John 2:3 as the alcoholic beverage, but to explain "wine" in verse 9 as grape juice.

In Luke 7:33,34, Jesus contrasts Himself with John the Baptist in that John, as a Nazarite, drank no wine (certainly, not grape juice), but Jesus did drink wine, so that His enemies called Him a "winebibber." It is as plain as day, from the mouth of the Lord Himself, that Jesus drank the wine that John abstained from drinking, that is, intoxicating beverage. Although He was no "winebibber," that is, a drunkard, a wino, Jesus was a "wine-drinker."

The fruit of the vine which Jesus incorporated in the Lord's Supper was wine, wine in the only sense Scripture knows of, a drink which invigorates a man and makes his heart glad, a beverage which, if abused, makes one drunk. Therefore, the Corinthians could do exactly that with this element of the sacrament, and we read in I Corinthians 11:21 that some of them wickedly became drunk with the wine of the Lord's Supper.

Also the wine that Paul told Timothy to use in I Timothy 5:23 was wine, not grape juice. It makes no difference that the reason for the use is "thy stomach's sake," for the fact remains that the New Testament clearly shows that some use of liquor is permissible. This is enough to refute the position of total abstinence.

The Old Testament teaches the same things, namely, that by "wine" is meant an intoxicating beverage and that this wine was legitimately used by God's people. Genesis 9:21 records that Noah became drunk on wine. Genesis 14:18 records that Melchizedek gave wine to Abraham after the battle with the kings. There is no need to list all the passages in the Old Testament that mention the legitimate possession and use of wine by Israel. Psalm 104:14,15 blesses Jehovah God for giving "wine that maketh glad the heart of man." Israel thankfully used and enjoyed this good creature of God.

To sum up, Scripture speaks of an intoxicating drink, wine, which it is permissible for the saints to use and which can be used rightly. But Scripture warns against drunkenness.

How then can anyone defend the proposition that any and all drinking of liquor is sin on the basis of Scripture? The fact of the matter is that this is

absolutely impossible. This becomes glaringly and painfully evident in the book by Sam Morris, "The Christian and the Liquor Traffic," which we may take as representative of all the other books and pamphlets defending total abstinence. Although it boastfully advertises itself as "a sledge hammer message," its efforts to prove that Scripture condemns drinking have all the force of a wet noodle. And since the teaching of the Bible is the one decisive thing as regards the question whether drinking is sinful, the entire book is a pitiful failure. Seldom do I come across such foolish interpretation of Holy Scripture. Not only do the passages to which he refers not prove what he wants them to prove, but they often prove the very opposite.

The proposition which the book wants to establish is this: "The Bible magnifies total abstinence." In other words, the Bible forbids us to drink alcoholic beverages at all. The book claims to give us Biblical grounds for this position. What are these "sledge hammer" blows against our use of liquor?

The first Biblical ground for opposing liquor is the statement in Deuteronomy 29:6 that the children of Israel drank no wine or strong drink during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. From this simple statement of fact the book infers that drinking wine is sinful. That this is an erroneous inference the book could have learned by reading the first part of the text where Moses reminds Israel that they also did not eat bread during the forty years. May we conclude from this that eating bread is sinful? At times, God's people abstained from perfectly legitimate activities because of a certain purpose God intended them to fulfill during that limited period. For example, Israel had to abstain from marital relationships at the time of the giving of the law (Exodus 19:15). Shall we conclude from this that marital relationships are sinful? This is foolishness.

The next ground against liquor is Jeremiah 35:1-14, God's praise of the Rechabites for their faithfulness to their father's command not to drink wine. What the book conveniently omits to mention is that the Rechabites were also faithful to their father in not building houses and sowing seed. According to the argument of the book, just as this passage proves the sinfulness of drinking wine, so it also proves the sinfulness of building a house and sowing seed. Therefore, no Christian may drink liquor, build a house, or sow seed. This, mind you, is the "sledge hammer" against drinking alcoholic beverages. The correct understanding of the passage has nothing to do with the sinfulness of wine. The Rechabites were praised for being faithful to their father in all his commands, whereas Israel was not faithful to their Father's commands.

Another "sledge hammer blow" against drinking is Leviticus 10:8,9, which the book explains thus: "God commanded the priests to drink no wine nor strong



drink." This is not even a correct statement of the teaching of the text. The text does not flatly prohibit wine to the priests, but it forbids them to drink wine *when they go into the tabernacle* ("Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee when ye go into the tabernacle").

Next, the book proves total abstinence from the fact that in the Old Testament and in the case of John the Baptist in the New Testament the Nazarites were forbidden to drink strong drink (cf. Number 6:1-3, Luke 1:15, etc.). It is hard to believe that one who claims to be a preacher of the Word can handle the Scriptures in such a silly manner. It is, of course, true that the Nazarites were forbidden to drink alcoholic beverages. It is also true that they were forbidden to cut their hair. Shall I preach to my young men that not only is long hair permissible for men but also that cutting their hair is sinful for young men, because the Nazarites were forbidden to cut their hair? In fact, the case of the Nazarite proves neither the sinfulness of drinking strong drink nor the sinfulness of cutting their hair on the part of men. On the contrary, it proves both that drinking strong drink was legitimate for the ordinary Israelite and that men had short hair. The Nazarites were special servants of God. As such, they were distinguished by certain characteristics that set them apart from the rest of Israel. Among these were total abstinence and long hair.

Then, the book appeals to Romans 14:21: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." The argument of the book is that since Paul says that it is good not to drink wine, drinking wine is sinful. At least, the book here admits that it is a mistake to suppose that wine in the New Testament was grape juice and grants that wine is liquor, for Paul would hardly teach that it is good not to drink grape juice. The absurdity of the book's appeal to this text to prove the sinfulness of drinking wine is obvious. If Paul is teaching the sinfulness of drinking wine, he is also teaching the sinfulness of eating meat, for he says: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine. . ." If we follow the reasoning of the book, we must conclude that all Christians must not only be total abstainers but also vegetarians. In fact, Paul is not teaching the sinfulness of drinking wine or eating meat. Both of these activities are perfectly legitimate. Paul expressly says in verse 20, "All things indeed are pure." But there may be brothers in the Church that are not yet as strong in Christ as they should be. These brothers regard eating meats and drinking alcohol as sinful and may be offended when the stronger Christians do these things. Then, out of love for the brother, not because there is anything sinful in eating meat or drinking wine, the stronger Christians should give up eating meat, drinking wine, or whatever offends the weaker brother.

Finally, the book appeals to the texts in the Scripture that condemn drunkenness. At this point, one wonders whether the book is not guilty of deliberate deceit rather than mere ignorance. It is supposed to be proving that drinking wine is sin; instead, it shows that drunkenness is sin (which no one denies); then it loudly concludes: "See, I have proved that drinking is sin." In fact, it has proved only that drunkenness is sin (which we have insisted all along is the Biblical teaching). The same error is made in the pamphlet, "75 Bible References on Drinking." This pamphlet refers to I Timothy 3:3,8,11,12 and analyzes the texts thus: "Church officers must not drink; neither should their families." Actually, the texts condemn drunkenness, not drinking but drinking too much. These texts are illustrations of the truth that the Bible never condemns drinking wine (liquor), but only drunkenness. Similar passages are I Corinthians 5, I Corinthians 6, and Galatians 5, which the pamphlet refers to as condemning drinking. I Timothy 3:3 says that a bishop, or elder, must not be "given to wine." Once more, by the way, it is made clear that "wine" in the Bible is not grape juice but wine, for the Bible would not forbid an elder to be given to grape juice. The word translated "given to wine" is *paroinos* and means 'addicted to liquor, sitting too long at the wine, drinking too much wine.' Similarly, verse 8 declares that a deacon must be a man "not given to much wine." What could be more plain? Paul does not write: "A deacon must be a man who does not drink wine." But he requires that a deacon not be a heavy drinker, a drunkard.

Some effort is made to find in the Old Testament the prohibition of drinking that cannot be found in the New Testament. Especially Habakkuk 2:15, Proverbs 20:1, and Proverbs 23:29,30 are quoted. But all of these passages warn, not against drinking, but against drunkenness. In Habakkuk 2:15,16, the prophet condemns the man who makes his neighbor drunk in order to "look on their nakedness." Proverbs 20:1 speaks of the danger of misusing wine and warns us against being deceived, i.e., being drunken. Proverbs 23:29ff. condemns "tarry(ing) long at the wine," i.e., drunkenness. The man described in the passage is a drunkard.

Our examination of Scripture shows that total abstinence is a commandment of men, not a commandment of God. Some may think that it is a good commandment of men, but we Reformed people will not permit our consciences to be bound by the ordinances of men. This is part of our liberty in Christ. Only the Word of God binds our consciences, and the Word of God in the gospel is not a reversion to the stifling legalism of Judaism. We will let no man judge us in meat, or in drink (Colossians 2:16). Why should we who are free in Christ be subject to ordinances, "touch not; taste not; handle not" (Colossians 2:21)?



Christ has freed us from the intolerable yoke of men's commandments, whether those of the Pharisees, or those of a Pope, or those of the books which you loaned me. So vital is this principle to us that we would rather have all the ungodly world in a drunken stupor because of beer, wine, and whiskey than that one child of God should doubt his salvation because he disobeys man's commandment not to drink wine.

This, then, is our Reformed position on the saints' use of liquor. The believer may drink and enjoy alcoholic beverages. The believer may not be drunk. Drunkenness is sin. The impenitent drunkard shall not be saved. Since drug use is precisely the same as drunkenness, drug use is condemned as well. Condemnation of drunkenness also includes condemnation of parties that lead to drunkenness, beer parties among the young or highball parties of their parents. Nor may one drink for the wrong reason, e.g., to drown his sorrows, to obliterate his problems for a little while, or to feel joyful when he is troubled with depression. Instead, he should be filled with the Spirit. We in Reformed churches need to hear the admonition against drunkenness in the preaching, and we need to keep this sin out of the Church by the disciplinary labor of the elders, just as was the case in the churches addressed by the New Testament epistles. By no means are we silent on the subject of liquor in our churches. It also belongs to our Reformed position on liquor that if a man cannot use liquor without abusing it, he ought to give it up entirely. It is better to go to heaven without liquor than to go to hell with it. But he may not make total abstinence a law for all the Church, only for himself. And if we have brothers in the church who are offended by our drinking, that is, weaker Christians who are actually tempted to sin through our behavior, we ought to give up drinking, just as we should give up eating meat if this offended someone. This we would do out of love for the brother, not because we thought drinking a sin.

You also mentioned smoking to me. It is my judgment that as it becomes increasingly evident that smoking is detrimental to health, Christians ought to give up smoking, or not to start. The law of God that would apply is the 6th commandment, which our Heidelberg Catechism explains to mean, in part: "that I hurt not myself, nor wilfully expose myself to any danger." Of course, smoking would be but one of many implications of this commandment: over-eating and being too fat; dangerous driving; hazardous sports; etc. To single out smoking as the one great violation of the 6th commandment strikes me as odd. When people and churches do this, I wonder about their thinking. Is it perhaps the case that in their thinking the prohibition of smoking is not part of the 6th commandment which the saved Christian is called to obey in thankfulness, but that "not smoking" is, in reality, another ordinance of man, another legalistic

rule to keep in order to be saved, another "virtuous" abstinence from something pleasurable? Why is it that not drinking and not smoking are exalted to a place of preeminence in the Christian life above the ten commandments of God? Why is it that many who cry down woe on smokers go on, year after year, breaking the 1st commandment of the law of God by preaching and confessing a god who cannot by almighty grace save anyone, but is dependent on the supposed free will of man? The first part of a holy life is to love and worship the true God by preaching, believing, and confessing pure doctrine. The second part is to love the neighbor by doing good to him in word and deed. In comparison with this, smoking is next to nothing.

This brings me, dear brother, to the heart of the matter. There is something far more important involved in this discussion than merely the questions, "May a German Christian drink a glass of beer on a hot summer evening, and may a Dutch Christian puff on a pipe or cigar without jeopardizing his soul's salvation?" As I have already indicated, the essential truth at stake in our discussion is the liberty of the Christian in Christ. That is why I headed my letter to you as I did: "An Open Letter Regarding Christian Liberty." The Life in the world of the Christian man is one of freedom. glorious freedom. For it is a life under grace, not under the law (Romans 6:14). And as Romans and Galatians show us, this liberty is always threatened by legalists, law-preachers, who try to entangle us again in the yoke of bondage. This, we must guard against on peril of our soul's salvation. What do I mean by Christian liberty? This. Christ Jesus in whom I believe satisfied for all my sins and fulfilled all righteousness for me, so that I am free from all sin, death, condemnation, and hell and from all obligation to do anything to earn salvation. The Spirit of Jesus now dwells in me, freeing me from the enslaving power of sin, so that I can and do live a life of obedience to God, although not perfectly. Freed from pollution, I am free to serve God. My life of holiness to the Lord is not governed by the precepts and ordinances of men — my conscience is not at the mercy of this pope who says, "Thou shalt not eat meat on Friday," and that lordly Pharisee who says, "Thou art damned if thou eatest with unwashed hands," and that religious tyrant who says, "If you drink liquor, you go to hell." It is the law of God that is the sphere of the saint; it is the law of God that I obey, the law that says, "Love your heavenly Father Who saved you by His only-begotten Son with all your heart and mind and soul and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." And I obey that law out of the motive of thankfulness for a wholly gracious salvation. I am a free man in my conscious life, too. I am not a slave who has a list of "do's" and "don't's" scrupulously to observe lest he be punished. But I am a son of God who loves my Father and who freely, joyfully honors this Father with a holy life.



This is the Reformed conception of a holy life. There is a Reformed doctrine of good works. I am convinced that it is the Biblical conception. It is unique. There are other churches that display a certain strictness with regard to the lives of their members, but whose conception of the Christian life smacks of the legalism of the Judaizers. They view the Christian life as essentially a matter of external deportment; they emphasize man's commandments, in distinction from God's; they present obedience to these commandments as a matter of achieving salvation. I think that we Reformed churches ought to set forth the unique Reformed doctrine of holiness and good works more than we have done. Let us have some Reformation Day lectures on such subjects as, "The Reformation's Doctrine of Good Works," and, "The Reformation's Goal of a Church Zealous of Genuine Good Works."

I grant you that there are some among us who use our liberty for an occasion to their flesh. These damnable antinomians spoil our good testimony as far as others are concerned and make us stink in the nostrils of those who observe us from without. These enemies within leave the impression that the Reformed doctrine of liberty is, in reality, only the satanic idea of licentiousness. These are the people, young or old,

who practice drunkenness and revellings and the attendant lusts and lasciviousness. God will judge them. When they reveal themselves, as they inevitably do, faithful elders will discipline them, excommunicating them if they refuse to repent. But the presence of these abusers of grace and liberty in the Church is not strange. The Devil always sows tares among the wheat in order, on the one hand, to destroy the Church with the leaven of sin or, on the other hand, to destroy the Church by getting her, in reaction to this abomination, to revert to legalism. The Church, however, may never deny or silence the truth because wicked men abuse it. For the sake of God's elect, she must proclaim it. They must be and will be saved by the truth.

In conclusion, I can think of no better counsel than to advise you to read and study the third part of our confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, for an understanding of the Reformed view of the holy life of the Christian. Reading it, you cannot any longer entertain fears concerning our eager pursuit of holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Cordially in Christ,  
David Engelsma

## *From Holy Writ*

# Exposition of Hebrews 11:28

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

### *Hebrews 11:28*

In our text the writer to the Hebrews affords a last glance at what transpired in the land of Egypt. Israel had been dwelling here for four hundred thirty years. Now they will be leaving; the LORD will deliver them through *redemption* with blood. This will not be emancipation; it will be deliverance from sin and guilt, death and shame, for God's firstborn son, Israel. Had not God said: Israel is my firstborn son? And had Pharaoh not stout-heartedly refused to let God's firstborn son go to worship Him, but had kept him in cruel bondage?

In our text here we see the great faith of Moses in preparing the passover and the effusion of blood on the door-posts. This is the faith which does not draw back into perdition, but believes unto the saving of the soul. It is faith which looked to Christ, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. For let it not be overlooked or forgotten that Jesus makes the statement concerning Moses that if one believes Moses, one believes in Me, for Moses writes concerning (*peri*)

*Me!* (John 5:46) The subject in Exodus 12 is not Moses at all, but it is Moses' faith in the Christ of God. Strictly speaking, the Cross of Calvary was raised up typically in the land of Egypt. Israel comes out of Egypt by virtue of the love of God which He reveals in the shedding of the blood of the Cross.

This blood of the Lamb in Egypt made a separation. It is blood which is to be shed for the people of Israel, the firstborn son of God. It is rooted in sovereign election of grace, and is the fulfilment of the promise of God to the fathers. There are two kinds of firstborn sons in Scripture. The one is the firstborn after the flesh. This is the world in its power and splendor. The other is the firstborn after the promise of God. This is the church in the Firstborn Son, who is the Firstborn of all creatures as the Firstborn out of the dead. (Col. 1:15-20)

In this night all the firstborn of the flesh will die. Thus it is announced by Moses to Pharaoh. It will be the culmination of all the dreadful plagues of Jehovah God. God is the LORD, and Pharaoh and all Egypt will



acknowledge it; they will bow before the LORD! And God will save His own firstborn by the blood of redemption.

Only by faith does Moses perform the will of the LORD!

### THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED (*Hebrews 11:28*)

There is a difference of opinion amongst commentators whether the verb in the Greek, which is "*pepoieeke*" should be translated "celebrated" or "prepared," that is, "instituted." Delitzsch takes exception to Lunemann and others that the term should refer to both the institution and the celebration of the Passover. According to him it must simply refer to the celebration.

We believe that the term in the Greek must refer to both. In the first place, because the verb is in the perfect tense and indicates completed action up till the present. The aorist tense would have indicated the once-celebration in Egypt. However, what Moses did in Egypt reaches across the ages. It is to be an ordinance "forever." This does not mean that the Passover is still an ordinance in the Old Testament form. This was abolished by Christ at Calvary. It was "forever" in the limited sense that is ever indicated in this term when applied to the typical ordinance in Israel. And, therefore, the preparing of the Passover refers not only to the celebration in Egypt, in that holy night of God, but refers to the institution of the typical celebration of the Passover also through the ages. It is a picture of our Passover, the celebration of the Lord's Supper up till this present day. And it will be such till Christ comes upon the clouds, and then we shall eat of the vine, and drink the new wine in the kingdom.

We must, therefore, distinguish between the passover proper and the later celebration of the event. Our text refers first of all to the "passover" proper, to the historic event of the LORD passing over Israel in the night when He slew the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and of beast. This event happened in the land of Egypt! Writes Lange of the phrase "In the land of Egypt," "It is a mark of dominion of Jehovah in the midst of His enemies, that he established the Jewish community in the land of Egypt, and also the Christian community in the midst of Judaism, and the Evangelical community under the dominion of the Papacy. To the triumphant assurance in regard to the place corresponds the triumphant assurance in regard to the time: the Passover, as a typical festival of redemption, was celebrated before the typical redemption itself; the Lord's Supper before the real redemption, and in the constant repetition of its celebration it points forward to the final redemption, which is to take place when the Lord comes." (Commentary on Exodus)

We do not quite agree with the designation of "Jewish Community" in Egypt. It was the church of

the firstborn of God. Still it was a national community in Egypt. They were born a nation in this night. And thus they were formed and called forth in Egypt. And they are separated from the Egyptians in this night, that all the world may know that the Lord doth make this difference by blood. Here is the wonder of grace!

The passover was the passing over of the angel of destruction, the destroying angel with his glittering sword. And "when I shall see the blood, I will pass over," said the LORD to Moses. And in view of this the passover must be instituted.

In the second place, therefore, the passover was a typical feast celebrating the remembrance of the Lord's deliverance. It was the Old Testament Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In it the Lamb must be eaten in which a bone has not been broken. They must not eat Lamb stew, and Lamb chops, but they must eat the "body." The body must lie before Israel. They must eat it with bitter herbs, reminding them of liberty from the bitter service of Egypt, and of their present liberty in the LORD. They must eat unleavened bread reminding them of the bread of affliction (Deut. 16:3). The bread must be unleavened, for all that was of the sinfulness of Egypt must be left behind as an evil leaven which would leaven their entire lives; putting away the leaven was a token of complete sanctification of life without which no one would see the Lord. And this must be reenacted annually as the feast in the beginning of months.

This Passover was instituted by Moses by faith!

It was saving faith, justifying faith! It was the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It was faith which prepared the passover in the land of Egypt, (while Moses is still in bondage), which hoped for the great redemption of the LORD!

### THE SPRINKLING (EFFUSION) OF BLOOD (*Hebrews 11:28; Exodus 12:6, 7*)

The houses of the children of Israel must be safe in this awful, holy night of the LORD. At midnight the LORD would pass through the land; He would come as a thief in the night. And Israel must be watchful unto prayer and be hidden safely under the blood which the LORD Himself had prescribed. It was to be the Lamb, which God told them to prepare, whose blood was to be put on the side-posts of the door of the houses and on the door-lintel, that is, the upper door-posts.

Now either this was the LORD'S way of redeeming Israel in this night, or otherwise it is nameless superstition. To the Egyptian this must have seemed foolishness, and to many in Israel perhaps it was a stumbling-block. But to those who believed it was the power and wisdom of God. If this way of putting blood on the door-posts was folly it was surely wiser than men; and if it is weakness, it is stronger than men. In this night the wise will be taken in their own



craftiness. But Moses preached redemption in the blood; it was to be the blood of a year-old Lamb; it was to be without spot or blemish.

Israel must take this blood and put it on the door. Each head of the home must thus appropriate this blood by faith. Moses, too, must put it on his door. The law-giver cannot save Himself. He must be covered by the blood of the Lamb. He brings about an "exodus" out of Egypt, but Christ will fulfil the "exodus" at Jerusalem through His death and resurrection to bring Israel into the promised land. And in this faith Moses too takes refuge in this holy night under the blood. He does this with all of Israel by faith.

What a sight that must have been, to see all of the thousands of the houses of the Israelites with blood on the doors! Here is faith which does not look back, but it looks forward across the ages. How could otherwise the blood of a mere lamb save Israel. The blood of goats, bullocks and sheep never took away any sin. It perfected nothing. (Hebrews 7:19; 9:9; 10:1, 14)

No, this rite of putting blood on the door-post was never repeated at later feasts of the Passover. It need not be. The LORD only passed through Egypt in this night of nights. And Israel only needed the protection of blood and faith in this promised redemption by blood. Later they could relate to their children the meaning of this feast and could recall what the LORD had performed for Israel and against Egypt in this night. It was ever remembered in the high-points of Israel's faith. However, when Israel's faith wanes and

they do not walk in the thankfulness of redemption and forget God's Sabbaths, then they also neglect the feast of the Passover. At such seasons they do not look toward the end of the law, to Christ. They fall back then into perdition and do not press on to the salvation of the soul. But when they walk in faith, as did Hezekiah and Josiah who kept the feast, then they also walk in patience, looking for the reward of the LORD.

We, too, must have blood on our door-posts. We have covenant homes. And salvation is not a mere personal matter. It is for Israel, for the church in our generations. We put this blood on our door-post by faith in the blood of Christ. And we are safe under the blood; we have been saved from wrath. And if we have been saved through the death of Christ, we shall be saved much more through His Life.

The LORD sent His angel that night over Egypt with his destroying sword. Centuries later David saw this angel over Jerusalem with his sword. He killed many in Israel in the pestilence, when David had numbered the people contrary to the will of the Lord. Then David makes a sacrifice. And the LORD says it is enough. His mercy is in the way of satisfied justice! Payment must be made. And the LORD stays the hand of the angel of death. He *may* not enter into Israel's homes. God is just! He is faithful. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all unrighteousness.

Safe with the blood of the LORD on the door-posts by faith!

## *The Day of Shadows*

# God's Shut-in

*Rev. John A. Heys*

A shut-in is also a shut-out.

Those whom we call shut-ins are confined to their own homes, hospitals, nursing homes, or the like. But, when they are believing children of God, they are also shut out of God's house of prayer, and are unable to worship with the saints in the sanctuary.

It was not so with Noah. God called him to *come* into the ark, and He shut him in that sacred abode where, with his family, he was constantly with the church of God and before God's face. They were not shut out from the divine services of that day. They were shut in that place where alone such worship of God was to be found. And although we do not read of such worship services or deeds of worship — and surely there was no burnt sacrifice or slaying of a sacrificial lamb all that year and ten days — prayers ascended

from out of the ark up to God in heaven, songs of praise were sung to Him, and the telling and magnification of His sovereignty and tender mercy were heard with regularity.

Do we not read that Noah was righteous in this generation, and that God saw this? Surely, then, his righteous conduct continued in that ark and did not wear thin and wear out during that year and ten days. He found grace in God's eyes. And that grace of God abideth ever. It, before Noah entered the ark, enabled him, among a generation whose every imagination of the heart was only evil continually, to have a heart whose imaginations led him to worship God. How else will you explain the fact that after that year and ten days God brought Noah forth, and that we read that God remembered him? Surely it was a remembering of



him in mercy and grace as a righteous man. It was a mercy that faileth never, and a grace that abideth ever to keep the believer in the way of faith, the righteous in a way of righteousness.

And God shut him in with representatives of all the living creatures of the earth that creep upon it and have the breath of their lives in their nostrils, so that the waters of the flood would cut them off from this breath of life, if they were not taken into the ark with Noah.

The number of these creatures need not be large, even if we take the instruction to Noah to mean that he must take seven pairs of clean animals, rather than three pairs plus a seventh animal, as is usually held, the seventh one then being a male and prescribed by God in order that Noah may have it to sacrifice the day he came out of the ark on dry ground.

There is much in favour of the stand that he was to take seven pairs of clean animals. There is, first of all, the fact that the marginal note (in Bibles that have them) tells us that the Hebrew reads "by seven, seven" rather than by sevens. The idea then being seven and seven, that is, because right after this statement we read, "the male and his female," seven males and their seven females. Then, too, God tells him to take the male *and its female* and gives no instruction as to what kind that seventh would be, if there are only three pairs and one single beast. And surely to have seven pairs would insure a supply of sacrificial animals – and Noah has not yet been told that man may eat the flesh of animals, for that comes in chapter 9:1-3 – more quickly than three pairs, after the seventh animal is slain.

The point, however, is that even with seven pairs of clean animals, the number of living creatures, whose breath of life is in their nostrils, and creep upon the earth, was not great, surely not as great as some would insist in order to ridicule the whole account and to try to show that this is fiction and not fact. And that, mind you, when they are dealing with the works of an Almighty God Who could of nothing create the whole world! Being limited at the moment to an English Bible and a Young's Concordance while on the mission field in Jamaica – and with a deadline to meet for the printer, to say nothing of the Editor-in-Chief, who has been very considerate and merciful – we have not the material at hand to give you the exact number of the animals of the world in their families. But it ought to be plain to all that many of the present forms of various animals – take for example the dog – were not in the ark in that form, but are the result of crossbreeding. And rather than weary you with technical terminology and statistics – which likewise we do not have access to at the moment – let it simply be brought to your attention that man himself has *since the flood* undergone some striking changes, so that man as we know him today was not in that ark in

the form in which we now see him. Consider that we have the white, the black, the yellow and even the red races. Now regardless of whether Adam and Noah were white or black, red or yellow as far as the pigment in their skin is concerned, man in only one of these colors of pigment of the skin went into the ark. And it is neither evolution, nor a denial of the truth of the flood and of the fact that Noah took representatives of all the living creatures which creep on the earth and have the breath of life in their nostrils into the ark, to say that today we have man in different forms than the one he was in when he entered the ark. Not only are there these different races with different pigment of the skin, but there are in the white race blondes and brunettes, blue-eyed and brown-eyed people; and look at the differently shaped noses and ears. There is the Roman nose and the pug nose as well as the strikingly pointed nose. The eyes of the oriental people differ from those of the Occident not in size or shape of the eyeball itself, but in the eyelids. Then there are the redheads, the unusually tall, and the dwarfs, and so we could go on. These are not a change of species, as evolution says of the animals in their various forms. And there were not, nor did there need to be a large number of kinds of animals in the ark.

Having collected them all Noah and his family began to go into the ark seven days before a drop of rain fell. It was not a quick dash to the ark when the sky began to lower and the waters began to fall. They entered in when it was to the unbelievers such a foolish thing to do and to the believer a wise work of God's grace. By faith Noah built that ark to the saving of his family, we read in Hebrews 11. By faith also it was that he entered into that ark when the need could only be seen by faith. For Noah and his family faith was the evidence of things not seen. And because the eye could not see the need for an ark, the eye could not see the safety of that ark and God's salvation in Christ. That is the folly of the world today. They see no sin because they have no eye of faith. And then they see no need for the cross and the blotting out of sin. Some in folly say that when they get older and death seems imminent they will seek refuge in Christ. Faith goes into the ark NOW! Faith runs to the cross today, because although the world has unprecedented prosperity, and the standard of living of man has never been so high, and it looks as though man will conquer this and that disease and make this world a better (?) place in which to live, faith sees the wrath of God upon sin, even when in creation there still is beauty and man has what he calls a good day physically and materially.

How the world of that day must have laughed when God shut Noah in that ark on a bright, sunlit day of the same kind men had seen and enjoyed all their lives. They laughed when he began to build. They mocked



when he continued to rebuke them and to continue with the work of the ark. But one hundred twenty years is a long time to mock, and they got weary of it and ignored him, even separating themselves further from him. Even the marvel of his collecting of the animals did not shake them; but when he walked into that ark, they reviled in their ridicule and mockery. It did seem such a foolish thing to do and such a good day to waste inside such an unnecessary and dark vessel.

But God shut him in. Let that comfort us whether we be shut-ins or not.

Of course, it does not mean that God shut him out of anything good. Rather does it mean that God shut him out of something very evil. The same word is used in Genesis 19:10 where we read of the angel pulling Lot away from the wicked Sodomites and into the house and then shutting the door. It was an act of mercy whereby God, Who called Noah to come into HIS ark, now holds Him before His face in tender compassion and love away from all the billows and waves of His wrath that will come on those outside of that ark. It does not mean, then, that in some natural and literal sense God locked him in that ark. For Noah was able to open the window and let out the raven. And there is no subsequent statement to the effect that after a year and ten days God opened the ark for Noah to leave. We do read that God told him to go forth, and Noah went forth.

No, God's shut-in was preserved and protected under the shadow of the Almighty. Yea the Hebrew declares that Jehovah shut him in. God did it from the viewpoint of being Jehovah the Covenant God, the unchangeably faithful God of our salvation, the I AM Who safely keeps His people and shuts them up in His hand out of which no man can pluck them.

So often and so easily a shut-in is inclined to think that God has shut him out. And that the shut-in is shut out from much of that which this earth can give, we will not deny. But the blessed truth, the gospel is that God's people are not shut out of the kingdom, and that the God Who shut Noah in that place of refuge and covenant fellowship with Himself never shuts us out of His kingdom. Instead He uses our deprivations, our sicknesses and diseases, and our death to shut us in the glory of His kingdom for ever. Noah was shut *in* the sphere of God's love and mercy. He was shut in Christ and the salvation that is in Him. And all God's dear children who are in distress and pain, and by them are kept out of His house on the Sabbath, may know and believe that although Noah and his family lost all of their earthly goods — and they did, although we seldom think of that and fix our attention on their safety and the protection of their lives in that ark — it all worked out and together for their good. And these present distresses are not that wherein God shuts us out of a blessing. They are that which He uses to draw us ever more closely to Himself.

Jehovah does that. It is reassuring to know that God shut Noah in and that Noah did not shut himself in that ark. It is reassuring to the shut-ins to know that God ordered their way into distresses and sickness and that He has shut us securely in Christ to go through our afflictions (as Noah went through the ark to a new world) to that fair land of the promise in Christ. As all of Noah's enemies were destroyed by the waters of the flood while he was shut in that ark, so all of God's shut-ins together with the rest of the church will have all their enemies destroyed, including that last enemy which is death, and forever be shut up in the blessedness of the new creation.

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## *All Around Us*

*Prof. H. Hanko*

Because our regular column has not appeared in the *Standard Bearer* for quite some time, there is a lot of news to catch up on. Perhaps there is even too much for one column, for the file in my desk where interesting items are stored for future use is jammed. But it does need cleaning out, and so we shall try to bring our readers up to date. The various news items do not necessarily appear in order of importance.

### **SECESSION AMONG SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS**

For a long time a battle has waged between liberals and conservatives within the Southern Presbyterian Church. The issues have been not only concentrated in

arguments over departures in doctrine, but also disagreements over membership in the COCU (Consultation on Church Union) talks, and union with the Northern Presbyterians.

Several conservative groups have sprung up within the Church who have made an effort to stem the liberal tide. These conservative groups have united and have formed the vanguard in a secessionist movement and are now in the process of forming a new denomination. Over two hundred congregations have already voted to join the new denomination, and there are hopes that more will follow.



The denomination that is in the process of being formed has as its goal the preservation of the historic Presbyterian faith and Church Order as contained especially in the Westminster Confessions.

This movement is somewhat different from the course of events in most denominations. There are struggles going on in nearly every major denomination in this country and abroad. But in most instances there are no efforts made to secede from a parent denomination which is going the way of apostasy. Usually the leaders seem to lack the spiritual courage to preserve the heritage of the denomination in a secessionist movement. The Southern Presbyterians are the exception.

### CONSERVATIVE VICTORIES IN THE MISSOURI SYNOD

The same struggle between liberals and conservatives has been firecely waged within the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. There too the fight was about the infallibility of the Scriptures, false teachings in the Seminaries and Churches, departure in doctrine and practice which permeated the Church.

Two years ago a conservative was elected as President of the Synod. During his tenure the battle concentrated in the struggle to clean house in the Synod's most important Seminary, Concordia. There a large part of the faculty were accused of teaching views contrary to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. President Preus launched an investigation which proved abundantly that it was true beyond doubt that Concordia had become a hotbed of heresy. But nothing apparently could be done until this year's Synod in New Orleans.

At this year's Synod, the conservatives won a solid victory. The votes on key issues were, according to reporters, divided 55% to 45% in favor of the conservatives. Preus was re-elected to a second term even though a well-organized movement had attempted to dump him. Men of the conservative forces were elected to most key posts within the denomination. And the way now seems cleared for Preus to pursue his goal of cleaning out Concordia Seminary and launching a major conservative counter-attack within the denomination to bring the Church back to historical Lutheranism.

This too is a rather surprising development. Usually when a denomination has gone as far as the Missouri Synod Lutherans, there is no turning back. The way downhill is steeper and travelled more swiftly. If Preus and the conservatives can effect a genuine return to historic Lutheranism within the denomination, this will be no small accomplishment.

The liberals however, are already anticipating final victory. They are convinced that, if they stay within the denomination, time is on their side and the final victory of the liberal forces is assured within the next

few years.

### NEWS ITEMS FROM THE NETHERLANDS

There are several news items from the Netherlands that are of interest. They are taken from recent issues of the *RES Newsletter*.

The first has to do with a new professor for theology in the Free University.

Dr. J. Veenhof of Basel, Switzerland, has been designated to succeed G. C. Berkouwer as Professor of Dogmatics in the Theological Faculty of the Free University of Amsterdam. Dr. Veenhof is the son of Prof. C. Veenhof (emeritus) of the Liberated Reformed Churches (buiten verband) in Kampen and is at present a pastor of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Basel. He will begin his duties in the fall.

Dr. Veenhof earned his degree (cum laude) at the University of Gottingen under Prof. Otto Weber. His dissertation dealt with the views of Herman Bavinck on revelation and inspiration.

Prof. Berkouwer retires on June 8 at the age of 70. He has occupied the chair of dogmatics at the Free University since 1940.

This is the first time in the history of the Free University that a man has occupied the position, held both by Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, who is not a member of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The appointment emphasizes the inter-denominational character of the Free University.

Observers find it significant that the successor of Berkouwer is not a proponent of the 'New Theology.' Dr. Veenhof represents a conservative theological position.

Another article has to do with relations between the churches in the Netherlands and South Africa. It reads:

There has been a cooling process of recent years between the Reformed Church in South Africa (GKSA) and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN). Both churches have had close ties since their origin in the previous century. In recent years doubts have arisen whether to continue the present relationship of "correspondence." A church in correspondence with another church freely accepts transfers of pastors and members. The two churches were among those that arranged the initial Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1946 of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The recent General Synod of the Afrikaner church received overtures from a number of regional assemblies that the relationship now in effect be discontinued. The objections against the Dutch church centered in three areas:

(1) The theological views of Professor Harry Kuitert concerning Genesis and the resurrection and return of Christ, and the views of Dr. Herman Wiersinga on reconciliation. These cause much concern in South Africa.

(2) The church order which the GKN adopted in 1970 reveals different viewpoints concerning church office, authority, and polity.



(3) The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands recently became members of the World Council of Churches in opposition to the advice of the RES.

Within the Dutch Church also persons have become unenthusiastic about their relationship with the Reformed Church in South Africa. This dissatisfaction stems from the support of the Afrikaner church to the racial policy of apartheid in South Africa.

The General Synod did not adopt the proposals that the relationship be terminated on the ground that not everything that is possible and obligatory within the "correspondence" relationship to bring about a more satisfactory relationship has been done. An article in *Die Kerkblad*, official organ of the Reformed Church in South Africa, stated that within the next three years a careful study will be made and the matter will be brought to the Synod of 1976.

In an article in the Dutch *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, Professor Herman Ridderbos reflected upon these interchurch developments and urged that for as long as it is possible the present relationship should be maintained. "It is no art to be in 'correspondence' so long as there is no cloud in the sky and it is limited to presenting friendly addresses to each other's Synods, and to transferring members and granting pulpit exchanges. But fellowship between churches is only then tested for its authenticity and strength when both parties have reason for criticism. Another advantage is that as long as the churches remain in correspondence with each other, various misunderstandings can be removed in the mutual exchange and all sorts of unjust criticism can be corrected." ...

#### **BILLY GRAHAM, KEY 73 AND THE JEWS**

Key 73 has come under some criticism because it was concentrating its zeal upon Jews to work for their conversion. This was especially distasteful to Jews themselves and seemed to be at odds with the general ecumenical spirit which prevails in today's churches.

To answer the critics Billy Graham issued a public statement which was not only intended to be a defense of Key 73, but which also had a great deal to say about the nature of Key 73, its evangelistic methods, and Billy Graham's own carefulness in maintaining a proper and acceptable ecumenical approach. The statement reads:

The reports about a growing misunderstanding in Christian-Jewish relationships over Key 73 has

become a source of concern to me. In order to help ease some of these tensions, I want to explain my own position. While I have not been directly involved in the developing organization of Key 73, I have from the beginning publicly supported its concept.

First, as an evangelist, I am interested in establishing contacts with all men concerning personal faith in Jesus Christ. Implicit in any belief is the right of sharing it with others. The message that God is Love prompts any recipient of that love to declare it to others.

Secondly, just as Judaism frowns on proselyting that is coercive, or that seems to commit men against their will, so do I. Gimmicks, coercion, and intimidation have had no place in my evangelistic efforts, certainly not in historic biblical evangelism. The American genius is that without denying any one expression of their convictions, all are nevertheless partners in our society. The Gospel's method is persuasive invitation, not coercion.

Where any group has used overbearing witness to seek conversions, the Bible calls it "zeal without knowledge." I understand that it is the purpose of Key 73 to call all men to Christ without singling out any specific religious or ethnic group.

Thirdly, along with most evangelical Christians, I believe God has always had a special relationship with the Jewish people, as St. Paul suggests in the book of Romans. In my evangelistic efforts I have never felt called to single out the Jews as Jews nor to single out any other particular groups, cultural, ethnic, or religious.

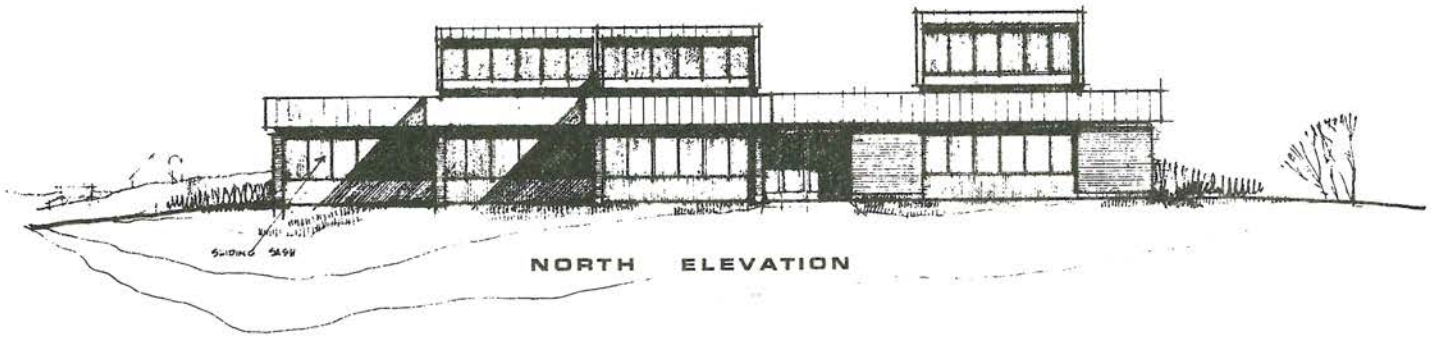
Lastly, it would be my hope that Key 73, and any other spiritual outreach program, could initiate nation-wide conversations, which would raise the spiritual level of our people, and promote mutual understanding.

#### **EVOLUTIONISM A THEORY IN TENNESSEE**

Following what has happened in the public schools in some parts of California, the Senate of the state of Tennessee voted to require all books dealing with human origins to label evolutionism as a theory. The Senate also agreed that other theories of origins should have equal space in textbooks, including the account of the Scriptures. The idea is not to forbid the teaching of evolutionism, but to give all views equal time and leave the actual decision up to the student. There are similar movements being started in other states.

**KNOW THE STANDARD, AND FOLLOW IT. READ THE STANDARD BEARER.**





## Feature

# The Seminary Building

## A PROGRESS REPORT

"We have begun building!" Our last report anticipated such a beginning of this article. And it is true. Not a great deal can be seen yet of the building, but progress ought to be fairly rapid in future weeks.

But before speaking of building progress, we ought to go back a bit. The "Blue-Ribbon" Committee had completed the work toward acquiring the seminary building site and had instructed the architect to complete the blueprints. All this was finished not very long before our last Synod met on June 6. The next step was to submit the plans to the various contractors for their bids. Then the total of the lowest bids would be added up, and we would know what the cost of building would be. We waited with some trepidation for the figures to come in.

A special meeting was called by the "Blue Ribbon" Committee to discuss the results of the bids. On June 5, after the Synodical prayer service in Hudsonville, the Theological School Committee and the "Blue Ribbon" Committee met. There were some long faces at that meeting. A member of the "Blue Ribbon" Committee admitted that he had not slept much the night after the bids were totalled. He felt that somehow the "Blue Ribbon" Committee had let down the Theological School Committee and our Synod too. The Synod of 1972 had approved the expenditure of approximately \$105,000 for building and land. But this was the estimated cost for the old building site next to Southeast Church. A new site would involve the committee in added expenses. Inflation would increase the cost of the building. We had discussed how much above the figure Synod had approved we could go — yet remain within the intent of Synod. We were ready to proceed if the figure were only reasonably above the \$105,000. But the figure the "Blue Ribbon" Committee submitted went beyond what they and we anticipated. Hence, the long faces.

The figure? \$153,000.00. We had only one alternative. We would present the figure to Synod for

its approval.

Synod began meeting the following day, and later in the week dealt with this question of the Seminary building and its cost. Unanimously, Synod approved the figure and instructed the Theological School Committee and the "Blue Ribbon" Committee to proceed with construction. Needless to say, the action of Synod was very encouraging for both of these committees.

Synod took further action. It decided to authorize the Theological School Committee to borrow from surplus Synodical funds at 5½% interest, to borrow from other sources if necessary, and to conduct annual drives in our churches till the Seminary Building is completely paid for. One striking thing: Synod intends that all these funds be raised through *voluntary* contributions. The "easy way out" would have been to lay assessments on all the churches for this building. After all, the money comes out of the same pockets anyway. But in raising the money on a voluntary basis, each can give according to his ability, and all can show their real and personal interest in our seminary. Nor have the members of our churches failed in our expectations, but have far exceeded them. Who would have thought a year ago that by now we would have received an average of \$132.00 per family for this cause (in cash and pledges)? Each church will be hearing more about the annual drive shortly.

### Building Progress

The week after Synod took its decision to proceed with building, the ground on the site was prepared for construction. Several weeks later, the foundation was laid; later yet, the cement walls were poured to the ground level. At present, electrical and heating work is being done before the cement floor is poured.

There have been a few delays. There will likely be some in the future. But the picture looks bright. Much of the materials for the building has been purchased and only waits the time for its need when it will be



delivered to the site.

The Theological School Committee also had the opportunity recently to purchase much of the necessary furnishings at only a fraction of its retail cost. This included tables, desks, 70 stacking chairs for the assembly room, and much other equipment. We are indebted to Steelcase, Inc. of Grand Rapids for the opportunity of obtaining all this equipment.

When will the building be finished? No one dares make a firm commitment. However, there seems every reason to believe that we will begin using the building by the beginning of the second semester of the school year (mid-January) — and perhaps sooner.

Take time out, if you are in the vicinity of the site, to visit. The location is at about 4949 Ivanrest, S.W. One can drive directly up to the point of construction. We can assure you, you won't be disappointed.

#### Finances

At present, we have \$106,431.69 in cash, assets, and pledges. This represents some \$14,500 above the sum reported in the last article. We are much encouraged by this. We have \$74,630.19 in cash and assets, and \$31,801.50 in unpaid pledges.

Now for some of the hard facts. By the end of this year, we will have to raise virtually all of the \$153,000.00. If we subtract our present assets, we arrive at the figure of \$78,370.00 to be borrowed (of this amount, \$31,801 is already pledged, \$46,569 is yet to be raised). The committee will have to find sources from which it can borrow this sum (part of which can be borrowed from Synodical surplus funds).

The committee is agonizing over this now.

On borrowed money, as everyone knows, interest must be paid. And interest rates have gone up greatly just the past few months. The churches can be saved a great sum of money if we have cash on hand. We would like to suggest, therefore, that those who can do so, pay their pledges as soon as possible. Those who intended to contribute, but for some reason have been putting it off, we urgently need your help NOW. If each of our families and working young people and individuals contribute an average of \$150.00, we will be able to meet all of our commitments. We have received so much from the Seminary God has given us during the past 50 years; now in a tangible way we can show a bit of our gratitude by providing a building where professors and students can labor with joy.

We do want to thank the generous giver. We have already received far more gifts than we had believed possible only a year ago. Our present plea for additional funds is not meant to suggest stinginess on the part of our people. Hardly so. Only, now that we have come so close to the reaching of our goal, we can only think that a little additional help from each of us will put us "over the top."

Before long, we do hope to present to you the plans for the dedication of our new Seminary Building. Watch for these. We would like as many of you present as can possibly come.

*The Theological School Committee  
(by Rev. G. Van Baren)*

## Studies in Isaiah

# Isaiah's Prophetic Vision

*Rev. Robt. C. Harbach*

*The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amotz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

(Isaiah 1:1).

*I. The Nature of the Prophecy.* The above verse forms the title to the whole book of Isaiah, and is certainly understood as such in the words of the writer of II Chronicles 32:32. "It is called a vision, not from any use of the corporeal sight (II. Cor. 12:1-4), but because of the clearness and evidence of the things revealed." The Lord many times did reveal himself to the physical eye, as we know from II Pet. 1:16-18; Gal. 1:11, 12; Jn. 6:69; I Jn. 1:1; Acts 4:20. But we have a revelation from God which is "also a more sure word of prophecy" than that spoken audibly and visibly from

heaven, "prophecy of the Scripture," which was not ever brought by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke that sure word of prophecy as carried along by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:19-21). What the vision signifies then is a *prophecy*; prophetic vision is intended, divinely inspired Scripture. Receiving the vision by supernatural inspiration, he was awake, "having his eyes open," and objectively "heard the words of God," and "saw (with the eyes of his mind) the vision of the Almighty" (Nu.24:4), and came not with his own conceptions or ideas. For "the Lord came



down. . . and *He* said, 'Hear now *MY* words. If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known unto him in a vision. . .'" (Nu.12:5f).

The name *Isaiah* means "the Salvation of Jehovah," and is synonymous with Joshua, Hosea, Jesus and Elisha (My God is Salvation). The very name of the prophet serves to declare the subject of his message and ministry, and reveals the truth that Jehovah provides the Savior for Judah and Jerusalem who would come and save them. The last part of the name is *Jah*, who is the God, author and director of history, who has made the goal of history the salvation of a people, and the restitution of all things. Jehovah is the Eternal God, who is, who was and who is to come, the Beginning and the End (he arche kai to telos). *Isaiah* was the son of Amotz (Strong), and only ignorance of the language connects him with the prophet Amos (Borne up).

The vision or prophecy was given "*concerning Judah*" or (bearing) *upon* Judah and Jerusalem. The thrust of the book bears strictly upon Judah and Jerusalem, therefore, not, indeed, upon a natural Israel restored to an earthly Canaan, but on God's covenant people, the children of Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem (so plainly identified in Heb. 12:22,23), the Israel of God, the *qahal Jehovah*, church of the Lord. Everything else in the book is subservient to that subject. We may see here concentric circles, with Jerusalem at the center, Judah in the circle around it, Israel in a wider circle, and the heathen nations forming the outer circle. There is the familiar figure of the organism of the reprobate shell encircling the elect kernel. The Lord speaks through the prophet first of all to Judah and Jerusalem, and then speaks of others, other nations, only for Judah and Jerusalem's sake. The book is laden "with many allusions throughout to the coming of the Messiah, to the conversion of the Jews under the gospel, to the destruction of the enemies of the Church. . . and the final triumphant perfection of the Church." <sup>1</sup>

*II. The Subject of the Prophecy.* Judah represents the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, and is particularly mentioned as a tribe from which the Messiah should come. Jerusalem is mentioned because the Messiah would appear there, and from there the gospel would go into all the world, and because it is a type of the above Jerusalem, the true church. The book contains prophecies of the New Testament church, of the distinctively gospel age, and of the coming of Christ, as well as prophecies concerning the calling of the Gentiles, the destruction of national Israel, the preservation of the spiritual remnant, the destruction of antichrist and the New Heavens and New Earth. Emphasis is then upon these two tribes, the ten tribes or Ephraim receiving emphasis in the prophecy of Hosea. *Isaiah's* prophecy, as "all Scripture, is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching"

God's elect, for "to them pertain the oracles of God." Also it is a means of reproof and correction in righteousness, for Judah and Jerusalem are chosen (Ps. 78:65) and principally righteous in Christ. God is known in Judah, His tabernacle is in Salem (Ps. 76-1,2); therefore judgment must begin at the house of God. Written in evil days and times of apostasy, it is intended for the comfort of God's people, for even in such times it is intended that "the children of Zion joy in their King."

*III. The Date of the Prophecy* was in the time of these four kings of Judah. Hosea and Micah were contemporaneous with *Isaiah* and these kings (Hos. 1:1; Mic. 1:1). *Uzziah's* fifty-two years was the longest reign so far in Judah, being second only to that of *Manasseh's*. There were elements of both a David and a Solomon in him. Like David, he was exceedingly strong, had a great army, and was a great administrator; like Solomon, an eminent agriculturist and engineer. For he built Elath, raised up forts, fortified Jerusalem, manufactured armor and devised missile weapons. His reign began well, honoring the law of God. But great prosperity proved too much of a temptation for him. Through pride he forgot whose servant he was, intruding upon the office of priest and the sacred precincts of the temple to burn incense. But the stroke of leprosy drove him from the attempt.

*Jotham*, in sixteen years, contributed many material improvements, building cities, castles, towers and housing developments. Spiritually, he was weak, not a reformer, nor a leader of the people, who were very corrupt. In his tenure the Ammonites were put down, but *Pekah*, king of Israel, and *Rezin*, King of Syria, began a conspiracy against him. But he died and passed on his troubles with these two to *Ahaz*.

*Ahaz* also reigned sixteen years, but the spiritual and moral decline of the kingdom which began with *Rehoboam* now came to the lowest it had ever been. Open apostasy prevailed. Images of Baal and heathen altars on the high places were among his flaunted evils, topped off with his abominable practice of sacrificing his children to Moloch, burning them in the Valley of Hinnom. Since the Lord in His just judgment punishes sin not only in eternity, but in this life immediately, wrath upon *Ahaz* came swiftly and terribly. The kingdom of Israel, itself almost expired with its last gasp, brought him to terrible defeat. The Syrians, hard pressing him, drove him from Elath on the Gulf of Akabah, depriving him of the rich commercial traffic with India. Simultaneously, the Edomites and the Philistines were a thorn in his side. When he tried conciliating the king of Assyria, he found from that quarter no help but rather more distress. These calamities blinded and hardened him more. He sacrificed to the gods of Damascus and shut up the house of the Lord. If his reign had not been cut off by his early death at the age of thirty-six, the kingdom of



Judah may well have come to an end when Israel did. As it was, Judah lasted 150 years longer than Israel.

With Hezekiah and his twenty-nine year reign came revival to Judah. A man of faith under Isaiah's inspiration, he wholeheartedly set out to restore the entire religion of Jehovah as delivered to Moses. He called the people from the whole length of the kingdom of Israel to the restored passover at Jerusalem. He removed the high places, the images, the groves, the brazen serpent. He trusted in the Lord his God and clung to Him. The great historical event of his reign was the clash with Sennacherib of Assyria, one of the greatest warrior kings of ancient times. He enjoyed victory over the Philistines. Israel was taken captive in the sixth year of his reign. He rebelled against Assyria, appealed to the prophet Isaiah for counsel from the Lord, prayed in the house of God for deliverance and was delivered by the Angel of the Lord who struck dead 185,000 of the Assyrian army. Becoming ill, he recovered under Isaiah. Foolishly, he showed his treasures to the Babylonians, and when Isaiah prophesied of the Babylonian invasion and captivity, Hezekiah cared little. Thus in Judah there were some marks of reviving, as under Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah and Josiah. Yet there was but little reformation. God was destroying the earthly kingdom.

Here a quotation from John Calvin is much in point. "All the servants of God ought carefully to . . . consider how patiently they ought to submit to their condition, how hard and difficult soever it may be, and ought not to reckon it a disgrace that they must endure many and severe trials. . . It is indeed a very severe trial when they perceive that by their manifold exertions they are doing no good, and imagine that it would be a thousand time better to relinquish their post than to labor so long in vain. . . Call to remembrance how Isaiah, whose labors were numerous and extensive, had little success, and how Jeremiah continued for fifty years to cry aloud to the people, though the result was that they became more and more rebellious, and how no difficulties could turn them aside from their course. We, too, ought to proceed in the discharge of our duty, and patiently endure every kind of annoyances. . . The unshaken firmness and unbroken courage with which he persevered ought to excite all the servants of God to imitation, that they may never bend or turn aside from the right path." 2

1 *Manual of Bible History*, Wm. G. Blaikie, T. Nelson & Sons, Longon, 1886, 316-17.

2 *Calvin's Commentaries*, Associated Publishers & Authors, Grand Rapids, Mich., Vol. 3, Isaiah, p. 3.

## Book Reviews

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

*Calvin's New Testament Commentaries (Torrance Translation), Vols. I, II, and III* (Harmony of the Gospels, plus James and Jude); Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.; each volume \$7.95. Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

The publication of these three volumes marks the completion of the New Testament section of the new twelve-volume set of the Torrance Translation. The Eerdmans Company is to be congratulated on their publishing of such a set as this.

Calvin needs no special recommendation. Anyone who is building a library of sound and dependable commentaries should think first of Calvin. And even though I personally could not and cannot see a dire need and a great benefit in a new translation, nevertheless I can only be happy about the perpetuation of the exegetical heritage handed down from Calvin. Moreover, I can understand that some will benefit from the modernization of the language in this translation; and, in so far as I have checked up on these three volumes, the translation appears to be a good one, comparing favorably with the Pringle translation.

A few informative notes may be in order. The Harmony of the Gospels was the last of Calvin's Commentaries to be written. Calvin wrote on all of the New Testament, except II and III John and Revelation. Volume I (336 pages) covers Matthew 1-10:42; Mark 1-9:41; and Luke 1-14:33. Volume II (320 pages) comments from Mark 6:12 and Luke 9:6 through Luke 19:44. And Volume III (352) comments from Matthew 21:10; Mark 11:11; and Luke 19:39, through the end of the Synoptics. In addition, the commentaries on James and Jude are included with Volume III. Perhaps it should be noted that this new set is not arranged so as to be compatible with the old set — just in case any reader might be considering filling in an old set with volumes from this new set.

The volumes are neatly and attractively published and appear to be well bound. And in today's market, the price is not exorbitant. Recommended for your reference library.

*The Five Points Of Calvinism, A Study Guide*, by Edwin H. Palmer; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids,



Mich.; 109 pages, \$1.95 (paper). Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema.

This little book is a rather traditional treatment of the Five Points of Calvinism. By this I do not mean to say that in many of its parts the book is not orthodox. But the book is rather prosaic. It does not sparkle. It lacks dynamic.

There are some good points. One of these is that it furnishes explicit Scriptural proof in many places. It also points out where Calvinism and Arminianism differ.

The book is badly marred, however, by its insistence upon common grace and "relative good" of sinners in its treatment of total depravity. It is marred by its insistence upon the "offer of the gospel" in connection

with limited atonement, as well as by an extremely unsatisfying treatment of the contradiction between the two. And, to say the least — and more could be said if a detailed critique were to be written — the chapter entitled "The Great Mystery" is hardly useful as a study *guide*. This treatment of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility would be confusing to anyone seeking guidance.

To sum things up, it simply does not work to "hedge" in maintaining Calvinism. One is either a consistent Calvinist, or he gets himself into trouble by "hedging."

Sorry, but I cannot go along with the jacket-claim that this book is "ideal for group and class use as well as for individual study."

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Board of the R.F.P.A. extends its sympathy to the family of

MR. JOHN BOS,

one of our board members, who was taken home to glory so unexpectedly, and also to our fellow board member, Mr. Richard Bos, his brother.

"I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." (Psalm 119:75.)

Mr. John Kalsbeek, Pres.  
Mr. Don Knoper, Sec'y.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

First Church Choral Society of Grand Rapids, Michigan extends its sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Mary Bos, and to her family in the sudden loss of their husband and father,

Mr. John Bos

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Psalm 55:22)

May the God of all grace so comfort and strengthen them in the assurance of His promises.

Mr. Edward Ophoff, Pres.  
Miss Pat Looyenga, Sec'y

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby express their sincere Christian sympathy to Mrs. John Bos and her family in the death of her husband, and their father,

JOHN BOS

May our covenant God comfort them by His Word and Spirit.

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

(Job 19:25)

Mr. C. Lubbers, President  
Mrs. Peter Faber, Sec'y.

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Loveland, Colorado on Wednesday, September 5, 1973 at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. Delegates in need of lodging should notify the clerk of the Loveland consistory of their need.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk

## News From Our Churches

August 14, 1973

If we were to choose from this page one single news item to be that of the greatest significance for the churches of our denomination, it would probably be this, that Rev. R. Decker, pastor of our South Holland,

Illinois, congregation, has accepted the call to serve as third professor in our seminary. The possibility of a pre-seminary program in our school during the 1973-1974 school year, rested with that decision. The



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THE STANDARD BEARER

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fact that the Lord has provided for the need, must certainly be an evidence also of His blessing upon the labors there.

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At the time of this writing, Rev. Heys is considering the call to serve as Home Missionary, Candidate Hoeksema the call to serve as pastor in our Forbes congregation, and Candidate Joostens in our Jenison congregation.

Candidate Hoeksema, as you know, is currently laboring, at the request of the Mission Committee, with Rev. Lubbers in Jamaica. He and his wife left Grand Rapids on July 18, were met in New Orleans by Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers (who had spent an apparently fruitful week in Houston), and accompanied them on the last leg of the journey to Montego Bay, Jamaica. Candidate and Mrs. Hoeksema plan to remain on the island for a period of up to six months.

Before the Hoeksemas had been two weeks on the island, they were involved in an automobile accident. Mrs. Hoeksema, according to the August 5 bulletin of First Church, "incurred some cuts on the forehead and leg which required stitching, but she was able to come home afterwards." The incident occurred on a Sunday afternoon, when they were returning home early because of the cancellation of evening services due to heavy rains.

That physical stress has been the lot of our missionaries in Jamaica has been plain from past experiences of Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers, and also, we understand, of Rev. Heys. During the time that the pastor of our Holland Church was working in the Mission field, he suffered a hernia while changing a tire on his low-slung compact station wagon. That was on February 10. In July he submitted to corrective surgery in the Holland City Hospital. It is well that we heed the exhortation, found in First Church's bulletin, that we "remember our missionaries in Jamaica before the Throne of Grace."

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When will Rev. Harbach get back? Where is Rev. Schipper? Has Rev. Hanco left yet? If you've had as much difficulty as I, during the past few months, trying to keep track of the whereabouts of our ministers, you'll probably appreciate a short review of those activities, gleaned from July and August church bulletins. Rev. Kuiper, who had gone to Philadelphia at the adjournment of Synod, returned to Pella during the week of July 8. The work in Pennsylvania was then taken up, a couple of weeks later, by Rev. Harbach, whose visit was expected to extend from the last week

of July through the months of August and September. He planned to be there alone during the first month, and be joined by his wife during the second.

Rev. Veldman returned from New Jersey the last week of June. Rev. Van Baren made a short visit to Midland Park, New Jersey, in order to preach there on Sunday, July 1. Professor Hanco and his family left for that state on the 6th of July. The professor preached in Fairlawn (in the Patterson area) on the remaining four Sundays of July. He was followed by Rev. and Mrs. Schipper, who planned to carry on the work during the month of August.

On July 25 the Mission Committee considered a request from five families of the Patterson area to be organized as a Protestant Reformed Church. The request was granted, and the time for organization was set for the last part of August or the first part of September when Rev. C. Hanco arrives in New Jersey to succeed Rev. Schipper. The two will together officiate at the organization services.

According to an August 5 bulletin, the Mission Committee also received a request for assistance from five families in Houston, Texas. They asked that one of our ministers meet with them and hopefully begin working with them. The Rev. D. Engelsma was asked by the Mission Committee to investigate and preach there for three Sundays.

From a Hudsonville bulletin, this: "May the Lord bless these labors to the gathering of His church unto the Day of the Lord."

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The absence of various of our ministers has worked something of a strain on the pulpit supply during these vacation months. From Hudsonville's bulletin of July 29 we read that "Because of the shortage of ministers at present, our service will begin at 11 o'clock this morning. Next week, the Lord willing, we will be on our regular schedule. Rev. Hanco will preach in Holland at 9:00." From Grand Rapids' Hope Church bulletin: "Due to a lack of supply, our second service next Sunday will be at 2:00 P.M." And, from a Southeast bulletin: "Because of the shortage of pulpit supply for July, the pastor will be preaching three times today. After the evening service he will be preaching at Faith Church at 7:30 instead of the usual 7:00 o'clock service. Rev. R. Van Overloop will also be preaching three times. He will take an unusual afternoon service at Faith."

There is, yet, one other pulpit supply which is worthy of note. Seminarian Arie den Hartog spent the summer months in Forbes, North Dakota.

D.D.