

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE

The OPC and the “Free Offer” (2)

The Certitude of Eternal Mansions

Beginning: Studies in Isaiah

Mission News

Divorce and Remarriage (6)

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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Editorials

Editor's Notes

Changes

This seems to be the issue for department changes. Rev. R.C. Harbach has finished his series of *Studies in Election*; in this issue he begins a series of *Studies in Isaiah*. Rev. G. Lubbers is back in the department *From Holy Writ*; and he will continue his exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The new subject for Rev. H. Veldman's *Contending for the Faith* will be Eschatology, or the doctrine of the last things. Speaking of changes, Rev. Engelsma has also promised one for *Taking Heed To The Doctrine*; he proposes to present a study of what is called "Hyper-Calvinism," which should appear in the near future.

Publication News

By the time you read this, as many as three of our

RFPA publications might be temporarily unavailable. *Reformed Dogmatics* and *Behold He Cometh* are at the bindery; we hope to have them soon. If you have an order in for either of these volumes, please be patient. As soon as we receive a new supply, we will mail your copy. Our only paperback, *Whosoever Will*, priced at \$1.95, sold far beyond our expectations. The Publications Committee had expected a rather slow sale, due to the fact that this was a reprint. However, our current supply is sold out; a new printing of 2,000 is being ordered, and copies will soon be available. Needless to say, the Publications Committee is always happy about sell-outs of this kind.

Question Box

Questioners, please have patience. I have several questions on hand; but, as you tell from this issue, we

currently have an abundance and a wide variety of articles to present. *Question Box* cannot have unlimited space; but in due time we will try to answer all questions.

The OPC and the "Free Offer" (2)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

We are now ready, after furnishing in our previous editorial on this subject the historical background, to discuss the current Orthodox Presbyterian position on the so-called "free offer" as this is embodied and expounded in the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet, "The Free Offer Of The Gospel."

The basic issue, you will recall, developed (in the course of the Clark Case) into one that involved the preaching of the gospel. The complainants against Dr. Gordon Clark took the position *that the preacher must say that God sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobate through the preaching of the gospel.*

This, we must remember, is the heart and core of the whole controversy concerning the "free offer." The issue is *not* whether the preaching of the gospel is promiscuous; every Reformed man believes this. The issue is not correctly stated in the following question: *may and must the preacher say that God sincerely seeks the salvation of all men through the preaching of the gospel?* The "free offer" doctrine has often been formulated thus. And in a general way this is a correct formulation. But it does not "zero in" on the fundamental issue. After all, among "all men" are also God's elect. And there is no debate about the question whether God sincerely seeks the salvation of *the elect* in the preaching of the gospel. But the problem — not a problem for me or for any truly Reformed man, but for the supporters of the "free offer" doctrine — is that among "all men" there are the *reprobate* as well as the elect. And to state the fundamental issue correctly and accurately, in such a way that the specific issue stands out clearly, therefore, we must phrase it as follows: *may and must the preaching of the gospel say that God sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobate through the preaching of the gospel?*

The position which Dr. Clark took — and which we took in 1924 and still take today — is: NO!

The position of the OPC in "The Free Offer of the Gospel" is: YES!

The latter position we propose to examine in the light of Scripture and the confessions. In doing this, we shall quote at length from the pamphlet itself, so that we cannot be accused of misrepresentation or misinterpretation. And although the pamphlet itself fails to appeal to the confessions or even to attempt to justify its position in the light of the confessions, we expect to conduct our examination in the light of the confessions (both the Westminster Confession and our

Reformed confessions, especially the Canons): to us it is inconceivable that the confessions should be totally ignored in a discussion of this kind. It is both Presbyterian and Reformed to apply the test of the confessions to any doctrinal position.

The Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet is divided into three parts. First is a brief, but important, introduction. In it the authors set forth their position in brief, a position which is supposed to be a Reformed theology of the "free offer." The second, and by far the largest, part of the pamphlet is entitled "Scriptural Basis." In this section the authors produce their alleged Scriptural evidence for the doctrine of the "free offer." The third part is very brief; in it the authors present five conclusions.

We will begin with the statement of position furnished in the *Introduction*.

In the first two paragraphs we read the following:

It would appear that the real point in dispute in connection with the free offer of the gospel is whether it can properly be said that God *desires* the salvation of all men. The Committee elected by the Twelfth General Assembly in its report to the Thirteenth General Assembly said, "God not only delights in the penitent but is also moved by the riches of his goodness and mercy to desire the repentance and salvation of the impenitent and reprobate." (*Minutes*, p. 67). It should have been apparent that the aforesaid Committee, in predicating such "desire" of God, was not dealing with the decretive will of God; it was dealing with the free offer of the gospel to all without distinction and that surely respects, not the decretive or secret will of God, but the revealed will. There is no ground for supposition that the expression was intended to refer to God's decretive will.

It must be admitted that if the expression were intended to apply to the decretive will of God then there would be, at least, implicit contradiction. For to say that God desires the salvation of the reprobate and also that God wills the damnation of the reprobate and apply the former to the same thing as the latter, namely, the decretive will, would be contradiction; it would amount to averring of the same thing, viewed from the same aspect, God wills and God does not will.

This is about as clear a statement of position as one could desire. We may summarize it in the following statements:

1. According to the will of His decree, God wills the

damnation of the reprobate. According to that same will of His decree, God does not will the repentance and salvation of the reprobate. To assert that He does would involve one in a plain contradiction.

2. When one speaks of the free offer of the gospel, he is not dealing with the decretive or secret will of God, but with the revealed will.

3. According to the revealed will of God, He wills the very opposite of what He wills according to His decretive will, namely, the salvation of the reprobate.

Now the conclusion from the above position is obvious. It is this, that there are in God two wills, each willing the very opposite of the other.

We shall enter into this matter in detail a bit later in our discussion: for here we have the most basic issue in the entire debate about the "free offer." This is indeed a doctrine which involves one's *theology*, one's doctrine of God. Is there contradiction in God? Is there conflict in God? Or even, is there contradiction and conflict between God's Being and God's revelation? Can it be said — dare it be said — that God is *one kind of God* according to His eternal Being and His eternal thoughts (His decree), but that He is *another kind of God* according to His revelation (His revealed will), that is, according to His Word, the Scriptures?

In turn, this is, you will understand, an important question also with respect to a question that is currently much discussed, namely, revelation and Holy Scripture. Are the Scriptures trustworthy? Do they truly and correctly and accurately make God known to us? Or are God and His will and His purpose and His attitude really not the same as they are revealed to be in God's Word, the Scriptures? You see, these are important questions. It simply will not do to give formal assent to the authority and infallibility of the Scriptures, but then in actual fact to deny the *trustworthiness* of those same Scriptures. If you do so, you lose revelation and you lose all possibility of the knowledge of God. Either God is as He has revealed Himself to be in the Scriptures, or we cannot and do not know Him at all. In fact, either God has revealed His so-called decretive will in the Scriptures (and then it is *revealed!*), or we cannot even say that God has a decretive will, much less say that the contents of that decretive will is the damnation of the reprobate.

Now it is perfectly obvious that the authors felt the force of the contradiction in which they were involving God in the above quoted paragraphs. In fact, they mention it. They state the problem plainly in the last sentence. But what do they attempt to do? They attempt to escape the contradiction by proposing that there are two wills in God: the will of God's decree and His revealed will.

Do not say that this is not true. Do not say that they are only talking about *two aspects* of *one will*. For two aspects of one and the same will cannot

possibly be contradictory. When you consider the one will of God from two aspects, or points of view, it cannot possibly be said that God wills the damnation of the reprobate *and* that God does not will the damnation of the reprobate. There is no rational being who can possibly convince himself or be convinced of this.

Hence, the authors of this pamphlet involve themselves in something that is in a way worse. It is bad theology! It strikes at the very attributes of God's Being, namely, His *unity* and His *simplicity*. For the doctrine of two wills in God is a denial of these attributes.

But even so, the authors of "The Free Offer Of The Gospel" do not escape the contradiction; they only move it back a step by their doctrine of two wills in God. This is very easily tested. For do not forget that when they write about these two wills in God, they are nevertheless writing about God, the willing God. You may reduce the expression "the decretive will of God" to: "God wills, according to His eternal decree." And you may reduce the expression "the revealed will of God" to: "God wills, according to His own revelation." Put thus, the contradiction is as glaring as ever:

1. God wills the damnation of the reprobate.
2. God wills the salvation of the reprobate.

And no amount of mental gymnastics can persuade one to accept both propositions.

What is the practical result for the preaching? The preacher who holds to the doctrine of the "free offer" necessarily must let go of proposition No. 1. And he does so, too! He will not preach it. Nor, by the way, will he preach sovereign election at all consistently. And if he does occasionally mention reprobation, he will either give it mere lip-service or he will present the Arminian doctrine of conditional reprobation. It never fails!

But there is a second, very serious contradiction involved in the position of the "free offer." To make this plain it is necessary to quote two more paragraphs of the *Introduction*:

The question then is: what is implicit in, or lies back of, the full and free offer of the gospel to all without distinction? The word "desire" has come to be used in the debate, not because it is *necessarily* the most accurate or felicitous word but because it serves to set forth quite sharply a certain implication of the full and free offer of the gospel to all. This implication is that in the free offer there is expressed not simply the bare preceptive will of God (another will, the will of God's command, HCH) but the disposition of lovingkindness on the part of God pointing to the salvation to be gained through compliance with the overtures of gospel grace. In other words, the gospel is not simply an offer or invitation but also implies that God delights that those to whom the offer comes would enjoy what is

offered in all its fullness. And the word "desire" has been used in order to express the thought epitomized in Ezekiel 33:11, which is to the effect that God has pleasure that the wicked turn from his evil way and live. It might as well have been said, "It please God that the wicked repent and be saved."

Again, the expression "God desires," in the formula that crystallizes the crux of the question, is intended to notify not at all the "seeming" attitude of God but a real attitude, a real disposition of lovingkindness inherent in the free offer to all, in other words, a pleasure or delight in God, contemplating the blessed result to be achieved by compliance with the overture proffered and the invitation given.

The above language leaves much to be desired as far as clarity is concerned. And there is more to be criticized than the single point which we now make. The only item we now wish to point out is that here is a second contradiction with respect to God. For here it is emphasized that the "free offer to all" bespeaks an attitude of "lovingkindness" on the part of God. This is said to be "inherent" in the "free offer to all." And it is even emphasized that this is not a "seeming attitude" of God, but a "real attitude, a real

disposition of lovingkindness."

But do not forget that reprobation is not a mere formal decree to damn some. Reprobation means *divine hatred*! It means that God from eternity hates some.

Hence, here is the second contradiction in God which is posited by "The Free Offer of the Gospel":

1. God from eternity hates the reprobate, and reveals Himself as such.

2. God is filled with a real disposition of lovingkindness toward the reprobate, and reveals Himself as such.

Again, of course, the only "escape" from this contradiction is to keep silence about proposition No. 1 or to pervert sovereign reprobation into the Arminian heresy of conditional reprobation.

But let no one imagine that these are abstract theological problems. They involve God! They involve God's revelation and its trustworthiness! They involve the truthfulness of the preaching!

What must the preacher, as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, preach?

He dare not, in the name of Christ, preach both!

Meditation

The Certitude of Eternal Mansions

Rev. M. Schipper

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

II Corinthians 5:1.

For we know . . . !

Not only does the apostle give expression to the assurance of his own personal faith and hope, but he includes here the faith of the entire church of God. Together with the apostle the believing, regenerated body of Christ joyfully expresses its hope, which stretches out into the eternal mansions above.

Here is expressed the certitude of eternal, heavenly mansions!

We know, O yes, we know!

We know because we have been begotten again through the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. We have within us a new life that cannot be overcome by death. In principle we are become new creatures. And we know that He which raised up the Lord Jesus

shall raise up us also with Jesus. Concerning this there can be no doubt!

We know also that though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. And this renewing work of grace cannot be halted by the exigencies of physical death. Consequently, we know that when our earthly house is dissolved, we have immediately our building of God, eternal in the heavens. For God will not allow that we be found naked; but at the very moment we die, at that very moment He will cover us with our heavenly house, not made with hands.

Indeed, we know!

We know, first of all, that our earthly house of this tabernacle will be dissolved.

Mark well, the apostle does not mean to leave this a matter of uncertainty. Nor did he have in mind or anticipate the speedy return of the Lord that would prevent the dissolution of the body. When he declared, "if our earthly houses were dissolved," it was not his position that somehow he would escape dissolution. Rather, he looked upon death as imminent, as an objective reality. He means to say, therefore: we know that when our earthly house of this tabernacle will be dissolved, we will have at that very moment our building of God. When we go out of the one, we will immediately enter into the other. At the same time it is also true that so long as we remain in the present tabernacle, we cannot enter into the heavenly house. The earthly house must first be dissolved. And we know that it shall be dissolved; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Mark also that when the apostle speaks of the dissolution of the present tabernacle, he does not look upon this dissolution as a painful experience. Rather, there is expressed here something that is joyfully anticipated.

Understand well that the Word of God is not speaking here of death in general, an experience which comes to every man that is born of woman, of man that is born dead in trespasses and sins. If this were the case, then indeed the passing through death would be a most painful experience. In death all the ties to the earthly are cut off. And to him who is outside of Christ, death is the gateway to eternal death, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

But the Word of God here is speaking of the death of the children of God; of those who have within them a renewed inward man. It refers to the experience of those who in death lose an old man, which always made it so difficult for the new man to serve God. For such death is the complete liberation of the new man, the inward man.

Consequently the apostle does not have in mind the more or less philosophical distinction of the separation of soul and body; but the beautiful and scriptural distinction of the separation of the inward man from the outward man. (II Cor. 4:16) And the inward man of the Christian cannot be designated merely by the general term "soul," but it must be understood as the regenerated man in Christ Jesus, that can never die. That inward man alone remains through the dissolution of temporal death, — all the rest perishes.

To that outward man, that is dissolved, belongs all that makes the earthly house thoroughly earthly. It includes all that God originally formed out of the dust of the earth and breathed into it the breath of life, whereby man became a living soul. It is earthly because it is taken out of the earth. It belongs to the earth. It is earthly in character. And it returns to the earth. "Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return," such is the judgment of God upon the outward man that perishes.

To that outward man belong all the relationships which tie him to the present world; the relation to husband or wife, the relation of parent and child, of employer and employee, of government and society. To that outward man belong all the sufferings of this present time; not only the sufferings in general, but also the sufferings for Christ's sake. To that outward man belongs also his relation to the human race that is dead in sin and misery; in which relation he possesses a nature that is subject to the lusts of the world and is exposed to all its temptations. It is that outward man that moves him to seek the things his inward man hates, and to will what the new man in Christ does not want to do. It is because of this outward man that the inward man often exclaims, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"

It is this outward man, we know, that shall be dissolved!

Hopefully the apostle calls this earthly house a tabernacle! A tabernacle is a tent, a temporary dwelling place. Here the apostle speaks the language of a pilgrim, who does not intend to build his foundations deep, who tarries but for a night; who will not speak the language of the fool, who imagines that his house shall stand for aye.

The Christian knows that the dissolution of this earthly house is absolutely necessary. He is deeply aware that flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. All that is of the earth, earthly, must be dissolved.

Indeed, this expectation of the child of God is one of joyful anticipation!

For when this outward man perishes, he is in immediate possession of his eternal home!

An house not made with hands!

This is, of course, figurative language. The apostle had just spoken of the earthly house as a tent; and a tent is made with hands. Negatively, then, this implies that the heavenly house is not transient. It does not pass away. It is not a house in which he wishes to dwell only for a night. And positively, this means that the heavenly house is eternal. In that house we shall abide forever. A house in which we shall rest eternally, and not be rushed by the exigencies of time.

And that eternal house is in the heavens!

We know!

And heaven is a place, not merely a condition. It belongs to the created universe, and also has a history. It is much richer and glorious now than when Abel, the first martyr, dwelled there alone. There the heavenly throng has steadily increased in number. There is Christ, the raised, exalted, and glorified Redeemer.

Literally we read, "a building out of God" we have!

This does not mean simply that God is the Artificer and Proprietor of that house; though He is, of course. He designed it before the foundation of the world. He

made it, and is the owner thereof. But rather the emphasis falls on the fact that God dwells there. Not merely as the omnipresent God, but as He reveals Himself in the highest possible form in the face of Christ Jesus our Lord. There He intends to live the most intimate fellowship of friendship with His people in Christ. Heaven is our home with God; literally, "out of God with us." That is centrally and essentially the blessedness of heaven.

We can speak, as the Bible does, of that city which is foursquare, with its streets of gold, and its pearly gates. We can say that there is no night there, that into it shall enter no thief to steal, that nothing such as moth or rust shall enter it to destroy. We can say that there is no death there, and it shall be the place of perfect peace to the inhabitants thereof. For the rest, no tongue can describe the place or the house of the many mansions. Except to say this, that we know that in the very center of it dwells the living and glorious God, without which all the rest loses its significance. He is the light and the life thereof!

When the apostle speaks of the house out of God, not made with hands; he is not referring to the body of the resurrection. The entrance into that body must wait unto the day of Christ at the end of the world. Rather he has in mind that whereof also Jesus spake: a house of many mansions, which He is now preparing. Into that house we enter immediately when our earthly tent is dissolved. So we shall never be found naked. And so shall the disembodied spirits of all the redeemed dwell with the Lord. This we know by faith, which is based on the truth: "I go to prepare a place for you."

This certain knowledge must of necessity have some basis!

A basis implied in the text, but definitely expressed in the context!

First of all, this knowledge and certitude rests on the fact that God has raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. Of this the apostle writes in the preceding: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." (II Cor. 4:14)

Secondly, this certitude is to be found in the fact that in the present tabernacle we groan, "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." (II Cor. 5:2)

Upon solid ground, therefore, the certitude of heavenly mansions rests!

On the one hand, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of glory for all who are in Him. A glory which does not wait the last day when the resurrection shall be completed, but a glory that is to be enjoyed immediately upon death, when the new man in Christ enters into heavenly mansions.

On the other hand, the groaning we experience in our present tabernacle is the expression of earnestly desiring to be clothed upon when death overtakes us. This groaning is nothing more than the evidence of the new life, the resurrection life, within us.

Thus we have as the basis for our certitude not only the objective Word of God concerning the glory which Christ has merited for His people; but we also have the work of the Spirit within us registering in the conscious groaning of our spirits to be clothed with our heavenly house.

How blessed is this certitude!

Blessed it is as an object of our hope!

When our earthly and perishable tabernacle shall be exchanged for an heavenly house, not made with hands. When the present, imperfect, sinful and corrupt nature shall forever be abandoned, and in its place we shall appear in the very presence of God, holy and perfect. When we shall lose that in which we have experienced suffering and travail, and heavenly joy shall be our portion. When that which is transient and temporal shall be exchanged for that which is eternal.

Blessed also is this certitude, when we consider it in the midst of our present circumstances!

Now we find ourselves so often affected by temptations, trials, suffering and grief. So oppressive are these circumstances that at times we must exclaim with the apostle, "Who shall deliver me? O wretched man that I am."

But in spite of all this, we know!

And this knowledge fills our hearts with heavenly joy!

So wonderful is this assurance, that death, which is called the last enemy, we can face boldly, triumphantly, and unafraid!

We are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us!

Thanks be unto Thee, O God, for Thy unspeakable grace!

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Question Box

Some Pertinent Questions About Our Reformed Position (4)

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Question

The third in the group of questions asked by a Canadian reader was as follows: "When we speak of predestination, must we go as far as to say that the Lord from eternity has *loved* His own — with that I can agree — but also that the Lord *hated* those who are rejected, from eternity? I know that the Bible says, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.' On the other hand, is it not so that the atoning work of our Lord and Savior is 'sufficient' for all men? See Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 15, Answer 37 Canons of Dordt, II, 3; and I Tim. 2:6, where we read, 'Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.'"

Reply

This is actually three questions. The first is about reprobation. The second is about the extent of the atonement. And the third is about the relation between the atonement and predestination. It is important, by the way, that we consider that last question, that is, that we see Christ's atonement in relation to predestination. For the sake of clarity and convenience, I will deal with the first question in this issue, in order to treat the second and third questions in a later article.

My questioner asks about eternal and sovereign reprobation. In reply, I might point to several facts. I might point out that if you believe in sovereign election, this necessarily implies — put it negatively, if you wish — that God sovereignly *did not choose*, or *passed by* the rest. Even when you phrase this negatively, the fact remains that the latter was as eternal and sovereign as the former. I might point out, secondly, that this has always been the Reformed position, from Calvin (and Luther, by the way) through Dordrecht and down to the present. And I might point out, in the third place, that it is only recently that any Reformed denomination had the sad courage officially to abandon this position. I refer, of course, to the fact that the *Gereformeerde Kerken* a couple of years ago officially abandoned the position of Canons I, 6 and 15. Finally, I might point out that

historically the doctrine of double predestination has usually been attacked at this point, but that it is also true historically that if you destroy the doctrine of reprobation, you necessarily do away with sovereign election. Usually, however, the latter is done by silence and by forfeit. There are many Reformed denominations today who hardly do lip-service any longer to the precious truth of election. But usually you will find that this began with a headlong rush to perform evangelism in an Arminian sense and to pervert the preaching of the gospel into a well-meant offer of salvation to all men. And to the latter, of course, the doctrine of sovereign reprobation is an insurmountable obstacle. My questioner, therefore, has hit upon a very important question.

But my questioner himself suggests both the answer and the method of answer when he writes: "I know that the Bible says: 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.'" The right method is to turn to the Scriptures: before those Scriptures, the infallible Word of God, we must bow unconditionally. And those Scriptures furnish the answer in the passage referred to by my questioner.

Only, let us get the entire passage before us, Romans 9:10-13: "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated."

There have been many attempts to get away from the plain teaching of this passage, which quotes from both Genesis 25:23 and Malachi 1:2-4. Some would weaken the meaning so that it reads, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I loved less." I recall personally hearing a radio preacher play hocus-pocus until he finally said, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I loved, too." One only has to consult the passage in Malachi to find out what kind of "love" for Esau that was. For there you find that the hatred of God against

Esau reveals itself in a manifestation of wrath against the people who were the objects of God's sovereign displeasure. They are called "the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever." No, the text in Romans 9 can only have reference to the love and hatred of God's sovereign and eternal good pleasure. It means: Jacob have I eternally accepted in love; Esau have I eternally rejected as the object of My sovereign hatred.

For notice that this was said to Rebecca, according to the text, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand." It had to be evident to Rebecca that when the children would grow up and when the elder of them would manifest himself as a fornicator, while the younger would manifest himself as a child of the promise, this was due not to any natural distinction in the two sons, but had to be attributed to the determination and realization of God's sovereign purpose of election. What is God's purpose? It is that which He eternally determines from before the foundation of the world according to His sovereign good pleasure. In this instance, the purposes of God concerns the realization of the promise, the bestowal of the covenant blessing. Now this purpose is realized *according to election*. God does not purpose to bestow the blessing of the promise upon all, not even upon all the natural children of Abraham. But His purpose distinguishes and makes separation even among those natural children. Only on His elect, whom He has sovereignly known and loved from before the foundation of the world, does God purpose to bestow the covenant blessing. And the significance of that purpose of God according to election with respect to Jacob and Esau is expressed by the quotation from Malachi. (And notice, by the way, that here and throughout Romans 9 the apostle constantly confirms what he teaches by quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures!)

We will pass by, as wholly without foundation, the argument that this passage speaks of nations rather than of individuals. This is plainly not the case: the whole question in Romans 9 concerns the fact that many of the apostle's fellow Israelites were not saved and the fact that God's sovereign purpose according to election makes distinction between persons of the same natural origin. Nor can there be any dispute about the fact that in Genesis 25 the reference was to the two sons in Rebecca's womb.

Hence, we conclude that this passage teaches the doctrine of personal election and reprobation.

But the passage undeniably teaches, too, that this personal election and reprobation are *sovereign and unconditional*. My questioner writes that he has no difficulty with saying that "the Lord from eternity has loved His own." But he asks whether we must also say "that the Lord hated those who are rejected from eternity?"

As I suggested, it is at this point that many opponents of this doctrine (Mark you well, I do not call my questioner an opponent; he is only asking honest questions.) — many opponents try to evade the plain teaching of the Word of God. They claim that it would be arbitrary, cruel, and tyrannical on God's part if the ultimate ground of the election of one unto life and the reprobation of another unto desolation would be the sovereign good pleasure of God. Predestination must rest, on part of God, in His foreknowledge of the character and works of man; and, on the part of man, it is based on his foreseen faith or unbelief, his foreseen works. This was — and still is — the Arminian presentation.

And this Arminian presentation is contrary to both the context and the text.

As far as the context is concerned, the further objections which are raised in question-form would never be raised against a doctrine of *conditional* predestination. Why would anyone raise the objection against conditional election and reprobation, "Is there then unrighteousness with God?" And why would the apostle then reply in detail, quoting the Lord's word to Moses and the example of Pharaoh, and concluding, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth?" And why would the objection often raised by sinful man come under consideration, "Thou wilt say then unto me, 'Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?'" And why would the apostle have to meet this objection — not by conceding that at least reprobation is on the basis of foreseen unbelief, or that reprobation is not from eternity, but by *rebuking* the brazen audacity of the sinner who replies against God? And why would the apostle point to the example of the potter who has power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? You see, all these are objections which are raised only against the doctrine that God sovereignly and from eternity hates the reprobate.

And as far as the text is concerned, this is plainly taught when the apostle emphasizes that the Word of God came to Rebecca *before* the children were born and *before* they had done either good or evil. If the twins had grown up, and if then the Word of God had come to her, she might have drawn the conclusion that God distinguished between the brothers on the basis of their own works, after Esau became manifest as a fornicator and Jacob became manifest as the true child of the covenant. But this purpose is revealed to her before the children were born and before they had in any way distinguished themselves by their works. And from this it is evident that it was God's intention to show Rebecca (and us) that His counsel of election and reprobation with regard to Jacob and Esau was independent on their works. And notice, please, that this is as true of *Esau* as of Jacob. If you accept this

with respect to Jacob (who was not yet born and who had done neither good nor evil), you must also accept it of Esau (who was also not yet born and had done

neither good nor evil). This is the plain teaching of the text. And before this Word of God you and I must bow.

All Around Us

Developments in the Gereformeerde Kerken

Prof. H. Hanko

In 2 recent issues of the *RES Newsletter*, three articles appeared concerning developments in the Gereformeerde Kerken. The first one is entitled "Society of Concerned in Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to Become a Modality Group." It reads:

The Society of the Concerned ("truth and unity" and "Scripture and Testimony") plan to become a modality (confessionally definable grouping) within the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The name they propose is "Confessional Reformed Organization." A number of work groups have already been formed for "confessional" congregations, catechism, youth work, school and university. A testimony is expected to appear in the near future.

The periodical, "Waarheid en Eenheid" (Truth and Unity) stated that the group reached the conclusion after the recent General Synod (Dordt 1971-72) that the Reformed Churches have in fact become modality churches and therefore decided to erect a clear and sturdy organization with which to proceed.

The paper states that the testimony will clearly state the purpose of the organization, namely to oppose those who have denied the confession and are nevertheless tolerated in the church.

The Rev. P. Van Til, one of the strongest opponents of Professor H. M. Kuitert at the recent General Synod, expressed disapproval of the development of a modality group. He feared that the use of the word itself would create an unfavorable climate and that the entire purpose of the Synod's work in maintaining the identity of the church would be lost. He wanted the Reformed Churches to retain their churchly character and not become a 'club of the Reformed persuasion.' "Reformatorsch Dagblad" compared the new organization with the confessional fellowship in the Netherlands Reformed Church which undertakes its own mission program.

Professor B. Nauta of the Free University observed that the Reformed Churches are already in fact a modality church, although not identical in this regard with the Netherlands Reformed Church.

The second article is entitled "Decision to Merge

Two Concerned Groups in Netherlands Augments Conflict." It reads:

A decision by two groups of concerned Christians within the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to merge and assume stronger organizational form has triggered a new conflict in the church there. The two groups, 'Truth and Unity' (Waarheid en Eenheid) and 'Scripture and Witness' (Schrift en Getuigenis) have not yet decided on the name of the new group, but they have determined to become an open force for orthodoxy in the Reformed Churches.

Their plans call for separate catechism teaching, youth work, theological training and the organization of 'confession congregations.' The group plans to hold conferences and issue publications that take clear positions on the current issues. The goal is to 'preserve the identity of the Reformed Churches.'

An 'alternative' ministers association, called Calvin, has already been organized and has issued a call for a meeting on 25 April in Amersfoort. The purpose of the new association is to support those pastors who want to preserve the Reformed character of the church so that the Reformed Churches may conform to their calling to be confessing churches in the world.

The editor of *Centraal Weekblad*, Klass Runia, reacted to the plans for the new organization by asking, "Are we facing a new rift?" He expressed his alarm by pointing out that the realizations of these plans confront the church with an "especially serious situation."

Runia noted that the reason given for the new action is the fact that there already are 'modalities' in the Reformed Churches, and that this has resulted from the disappointment of the associations of the concerned that the General Synod (Dordrecht 1971/72) did not apply any disciplinary measures in November against Dr. Harry M. Kuitert. Runia expressed his doubt, however, whether these plans would offer a good solution, and feared that they would produce a modality church. He further noted that the plans are in direct conflict with the church order. If the churches do not adhere to these basic

rules, it will become a chaos, Runia observed.

"It sounds terrible to speak of a new split in the church," Runia concluded, "but I believe that if the concerned brothers and sisters continue on this way, it will be almost unavoidable. No local church council can tolerate that in its district alternative services and catechism teaching will be advocated. This will lead to a conflict."

One of the 'concerned,' the Rev. W. van Benthem, wrote a reply to Runia which he could not get placed in any paper, so he bought advertising space in Trouw. He declared that the theology of Kuitert is deadly dangerous and that most of the students at the Free University where Kuitert teaches allow themselves to be pumped full and to bow before Baal. Van Benthem said that the pulpits should be barred to Kuitert and Wiersinga and that disciplinary measures should be taken against them. In this way he thought a new rift could be avoided.

A further reaction came from the Executive Committee (Moderamen) of the General Synod. It issued a call for a special day of prayer and repentance on Sunday, 15 April. In its communication to the churches the Executive Committee spoke not only of the threatening conflict but also of a 'spiritual crisis' in the Reformed Churches. It saw a contrast "between our material prosperity and our spiritual poverty . . . We shall have to reflect together concerning this before the face of God."

A third article reads:

Three professors in theology in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have engaged in a lively discussion in *Centraal Weekblad*, Harry Kuitert, Klaas Runia and G. Th. Rothuizen.

Occasion for the discussion was a TV interview by Kuitert. In answering a question on the second coming of Christ, he stated that it could very well happen that all of a sudden we will discover that Jesus is already with us and then the question will be, 'will the real Jesus stand up?'

Runia objected that the view of Kuitert was in disagreement with what the last General Synod had said concerning the 'consequent horizontalizing of faith' and in particular where it said that "the completion of the history of salvation lies beyond our present earthly existence and will occur in the day of Christ." Runia found the statement of Kuitert to be entirely out of accord with the declaration of Synod with which Kuitert himself had expressed agreement.

The next issue of *Centraal Weekblad* carried an exchange of letters between Kuitert and Runia. Kuitert could not understand why Runia had as it were "called the church people to arms" against a fellow Christian and a colleague and also that Runia had not spoken with him first, and that he had written before he had the text of the interview in hand. Kuitert did not deny any of that which he had been alleged to say.

Runia replied that he had first showed his written comments to a number of colleagues before publishing them and later checked them with the

transcript and found that there was no discrepancy. Runia's concern was that Kuitert contradicted the testimony of the New Testament which teaches that the appearance of Christ will be from 'outside,' not from 'within.' Kuitert, said Runia, has not followed the rules of the game. "Is it really necessary to lure problems into the open and disturb the church?"

Prof. G. Th. Rothuizen entered the discussion by putting a few 'critical questions' to Runia. In his view Runia holds to an idea of unity that may have been valid some 15 years ago but is valid no longer. He pleaded for 'alternative forms' of the church, admitted that modalities do exist, and that this is no cause for shame. He claimed that along with a plurality in theology and in the forms of the church there should also be a 'poly-interpretability of the Bible.' "We shall have to learn to live with alternative forms of the church and theology," he said. He defended what he called a new 'pluriform unity.'

In reply Runia singled out what he considered to be one of the most far-reaching differences within the Reformed Churches, namely the way in which we read the Bible. When he compared the views of Herman Wiersinga and Herman Ridderbos on the biblical idea of reconciliation, then he could no longer speak of a pluriform unity. Rothuizen had written that Kuitert and the concerned people could not be brought to one common theological denominator. But Runia said that the unity does not stand or fall with a *theological* unity. "Theology is a science that is surely of great importance to the church, but it is not the binding factor in the church. The binding factor is the *confession*, and that is quite different from theology . . . The confession is in essence the song of praise in which the church sings its faith in God and in what He has done for us in Jesus Christ . . . Must we not in last analysis say the same thing, at least when it concerns the central, fundamental aspects of the Christian faith?"

No doubt the editor of our *Standard Bearer* will comment at length about this matter; but a few remarks are in order.

Our readers should understand first of all, that a "modalities church" is a church in which there is complete freedom of doctrinal teaching so that every member is allowed to hold to his own views with respect to the truth of Scripture. It is also a church which has within it different conceptions of church polity. However, in a modalities church, various groups of like mind join together within one church federation and hold views concerning the truth and concerning church polity at variance with other groups. In spite of these differences however, the church continues as one denomination.

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have indeed become a modalities church. This is even admitted by some in the articles above. And it is proved also by the views concerning the second coming of Christ which were expressed by Dr. Kuitert in a recent TV interview in which he flatly denied that

Christ would come at the end of time.

This is, of course, a confessional question. There are only two real possibilities therefore. One is simply to ignore the confessions and act as if they have no binding force within the church. The other is so to interpret the confessions that any and every view is declared confessional regardless of whether it is or not. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands seem at present to be straddling the fence on this matter.

What is interesting however, is the fact that those who are determined to preserve the truth of the confessions are now organizing within the Reformed Churches and on the grounds that they may do this because the Reformed Churches are a modalities church. Hence there is room for their group as well as the supporters of Kuitert.

This is opposed by Runia. This is strange. It is strange that he should become disturbed by this development. It is strange that he should object. He has expressed that the decisions of the Synod which cleared Kuitert were "evangelical." But now, when certain ones object and desire to press for confessional integrity, Runia is disturbed. In a way this ought not to surprise us. This is always the way it goes with the spirit of toleration. Toleration in matters of the truth is the devil's weapon. And the result always is that there is toleration for every view under the face of the heavens *except* the truth. This is true of Runia too. Even his criticism of Kuitert's views concerning the coming of Christ are not severe. And surely he does not press for Kuitert's deposition even though Kuitert continues to deny fundamental elements in the truth of Scripture.

Kuitert becomes bolder, and Runia, even in his objections, is mild.

And so it is not strange that Runia finally pleads a view which teaches that "the unity (of the church) does not stand or fall with a *theological* unity." And in this connection he interprets the confessions as "songs of praise."

But are the "concerned" correct in seeking organization within Reformed Churches? This is another question. There are some, as appears from the articles above, who are not satisfied with this. And Runia says that this is contrary to the Church Order.

No doubt Runia is correct — although this sounds strange coming from a man who has participated in grossest violations of the church order himself. But when, e.g., Van Til, speaks of the wrongness in forming within the church "a club of Reformed persuasion," he certainly strikes at the heart of the issue.

The "concerned" are erecting a church within a church. This is never right. And, in the final analysis it does not work. As part of the denomination they are responsible for all that that denomination does. Remaining within it they vitiate their protest. This has serious consequences for themselves and their children. The light is going out in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The efforts of the "concerned" to keep the light flickering cannot be successful. The cold winds of heresy will blow out that flickering flame in due time. And then the light will also be gone for them and their children.

The only solution, as it has always been throughout the ages, is secession.

Taking Heed To The Doctrine

The Importance of the Preaching of God's Word (3)

Rev. David Engelsma

In our day there is a massive assault on the preaching of the Word and a large scale defection from the Word that is preached. There is, first of all, an assault on the preaching itself. There is a strong, open movement today to do away with the public preaching by an ordained preacher. Men are replacing the preaching, at least partially, with discussions, with films, and with various kinds of other gimmicks. Over against all

arguments that are raised to defend these practices by saying that they serve to instruct the Church, the answer of the Heidelberg Catechism is conclusive in Question 98: "God will have His people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His Word." Along with the replacement of preaching there is a questioning whether only those who are called of God to the office of the ministry may preach. The

answer of Romans 10:15 is final: "How shall they preach except they be sent?" There is another assault on preaching today that consists of a noticeable weakening of the duty of pastors to preach for the edification of their congregations. So-called evangelistic preaching predominates in the established churches, preaching that professes to be interested in soul winning, and men are losing sight of the necessity of preaching for the feeding of God's flock. Men are losing sight of Jesus' gift to the church of pastors and teachers as we read in Ephesians 4, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, that we may grow up into Christ Who is our Head. There is another tragic development in our time that consists of surrendering the distressed souls of Jesus' sheep and Jesus' lambs to psychiatry, which then attempts to cure these souls, not with the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ, but with the monkeyshines of men. That which Paul in Acts 20 called private preaching from house to house, which he said he did not cease to do for three years in Ephesus, is ceasing.

Hand in hand with the attack on preaching goes the undermining of the Word that ought to be preached. There is in our day a frontal attack on the Holy Scriptures themselves. Men openly deny the inspiration of the Bible, the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible. They deny its reliability, and they deny its clarity to the simple, believing child of God. Plain passages of Scripture such as Genesis 1, 2, 3, which are understandable to the smallest child in the church, are taken out of the hands of the people of God and are given over to the interpretations of learned philosophers and theologians. The whole great truth of the clarity of the Bible is at issue. In my judgment, this is *the* crucial issue for the Church of Jesus Christ today: Is the Scripture the Word of God? Everything depends on that; the Church stands on that; the Christian stands on that; the gospel stands on that! Hardly less dangerous is the attack on the Scriptures made today by flooding the churches with bad, unreliable, and even perverted versions of the Scriptures. Especially the youth of the covenant, the Church of tomorrow, are actually led away from the Scriptures by these unreliable versions. Above all, the attack upon the Word of God today takes the form of preaching a message that is false doctrine, although it pretends to be the gospel. Now, Rome has never changed. Rome continues to preach a gospel of righteousness by works, a gospel that consists of maintaining that a man's righteousness before God is, at least partially, his own works and efforts. Rome's doctrine is: Salvation is of him that runneth. But much of Protestantism today has adopted an error that is not a whit better or a bit different than the message of Rome. The message of much of Protestantism today is this: Salvation is of him that willeth. Much of Protestantism has adopted the false doctrine of "free

will." This is the teaching that man by nature still retains the ability to choose Christ and to make a decision for God's salvation, upon which decision then depends his salvation. This is the teaching that God loves all men, that Christ died for all men to make salvation possible for all men, that God is busy now trying to save all men, and that their salvation depends ultimately upon their free will, their decision for Christ. No less than Rome's gospel, this is another gospel than the gospel of the apostles. In Romans 9:16, the apostle Paul cries out: "So then it (salvation) is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth" — it is not of works, but it is not either of man's will. On the contrary, it (salvation) is of God that showeth mercy! The fundamental issue of the Reformation, the difference between the deformed and the Reformed Church, was the issue of the freedom or the bondage of the will of man. And so it is today.

What explains these attacks on the preaching of the Word today? They are all aspects of one great attack on God's Word in these last days. They are the great apostasy that must come before the appearance of the man of sin, the anti-Christ, and the end of the world. In part, these attacks upon the Word of God are due to the hatred for the Word of God by our ancient foe, the devil, and by his human servants within the churches. As is always the case, the most fierce battle that the Church has to fight is the battle against the enemy within. In part, though, the defection today from the Word of God is due to our weak faith, our lack of trust in God's Word. We are afraid that the preaching lacks the power to do what has to be done today. We fear that the preaching of the gospel will not be able to save and keep the young people. We fear that the preaching of the gospel will not be able to comfort the depressed. We fear that the preaching of the gospel will not be adequate for us "modern men." We fear that the Scriptures cannot stand the test of science, that it does not square with the opinions of learned men. We fear that men of the 20th century will dislike the rough edges of the gospel, total depravity and predestination and the others. So we are giving up on the Word of God. And we are dying! And we are restless, lacking peace and joy! And we are becoming worldly, disobedient, self seeking, rather than men who seek the Kingdom of God first! Let us confess our sin of unbelief and put away our folly! The Word of God in the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It is the Word that will save our covenant children. It is the Word that will endure triumphant when this world and its wisdom are in rubble.

This is the calling of the Church: Preach the Word! Preach it twice on the Lord's Day in the congregation. Preach it to the children in catechism. Preach it privately from house to house. Let this be the life-blood of the Church in all her labor. Let her do it in a childlike faith that by the foolish preaching Christ

will build His Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Then the Holy Spirit will be present with us in power. This is the mark of the true Church of Jesus Christ in every age: the pure preaching of the gospel of the Scriptures.

The individual church members have a calling too. Individual church members are by no means free from blame in this great departure from the Word of God. In fact, II Timothy 3 lays much of the blame at their feet. Paul says there that in the last days they will have itching ears that cannot endure sound doctrine; they heap up to themselves teachers; and they turn from the truth unto fables. There are many who are indifferent to doctrine. There are many who clamor against preaching that explains the Bible and that is doctrinal. There are many today who forsake the truth in order to satisfy their desire for wild experiences. The individual believer has a calling with respect to the preaching

of the Word of God. The individual believer has the ability to discern the truth and to cleave to it. He has the ability to detect and to reject the lie. Every believer is a prophet, priest, and king. The Reformation restored to you and to me our rightful office as a believer. Therefore, let the believer see to it that he and his children live under the pure preaching of the Word and that he maintains it and supports it. The calling that we have as believers is that which God Himself gave us when He spoke from heaven at the occasion of the transfiguration of His Son, Jesus Christ: "This is my beloved Son: hear Him." Be sure that you hear Him! By our hearing Christ in the preaching of the gospel with a true faith, we are saved, and God is glorified in the Church, even as we pray: Unto God be glory in the Church by Jesus Christ through all ages, world without end!

The Strength of Youth

Divorce and Remarriage (6)

Rev. J. Kortering

Our attention is now directed to the New Testament evidence on the subject of divorce and remarriage. Our purpose is to present a concise analysis of the pertinent texts and the conclusions we draw from them.

CHRIST'S TEACHING IN MATT. 19

The passage is Matt. 19:3-9, "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." We would make the following observations.

First, the issue that brought the Pharisees to Jesus in the first place was the division between the school of Rabbi Hillel, who taught that Moses in Deut. 24 allowed the putting away of a wife for every cause, that is, for any reason by which a man no longer found pleasure in his wife, and the other school under Rabbi Shammai which insisted that Moses only allowed a putting away of a wife for moral reasons: he found some moral uncleanness in her. Now they wanted Jesus' view on this, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife *for every cause*?"

Secondly, Jesus' answer to them indicates that he does not take the side of either one. Emphatically, Jesus goes to the very beginning of time and states, "Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." This is God's original and abiding purpose for marriage. There should be no putting away.

Thirdly, when these Jews counter Jesus' argument by referring to the writing of divorcement granted by Moses, Christ tells them that this was a temporary interruption, granted because of the hardness of their hearts, and once again insists that the principle to follow is that set forth from the beginning.

Fourthly, Jesus sets forth his own teaching on divorce and remarriage in verse 9. "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

In connection with this text, we should consider that the point of dispute here centers in the exception clause, "except it be for fornication." Does this clause modify, "Whosoever shall put away his wife" or does it modify also the rest of the clauses? We believe that it is exegetically correct that it modifies only the preceding clause. The text tells us that whosoever shall put away his wife and shall marry another committeth adultery, etc. The only exception is that a man may put away his wife for adultery and that act itself is not a committing of adultery.

This agrees with other texts in the New Testament. Consider Matt. 5:32, "But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Certainly this text makes clear the teaching of Matt 19:9. A man may put away his wife for the cause of fornication; any other reason would cause her to commit adultery. And whosoever marries a divorced person commits adultery.

We read of this directly in Mark 10:11, 12, "And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." You notice in this text there is no exception clause at all. This does not contradict Matt. 19:9, but confirms that Matt. 19:9 teaches the same thing, viz. that a person divorced and remarried commits adultery.

Luke 16:18 underscores this once again, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."

Finally, the reaction of the disciples confirms that Christ taught something quite different from the popularly accepted teaching of the Pharisees, "His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." If marriage is for life and a man can only put away his wife for adultery, and even then not be allowed to remarry another, it is not good to marry! To this, Christ answers that such must consider themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake, verse 12. As difficult as this may be, such is their calling for God's sake. They must live as a eunuch (one unable to consummate marriage), as obedient citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

PAUL'S TEACHING OF I COR. 7:15

The text reads, "But if the unbelieving depart, let

him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace." We must consider the following points.

First, in this section of the chapter, Paul is dealing with the subject of what to do in cases of mixed marriages (one a believer and another an unbeliever) which resulted because of the conversion of one of the marriage partners.

Secondly, in verses 12 and 13, he counsels the marriage partner who is a believer that he or she does not have to put away (be separated from) their unbelieving partner just because they do not believe. The reason is in verse 14, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."

Thirdly, what if the unbelieving husband or wife decides that he "wants out" of their marriage, what then? Suppose that the unbelieving partner decided that suddenly his spouse has become a religious fanatic and he doesn't want anything to do with her anymore, since she "got religion." What must the believing husband or wife do in that case? Paul's answer is, "But if the unbelieving depart, let them depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace." The reason is, "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

Fourthly, we should notice the issue is not remarriage, it is divorce. What is meant by "let him depart." Is this another ground for divorce, desertion, in addition to adultery? The answer must be no. Paul teaches here that if such a marriage partner wants to live separately, the believer must not feel guilt as if he has done something wrong which contributed to the breaking of the marriage. "Let him depart" means that he must acquiesce in this decision of his partner (one which he cannot prevent anyway) and not feel that he has done wrong by believing in Christ. Such a marriage partner forsakes his wife or her husband in hardness against Jesus Christ. For this reason the child of God is not under bondage (under the condemnation of the law which finds guilty sinners punishable).

Finally, if the child of God assumes this attitude, he keeps the door open for repentance and reconciliation, "For what knowest thou, O wife whether thou shalt save thy husband, or how knowest thou O man whether thou shalt save thy wife? This must be foremost on the minds of the believers, the salvation of their unbelieving spouses, and anything that might possibly contribute toward this is blessed by God. This is further confirmed later in the chapter, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will only in the Lord," I Cor. 7:39. This principle applies to all of marriage; it is a lifelong union

which necessitates working out differences.

THE TEACHING OF ROMANS 7:1-3

Here we read, "know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is not an adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." In this connection we should observe the following:

First, Paul is speaking here of the "law" in both its outward and inward aspects. Concerning the outward aspect, those included in type and shadow as the civil and ceremonial laws in Israel, Paul says that in Christ we are dead to this law. This is fulfilled by the perfect obedience of Christ on the cross; we are not under the law, but under grace, Romans 6:14; we are become dead to this law by the body of Christ, Rom. 7:4.

Secondly, He also has something to say about the inward principle, viz., love of God and neighbor. From this point of view, the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth, Rom. 7:1. He makes specific mention of this law as it applies to marriage: the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth," verse 2. The reason

for this binding is the inner principle of the law which is love. Love is for life. A person does not "fall into love" or fall out of love at will; one either loves or hates. The inner principle of the law tells us that the love in marriage is binding for life and only death can free one from this law, verse 3. To marry another while one's marriage partner is alive is to commit adultery, to violate the law of love.

Thirdly, the power whereby husband and wife are able to abide in this law is, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God," verse 4. In Christ, we are become dead to the law of outward works as a condition to righteousness. No longer is the exhortation, "This do and live" in force; rather now we are married to Christ and the principle of the law of love is written within our hearts and now we can say with Paul, "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me." Now the exhortation is "live and do."

With this kind of understanding, we can appreciate what Paul tells us concerning the permanence of marriage. With the love of Christ in our hearts, being married to Him, we are bound by this law of love to our marriage partner for life. Only death can terminate this marriage bond. Thus it was from the beginning; now it is restored in us by a living relationship of faith with Christ.

This has many practical points of application for young people either aspiring to marriage or just having entered marriage. We will examine these as a conclusion in our next article, D.V.

Studies in Isaiah (1)

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

Introduction

It was Lowth (d. 1787) who said, "Isaiah is certainly one of the most difficult of all the prophets, though perhaps few are sensible of it but they who try to explain him . . . He that will undertake to fathom the depths of this prophecy is in great danger of going out of his own" depth. With this warning in mind, one would certainly hesitate before plunging into the bottomless sea of Isaiah's sixty-six chapters. Yet as you scan the whole of the sixty-six books of the Bible, you

see before you nothing less than a limitless ocean. When we come to the Scriptures, anywhere, we are dealing with no little pond. He, then, indeed sets out to swim in deep waters beyond his depth who proposes to fathom the depths of, or enter upon the truth of, any book in the Bible. Take the epistles of Paul, for example. Who, ever, in his preaching or expositions, does them justice? If one were so afraid of going out beyond his depth, he would never open his Bible! Does not the Christian aim, "with all saints to comprehend

what is the breadth, and length, and *depth*, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge?" Does he not say in regard to all Scripture, "O the depth!" But as we enter upon any studies in the Scriptures, we do so in the spirit of the words of the great Dr. J. A. Alexander (d. 1860), who would "avoid the presumption of knowing everything as well as the disgrace of knowing nothing."

Prophet is a title which, in its popular sense, has come to mean, "one who makes a prediction of future events." A prophet foretells things to come. The New Testament takes us on a little deeper than that with its word *prophetes*, which means more than a foreteller, but also a forth-teller. So that a prophet not only foretells future events, but proclaims, expounds and "fully reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption" (Heid. Cat., Q. 31). He is not one who invents his own message. Nor is his message the combined contribution of God and himself. A prophet is one through whom God speaks. He speaks by divine inspiration, or, he speaks that word which is God-breathed. He "speaks *out* the counsel of God with clearness, energy and authority" (Trench), all God-given, for he has no message nor abilities of his own. He, himself, body, soul and mind, is a gift of God to the church. The Old Testament word for prophet, *nabhi*, (pronounced nah-BVEE), as to its etymology, is somewhat vague with various meanings. But the meaning with the most support is the most satisfactory, and has the root idea of, *to boil up and gush forth*. The idea is that of an ebullition and pouring forth of truth and knowledge, and that under the influence of a divine energy, not by the prophet's own powers. Both the prophet and his prophecies are the contributions of God. His prophecies embrace not only the future, but also the past and the present. So Daniel told the king what he *had* dreamed and then interpreted the king's dream as to its present as well as future significance. A prophet, then, is a product of heaven, not a human product. In fact, it is important to understand that "a prophet is one who has a great intimacy with Heaven." He has, because he is one who instructs strangers and sojourners in this world while on their pilgrim journey to their true and continuing city, the Jerusalem Above. Accordingly, Isaiah begins with the earthly Jerusalem and ends with heavenly Jerusalem and the New Heavens and New Earth, and, as far as the last half of the book is concerned (40-66), with its "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," begins and ends where the New Testament begins and ends. A prophet is one who receives his message immediately from heaven (chapter 6), with a commission to preach it to God's church. Isaiah, his wife and two sons were signs to the people; they were walking Bibles. The Heidelberg Catechism asks (Q. 98), "May not in ages be tolerated in the churches, as Bibles to the laity?"

and the answer is, "No, for we must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have his people taught not by dumb images, but by the living preaching of His word." There never was a time when images were or could be tolerated as Bibles to the people. But there was a time, before the Old Testament revelation had been completed, when "there were prophets who were instead of Bibles to the church."

Isaiah means "Salvation of Jehovah," which in itself sets forth for the elect the very goal of history. History moves to that goal, to the reconciliation of all things (Col. 1:20). All things move through and out of judgment to the redemption of the purchased possession. This points us to the idea of the whole book, which is Israel, the peculiar people, God's covenant people, the Church, its origin, calling, mission, sins, tribulations, history and destiny. That destiny and salvation is seen, especially in this book, as it is in every book in the Bible, in Christ alone, in whom "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." According to 1:1, Judah and Jerusalem are, centrally and solely, the object of the vision and book of Isaiah. His largest perimeter of vision is universal, embracing the imperial kingdom-of-this-world powers. Then within this largest circle the smaller one of the neighboring heathen nations; within this the yet smaller one, of all Israel; and within this the still smaller one of the kingdom of Judah; within that, the Israel within Israel, and within the organism of the true Israel, the Seed of life, Immanuel, God with us. Isaiah knew this. He was conscious of the significance of his name, for *yeshua*, "He shall save," and *yeshua*, the Old Testament word for "Jesus," *salvation*, are with him favorite words. So much so that he begins (chap. 1, see v. 18) with the necessity of salvation, climaxes it all (chap. 53) with the Way of salvation, and concludes (66:23, 24) with the punishment for neglecting so great a salvation.

The name of the prophet also reveals that his point of view is theocentric. Isaiah lives for the sake of Jehovah. Also the meaning is that salvation is not in the first place for the sake of the sinner, but for the sake of Jehovah (43:21). Some have called him "the evangelical prophet," or "the prophet of redemption," "the prophet of the divine sovereignty," "the Paul, the Calvin of the Old Testament," "the universal prophet." Latent in Isaiah's name is the divine election. "Salvation is of the Lord." "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:9). According to His decree of election, God ordained a people, a holy nation, unto glory and eternal life in Christ. The promises of God were made to this chosen people, the remnant according to the election of grace, who alone rested in the word of promise. They are, from all eternity, the true Israel, the true seed of

Abraham, Jews who are Jews *inwardly*, which means all who believe, including believing Gentiles. They belong to the spiritual Israel. The sovereign God always denounced judgments against the carnal Israel, and always pronounced blessings on the spiritual Israel. "Fear not!" is His efficacious command to the latter (41:10), never to the former, for they have everything to fear, while the spiritual Israel has everything to hope (Rom. 5:2, 4, 5; 8:24). The Lord always made it plain to His people that the judgments which had to come on Israel as a nation would not destroy the Israel of God, or the true church, but that He would surely preserve, protect and save His own elect. Isaiah was raised up by God to strengthen the faith of the spiritual Israel, to comfort the hearts of the "very small remnant."

A further word must be said on Isaiah's view of history. According to him, the kingdom of this world is the heathen state in its Nimrodic form. That means, the state attempts, by incessant acquisition, to expand into a one-world dominating power. To accomplish this, it must always burst its seams beyond its present boundaries, overwhelming surrounding nations, ever accumulating wider territories, not merely out of the motives of self-defence or retaliation, but for the purpose of ultimate world-conquest. When world dictators find difficulty unifying their kingdoms and enlarging their dominions, they pick on an enemy, either within or without the state, and start a war against it. The nation is then united in fighting the war, which has been made to appear one of self-defence, or survival, or making the world safe for democracy. Recall that our own nation was united to fight the Second World War through the force of the Pearl Harbor attack. This method of uniting a people is

neither new nor accidental. It is planned that way. (Cp. "Roosevelt's Road to Russia," by Crocker). Dictators and world-powers have operated and continued on the principle of "perpetual war for perpetual peace." When there is no more war, no more, however ridiculous, excuse for war, look out! Then the state will persecute the church. Wars and rumors of wars allow the church to continue to exist in the world. The Bible's point of view sees Assyria forging the first, Rome the middle, and the final Antichrist the last link in the chain of aggression and suppression perpetrated by the kingdom of this world. This is the spirit of antichrist, the tendency of which is to restore the Tower of Babel, to heal the mortally wounded head of the dragon, to so unite the entire world that heathendom and Christendom (not Christianity!), Gog and Magog together with the Antichrist unite as one fierce peril and plague against the true remnant of believers left on the earth. Isaiah and the other major prophets have universal depth of field.

Perhaps the reader of these lines has not only no sympathy with but no interest in the critical problem of this book. Such a reader says, "I am more interested in the house, not with all the insects that go buzzing around the house!" Well, but some of those buzzing creatures, if termites, may not only undermine the house, but eat it out to a thin, hollow shell, so that there will soon be no house. The effect of the German higher criticism has been, like the ruin of termites, to shred the Book of Isaiah into pieces. We should know something of the operations of these spiritual termites, and how to exterminate them. But that will have to wait for the next time.

(To be continued, D. V.)

From Holy Writ

Exposition of the Book of Hebrews (Hebrews 11: 24)

Rev. G. Lubbers

The General Argument and Exhortation

It is well to pick up the thread just a bit at this juncture of our series of essays on Hebrews 11. The writer is concerned about the spiritual attitude of the Hebrews. There is a great temptation which besets

them inasmuch as the way to receiving the final promise, with all that this implies, seems a long way off. The church enters into glory and salvation through much tribulation; often this tribulation is deep, intense and repetitive. The end is not in sight, except for the eye of faith and hope!

In view of this great conflict of faith and hope, the writer urges the believers to call to mind a definite former time in their life and Christian experience. That was a time when they were first enlightened. No, for this time and this affliction they can not take any credit and self-glorying. They were enlightened by the sovereign and mighty grace of God. Also in this enlightenment they have nothing which they have not received. All boasting is excluded. It was during that time that they had had endurance. Yes, it was a great fight of affliction; but they had contended like warriors who sought the crown of victory. And remembering all this they must be spurred on in the present conflict. They must not lag in the fight.

Nothing strange happens to them when they thus must wait in patience upon God, for their ultimate salvation and deliverance. Had not God thus spoken to Israel in Isaiah 26:20, 21, saying "yet a little while and he that cometh shall come." And does not the word spoken by the Lord through Habakkuk stand, which says "Now my just one shall live by faith, and if any man falleth back my soul hath no delight in him."

The writer is convinced that the believers are not of those who fall back into perdition, but that they are those who are believing to the saving of the soul! And now the writer recounts the men of like passion as the Hebrews and us, to show how they believed to the saving of the soul.

THE GREAT ARENA OF CONFLICT WHEN MOSES IS BORN (*Hebrews 11:24, Exodus 1:7-22*)

Israel is in Egypt at this time. It is now a long time ago that Jacob, the patriarch, left the land of promise with his seventy souls because of the famine in the land, with the sanction of the Lord. And he was with Israel in a very singular way; He was causing Israel to multiply exceedingly in the land of Egypt according to His sure promise and mercies. This increase of Israel was a cause of fear for the king of Egypt. As we all know this was not the same Pharaoh as in the time of Joseph, nor was this the same kingly dynasty. It was another Pharaoh, another line of kings in Egypt. He adopted a new policy toward the children of Israel.

It was of the Lord to bring His people out of Egypt. God had foretold Israel's departure from Egypt to Abraham in a vision as recorded in Genesis 15:16 "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full . . ." The time of Israel's deliverance was at hand. They would obtain the promise of God. But it must be through afflictions. They will need patience, that, after having done the will of God, they may obtain the promise. Israel is in the great arena of the conflict and battle of faith; they are in the very vortex of the storm.

The storm rages in Egypt. It is in the mighty will of God that Egypt becomes a ghetto, which is a house of bondage. Satan rages against the people of God, and

the seed of the serpent attempts mightily to triumph over the seed of the woman, the Christ and His church! The will of God will be done, and even the wrath of man shall praise the Lord. In futile wrath and anguished fear the king of Egypt takes his hellish measures against the people of God's own choosing. He will proceed with guile to keep Israel in Egypt, weak enough to keep her in subjection, and strong enough to serve him in building his cities, to achieve his civic improvements and cultural attainments.

The wicked king's attempt to destroy Israel and to prevent the birth of Christ the firstborn son of Israel are threefold:

The first attempt is to make Israel serve with rigor in Egypt and to make them slaves instead of free men. Their legal status in Israel was changed. An entire nation was simply subjugated to slavery by the fiat of the king, and by the stroke of the pen; all the former decisions concerning Israel were declared null and void! They were simply an outlawed people, without rights and possessions any more! Legally and actually they were declared slaves and the wheels of enslavement were set in motion.

The second attempt, when the former failed to stem the miraculous growth of Israel, was to command all the midwives in Israel — it seems that from here on a close tabulation was kept of Israel's birth and the matter was placed under the direct control of Egypt — to kill all the male children when they were born. However, the midwives did not heed the command of the king, and thus the purposes of the king were nullified. And the king feared the more with a despotic fear. And the king is horrified by the growth of Israel. His is the courage of despair!

The final measure is now taken. All the children, the male children of Israel, must be cast into the river Nile. That is the final and grand assault upon Israel.

Here in this boiling caldron of Satan's fires Israel must endure a great fight of affliction to receive the promised deliverance, which the Lord revealed and predicted to Abraham. Here faith will be tried. And faith must become manifest to be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For without faith it is impossible to please God.

FAITH'S OWN EXACT REASONING

The reasoning of faith is not of the natural man. Faith is the gift of God and clings to the promised salvation; it does not fall back into perdition, but reaches out unto salvation. Such was the faith of the parents and family of Moses. Here were these sons of Levi scattered in Israel; yet, they are firm in faith and in looking for the redemption of Israel. Amram and Jochebed, famous parents in Israel they! They had lived through affliction and had named their daughter Miriam, and in hope they had looked for the light to arise in darkness and had named their first son, Aaron.

But their faith did not fail when their third child, this time a son, was born. This time God gave them a child, a child of exceptional beauty, and full of promise. He was fair before God. (Acts 7:20)

Hebrews 11:24 tells us that they saw this "by faith." Faith has its own reasoning, its own ratiocination. In the midst of this impenetrable darkness of Egypt's affliction these parents saw the day dawn in the birth of their son. They saw, as it were, the redeemer and deliverer of Israel in this son. Great things are in store for them. The horizons are lifting! Nay, not in reality yet! For the king's command stands to cast all the sons in the river. The king's command also obtains in regard to their child, this beautiful son! But here is faith in the midst of "conflict and conquest." And faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

The young child is not declared and handed over to the king's hench-men. He is hid. He is hid in faith. No, he is not hid awaiting the inevitable day when the king's men will ferret him out of his parents' hiding-place. He is placed in the secret place of the Most High and under the shadow of the Almighty. He is given over by faith into the secret and loving providence of the protector of Israel. And at the end of three months Moses' mother does not perform an act of desperation by placing him in a little ark and placing him in the river's edge in the bulrushes. It was faith that prompted her to action. She hid him three months in faith, and now in faith she will place this child in the very mouth of the lion, in the home of the murderer of Israel's seed.

It was not a mere happenstance that the king's daughter came to the river at this time. It was not such even from the viewpoint of Moses' parents. They must have observed the king's daughter's schedule and routine and proceeded accordingly in faith! In faith they reasoned that God would take care of their child. No, they were not acting from the courage of desperation. Three months they did hide this child in faith; now they will place this child in the ark in the

river in faith. It is the strategy of faith's own ratiocination. They will place the child in the very den of the enemy and the Lord will provide. Such was faith which conquered in the conquest.

Yes, it all seems so natural. God overrules the motherly instincts of Pharaoh's daughter to fulfill His design in liberating Moses and in preparing him to be the law-giver of Israel. All things will work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to the Divine purpose of election.

What an amazing turn of events. Miriam inquired whether she shall find nurse for the little baby brother. And the Lord makes this daughter of Egypt's king to respond in the affirmative, and thus Moses is once more in his parental home, free from the threat of being cast into the river. Moses' mother receives a reward of faith in the money received from Pharaoh's daughter. Such a reward of faith could only prompt them to greater heights of faith and expectancy of hope. And in this hope Moses will be instructed in his infant days in the house of his parents concerning the "affection of Christ" which Israel is enduring in Egypt.

The reasoning of a faith which clings to the faithful promise of God cannot be in error!

FEARLESS OF THE KING'S COMMAND

It seems that the conjecture of some that the "king's command" to cast all the sons of Israel into the river was not executed on a large scale. Quite likely also this command was set aside through the instrumentality of the king's daughter. Thus the Lord takes the crafty king in his own craftiness.

The Hebrew Christians and we do well to note this lesson from the Word of God contained in holy Scriptures. It was this Moses upon whom Jewry set their affections, whose very life depended not on the works of the law, but upon the faith in the promises of God. If Moses' parents needed patience to do the will of God in order to obtain the promise, surely we do well to press these foot-prints of these erstwhile saints. And he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Mission News

Our Labors In Florida

Rev. H. Veldman

In this article we submit to our people a report of our labors in Florida. Our people know, of course, that the Mission Committee of our Protestant Reformed Churches sent the undersigned to labor for six Sundays

in the Bradenton area of Florida. And I am sure that they wish to be informed of our work there.

My wife and I left for Florida the Tuesday morning of Feb. 20. We arrived in the Bradenton area on

Thursday afternoon of Feb. 22. Our Mission Committee decided to send one of our ministers to Florida at its meeting of Jan. 17. When the Revs. C. Hanko and M. Schipper could not go, the consistory of the undersigned decided to release me for the purpose of laboring in sunny Florida. And so we left our Michigan home for the land of sunshine and oranges the Tuesday morning of Feb. 20.

Although the Mission Committee decided to ask local consistories to release their minister for mission work in Florida, and although my consistory decided to release me for this work, nevertheless my going to Florida remained very much in doubt for some time. The difficulty centered in the obtaining of a meeting place for our services and also in the renting of a lodging place for the undersigned. Both proved to be very scarce items. Our people in Florida were advised, should nothing else be available, to rent a room in the Holiday Inn or in a bank in that area. Our congregation of Lynden, for example, conducted its services in a bank for a number of years. However, to obtain lodging quarters for us proved to be a greater problem. When we decided to go to Florida, after struggling with this problem, we did not know where we would conduct our services or where we would be able to stay. All we knew was that we would lodge two nights in a motel enroute to Florida and that we would be in a Holiday Inn the first two nights in Bradenton. The Mission Committee had decided to send one of our ministers to the Bradenton area and we proceeded from the confidence that the Lord would provide.

And the Lord did provide! The Saturday evening before our scheduled departure we received a telephone call from Bradenton that a room had been rented in the Bradenton-Sarasota Holiday Inn. And on Monday morning, the day before our departure from Michigan, one of the members of our Southwest church, who had planned to spend the month of March in this area, called me to inform me that they could not make the trip to Florida and that my wife and I could take their place in the motel which they had reserved for themselves. We believed that the Lord had opened the way!

The uncertainty of a meeting place for our services made it impossible to advertise our coming in the Bradenton paper. A room had been reserved in the Holiday Inn through the Sunday of April 1. However, we would not be able to meet in this room the Sundays of March 11 and 18. Efforts would have to be made to obtain a room elsewhere. We applied for a room in a Quality Motel in the city of Bradenton, but this request was denied us. Then we contacted the superintendent of public schools in Bradenton, but again we were disappointed. We also applied for a meeting place in a Girl's Club in the heart of Bradenton, but again we were disappointed. Finally, Mr. D. Langeland of our Kalamazoo church, who,

incidentally, was a great help to us, and himself a funeral director, contacted a funeral director in this area, and he gladdened our hearts by informing us that we could use his funeral home for the purpose of conducting our services. What an ideal place this proved to be! Of course, there was one thing about this funeral home that might make it impossible for us to worship there. Should there be a body in this home upon the Lord's Day, then the visiting hours for the family might make it impossible for us to hold our services there. And there were two bodies in that funeral home the last Sunday we were in Florida, April 1! But this funeral director was so accommodating that he advertised in the Saturday paper that the visiting hours would be restricted to Sunday afternoon so that we could conduct our service there in the evening.

I must say a word at this time about the coming of Mr. and Mrs. John (see you in church) Faber to Bradenton while we were laboring there. They had planned this trip before having any idea that our churches would conduct mission work in Florida. They spent two weeks in the Bradenton area, the Sundays of March 18 and 25. How glad we were that they could come! How well we can understand the joy of Rev. Lubbers when friends from our churches in the States come to visit with them! And this is particularly true because this brother is also a member of the Mission Committee. Certainly, divinely providential! He was in the position to study this field for himself. And how we enjoyed their company and fellowship! They contributed so much to our Florida stay and our labors there.

We were also saddened during our labors in this land of sunshine. The Moermans of our Kalamazoo church spent the Sunday of March 4 in our services. The following day, while they were riding their bikes in the Venice area, Mrs. Moerman was involved in a fatal accident. She remained in a coma until Saturday evening. That evening our Lord took her unto Himself. We were certainly reminded of the uncertainty of life!

As far as our labors are concerned, we may remark, in the first place, that we contacted two radio stations in the St. Petersburg area. Our radio committee had asked the undersigned to ascertain whether it would be possible to carry our Reformed Witness Hour over a radio station in that area. As we said, we contacted two such stations and sent the information to our radio committee. One of these stations, in St. Petersburg, also carries the Back To God Hour of the Christian Reformed church. Besides this, we distributed considerable Prot. Ref. literature in Florida. Mr. Henry Vander Wal, the energetic and very able business manager of our *Standard Bearer*, supplied me with this literature. We disposed or distributed all of it.

What about our services in Florida? We preached there six Sundays and also conducted a Prayer Day

service. Our largest audience was thirty-one people, and this was on a Sunday when we had three couples of our Hudsonville church in attendance. Our smallest audience was fourteen people; and this happened twice, the first evening service and once when the Lord sent a very heavy rain upon the Bradenton area. We must bear in mind that we could advertise only the last three Sundays, due to the fact that, prior to these last three Sundays, our meeting place was so uncertain. Our audiences were constituted exclusively of vacationers or transients. We never had a native Floridian in attendance. These "vacationers" belonged either to our churches or to the Christian Reformed Church. We also made some contacts of people who did not attend our services. These contacts were very stimulating. We were amazed to meet these people, discuss the truth with them, and discover how thoroughly Reformed they were. This was particularly true of people whom we visited in Fort Meyers Beach and in Winter Haven. But these people are isolated. The people in Fort Meyers Beach are from Pennsylvania. When I asked them whether they knew of others in their own community who loved the truth as they did, the answer was that they knew of none. Somehow they came into contact with our churches and our literature, and they seemed to love the truth of the Word of God with all their heart and soul. As this party at Fort Meyers Beach said to the undersigned: "I thank God for the Protestant Reformed Churches." For awhile I thought that I might spend the last Sunday of our Florida visit in Winter Haven, to preach the Word there to a congregation of some sixty souls, including from fifteen to twenty children. The consistory there, however, later informed me that they had made arrangements for the Sunday of April 1; besides, the emeritated minister who conducted the services there, and who planned to leave Winter Haven after March 25, did not seem to relish the idea of our conducting the services there.

Preaching thirteen times while in Florida, we delivered four sermons based on our Heidelberg Catechism. We preached on the first question of Lord's Day 7: "Are all men, as they perished in Adam, saved in Christ?" And we emphasized that only they are saved who are ingrafted into Christ by a true and living faith. Twice we preached on Lord's Day 21, calling attention to the election of the church and also to the gathering of the church by the Son of God by His Spirit and Word. And we also preached a sermon on Lord's Day 15, emphasizing the unique character of the Sufferer of Calvary. Our preaching was certainly well received. We may surely report that they enjoyed the preaching of the Word of God as proclaimed in our

Protestant Reformed churches. And the undersigned may surely declare that he enjoyed this aspect of his labors in Florida. It was also a thrilling experience to discuss the truth of the Word of God with whoever would give us an audience.

It has been said, and honestly, that we should have waited with our mission endeavour in Florida until later in the year, that we went to the Bradenton area too late in the season. To this we reply that the Lord certainly gave us an open door. He provided us with a meeting place for our services. And He also provided the undersigned and his wife with a lodging place. It is true that we could not advertise our services for the first three Sundays, but it is also true that the last three Sundays were advertised in the Bradenton paper.

Was our going to Florida worthwhile? What did we set as our goal? Why did we work there? I ask this question, we understand, from the viewpoint of our Mission Committee? To organize a church in Florida? Hardly! We will not attempt to answer the question whether a church of our churches will eventually be organized there. But this I can say: the purpose of our mission there was to sow the seed, to establish contacts with people who would listen to us, to preach the truth as we know it to be according to the Scriptures, so that these people may report of our preaching when they return to their respective homes and churches. We had people in our audiences, from the state of New York, who attended all our services. They received our preaching very enthusiastically. And we urged them to carry our proclamation of the Word of God home with them. We assured them that our churches were ready to come to their assistance, that we would heed every plea to come over to them and help them.

Was our going to Florida worthwhile? I surely believe that it was. Our churches had the opportunity to proclaim the wonderful truths of the Scriptures which are so precious to us. Our audiences were not large. But we did have an open door. We did have the opportunity to speak that which we know to be completely in harmony with the infallible Scriptures. We may leave the fruit of these labors in the hands of our God. All that the church of God must do is preach the Word. That is exclusively the calling of the church of the living God. The Son of God gathers His church. This we may safely leave in His hands. As I told my audiences in Bradenton: "What a shame it is to hire orchestras and bands and soloists, when all that is necessary is the lively preaching of the Word of God!" May we as churches be faithful in the Proclamation of the infallible Scriptures, and take hold of every opportunity at our disposal to sow the seed, leaving the fruit to Him Who alone gathers His Church.



Book Review

Lectures in Systematic Theology

Lectures in Systematic Theology, Robert L. Dabney; Zondervan Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.; 903 pp., \$12.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema]

This book was not actually sent me for review. I saw it advertised, and purchased it for my personal library. But because I consider it a worthwhile contribution to Reformed theology, and because it is representative of old-line Southern Presbyterianism, I am calling it to the attention of those interested in theological works by means of this brief notice. Incidentally, if the Zondervan Book Review department notices this, I hereby invite them to send books of this caliber to the *Standard Bearer* for review.

Robert Lewis Dabney had a varied and rather strange career. I would guess that the story of his life would make interesting reading. He was a pastor for six years. In 1853 he became a professor of church history and church polity. In 1859 he became a professor of systematic theology. During the Civil War, he served as a chaplain, but also served as Chief of Staff to General T.J. (Stonewall) Jackson — in the Confederate Army. Then he returned to systematic theology at Union Seminary until 1883. And finally he taught at the University of Texas in the Chair of

Mental and Moral Philosophy and Political Economy.

Perhaps you wonder what kind of theology came from his pen?

Good, solid stuff! No, you will not agree with everything. But in the main, the theology is that of the Westminster Confession. There is a considerable amount of good polemics and apologetics intermingled. Here and there a fresh insight! If you enjoy reading theology, or if you are only on the market for another reference work in the dogmatics department of your library, here is a good volume. One could do far worse than to purchase Dabney's work.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the First Protestant Reformed of Holland, Michigan, extends its sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. G. Scholten, in the death of her mother,

MRS. P. DREYER.

May our covenant God comfort her and grant her His peace.

Mrs. J. Van Kampen, Pres.
Mrs. T. Elzinga, Sec'y.

Principle of Education, No. 4

In the midst of and in distinction from the evil world that lieth in darkness and is perverse in all its ways because of sin, it is the calling of the people of God to live by grace from the principle of regeneration according to the will of God in every sphere of life, individual, family, social, industrial, political and

ecclesiastical, so that they may be children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Hence, they insist that all education, that must prepare their children for such an all-sided Christian walk in the world, shall be adapted to this purpose.

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News From Our Churches

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

April 4, 1973

Southeast Prot. Ref. Church

Classis East met in regular session on the 4th of April in Southeast Church. Present for the first time were the delegates from the newly organized Faith Prot. Ref. Church in Jenison, Michigan. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. G. Van Baren presided over this session of classis.

The Stated Clerk and Classical Committee gave their respective reports. Reporting also was the consistory of Hope Church who served as the classical committee to oversee the organization of the Jenison area church. Faith Prot. Ref. Church is now very much a reality. Rev. C. Hanko has been appointed as her moderator; classical appointments have been regular.

The regular committees necessary for each session of classis were appointed. Elders H. Boer and R. Bos were appointed as Finance Committee. Expenses of \$24.96 were reported by this committee. Faith Church requested classical appointments. The committee of Rev. M. Schipper and Elders G. VanDenTop and G. Pipe constructed the following schedule for Faith Church. The schedule adopted is as follows: April 15 - R. C. Harbach; April 22 - M. Schipper; May 6 - H. Veldman; May 13 - R. Van Overloop; May 20 - G. Van Baren; May 27 - M. Schipper; June 10 - C. Hanko; June 17 - G. Van Baren; June 24 - J.A. Heys; July 1 - R.C. Harbach; July 8 - H. Veldman.

Faith Church also submitted requests for subsidy for 1973 and 1974. These requests were forwarded to Synod for approval.

First Church came to Classis with an overture requesting that Synod continue its work on the revision of *The Psalter* and to request that our churches take two collections per year to cover the expenses of this project. Classis approved this overture not only but also made two additional suggestions to Synod concerning this matter: 1) That Synod consider constructing a new psalter incorporating the old favorites of the present edition and 2) That Synod appoint a separate committee to revise the liturgical material in *The Psalter*.

Rev. M. Schipper and Rev. H. Veldman were elected to conduct church visitation. Rev. Heys will serve as alternate.

One matter was considered by the Classis in closed session.

Elder G. VanDenTop was appointed to thank the ladies of Southeast for their catering services.

The remaining business concerned the closing of this session of Classis East. The questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and satisfactorily answered, the concept minutes were read and adopted, and the chairman thanked the delegates for their cooperation in conducting the business of the day. Classis adjourned and Rev. C. Hanko closed the session with prayer. Classis stood adjourned until June 27 when the next session will be held at the First Prot. Ref. Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Huisken
Stated Clerk
Classis East

A couple of news items of current interest will probably still fit on this page, along with the Classis Report. For the first, I'll quote a paragraph from our newly organized church in Jenison, Michigan.

"At the Congregational Meeting held March 29, 'Faith' was selected as the name for our church. The pastoral call was extended to Rev. D. Engelsma and a budget of \$10.00 for the General Fund and \$2.00 for the Building Fund was adopted."

The second comes from a couple of different bulletins. From Hudsonville's: "Rev. Engelsma reports that an open door is given to us in the Philadelphia area, with much work, more than can be accomplished in a few weeks."

From First's: "Rev. Engelsma, who has been laboring in Philadelphia, has reported findings to the Mission Committee, and the committee deems it highly necessary that this work be carried on without a break in continuity. The Mission Committee has requested our consistory and congregation to release our pastor for a period of four to six weeks to work there. The consistory, in a special meeting held Wednesday evening, granted their request, limiting the time to four weeks. All indications are that the Lord has opened a door to us in Philadelphia, and a strong indication that another door will be opened in New Jersey where Rev. Engelsma has made other contacts with 'concerned' people. These are believers who loved the Reformed Faith but who are starving because of the apostasy of their churches."

And, back to Hudsonville's: "We are grateful to our God for this opportunity to proclaim the truth most precious to us."

D.D.