

The STANDARD BEARER



A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Home-instruction is fundamental! Let us never forget it! The instruction a child receives at home is basic with respect to all other instruction, and the character of his bringing up at home reflects itself in his manifestation everywhere else, in Church, in Catechism, in Sunday School and in the Primary School. It is true, that we cannot easily over-estimate the value of a Christian education throughout, in Church and School as well as at home. It is equally true, that the danger is not imaginary, now we have so many institutions for the purpose of instructing our children outside of the home, that we trust too much in those institutions, as if they could bear the entire burden of responsibility, and that we grow negligent with respect to the bringing up of our children at home.

Scripture emphasizes the need of home-instruction. Ultimately it places the responsibility for the education of our children upon the parent. [See page 173]

MEDITATION

Choosing Life

Rev. M. Schipper

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

Deuteronomy 30:19.

"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil . . ."

It is the law of the blessing and the curse!

Do this, and thou shalt live! Love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, soul, and strength. And love thy neighbor as thyself. Doing this thou shalt be blessed.

Do this, and thou shalt die! Hate God, and worship the idol. Hate thy neighbor, and love God's enemies. Doing this thou shalt surely die; thou shalt not live.

This is the law which Moses received from God, and had given to the people. If ye will love the Lord and walk in His ways, and do His commandments, ye shall surely live. But if ye are haughty, and proud, and refuse to obey, ye shall be cursed and scattered.

Life and death!

Choose life! Glorious life!

But what is it?

Life we see all about us. We see it in the world of vegetation. We see it in the waters, and in the air about us. We see it in the trees and plants that spring up out of the earth. We see it in the animals and creeping things upon the face of the earth. We behold the life of the bird that wings its way freely in the sky above us, and in the fish that plays in the waters of the sea.

Death!

Inevitable death!

While all about us we see life, we also see death on every hand!

Peculiarly after the creatures live for a time, they die. And none of the creatures makes life or death a matter of choice. Life appears to be imposed upon them; but death, too, is inescapable.

And in a certain sense of the word, what is true of

the creatures in general is also true of man. He is not responsible for the fact that he lives, for his life came to him from without. And after he lives for threescore years and ten, or fourscore years if strong, he too passes away as a shadow.

And so the questions persist . . .

What is life?

And how can it be said to be a matter of choice?

When we look at the living creatures about us, we observe that life for them seems to be their constant adaptation to the proper sphere of external reality in which they are placed by God, and which is in harmony with their very being and nature. A tree, for instance, is said to be living when it constantly draws from the soil in which it is planted the life-giving ingredients which God has put into it, when it takes from the air, from the rain and sunshine the energy these elements give. Or take, for example, the fish; which is said to live so long as it abides within the water, the law in which God has placed it. Take the tree out of the soil or the fish out of the water, and these creatures die. But as was said above, life is imposed upon them. They have no choice in the matter. In fact, life must first be given to them, or they cannot continue to adapt to the law of God in which they are placed. Put a dead tree in rich soil and it will soon deteriorate and rot away. Leave a dead fish in the water and it will soon bloat, and become a stinking mess. And, as was suggested, man, the crown of creation, is in many respects like the tree and the fish and the animals. His natural earthly life, breathed into him by the Spirit of God, continues so long as he breathes the air about him, and adapts himself to the earthly creation for his food and drink. Deprive him of the air, and he suffocates to death; take from him his food and drink, and he perishes.

But man is also different from the other creatures!

And life for him in the ultimate sense of the word is quite different than that of the animal.

He is made in the image and likeness of God!

And this image is the very idea of his being! He resembles God in a creaturely way. He therefore cannot live by bread alone, but by the Word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Life in its highest reality is in God!

He is the living God! The absolute reality of life!

In God life is the eternal adaptation to Himself alone! This is possible because He is One in Being and Three in Persons. Reverently speaking, were God only one, He could not be the living God. But because He is triune, He can and does eternally adapt to Himself. In the Trinity there is a mutual seeking and finding of Himself. Among the three Divine Persons there is a bond of perfection, love. The Father seeks and finds Himself in the Son, Who is His perfect reflection and impressed image; and this He does through the Spirit. The Son seeks and finds the Father through the Spirit. And the Spirit takes the deep things of the Father and reveals them to the Son. This proceeding and returning, generation and procession, is the divine, perfected, covenant life of God.

Man's life, on the other hand, consists in the vibrating of God's life in him. God's covenant love must thrill his whole being. Man's real life consists in his constantly adapting to the covenant life of God. For him eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent. (John 17:3).

We must remember here that we are speaking of man as he came forth from the hand of his Creator; of man as he was formed out of the dust of the earth and in whom God breathed the Spirit of life, and he became a living soul; of man who was created in the image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

As such, man could rightly know God his Creator, heartily love and serve Him. Though he was created lapsible, he could by an act of his will choose life. But with the freedom of his will he could also choose death. And the fact of the matter is, that he chose the latter.

Consequently Adam, and all men in him, could not and cannot now of themselves choose life. He is in bondage and in slavery to sin, and he wills only death, and the way to death. Since the fall all men are conceived and born in sin, are spiritually dead. Incapable is the natural man of any spiritual good, nor can he of himself choose life.

But here is the good news of the Gospel!

God, the living God, in His elective love chose His people in Christ. And for them He sent His Son into

the world to assume their guilt in their nature. This assumed guilt He bore to the accursed tree, where the wrath of God He bore over against the sin of His people, so as to remove the guilt and that wrath from them. And because He redeemed them from eternal wrath, God raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him at His right hand. There He gave unto Him the Spirit of Life without measure, which Spirit He, their Saviour, imparts unto them in such a way that they are spiritually renewed. And becoming new creatures by grace, their will is also renewed, and they are enabled to choose once more life and glory.

By grace, therefore, he is a new creation, recreated in true knowledge and righteousness, reflecting in a creaturely way the virtues of God. He is alive with the resurrection life, the imperishable life of Christ His Saviour. Able he is once more to love God and to adapt to the will of God for his life. While he stands in the midst of death, in a body that tends to the grave, he is enabled by the grace of God through faith once more to choose life.

Necessary choice!

Not so is it that man is free not to choose if he will. Nor is it so that the natural man, apart from grace, can choose life if he will. Never is it so that man can decide to be independent, refusing to make a choice between life and death, between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. Vain man may boast of the freedom of the will. The so-called atheist may boast that he has decided to serve no God. But all such boasting is vain. Choose he must, and choose he will.

The reason is that man, in distinction from the animal, is made a rational, moral creature. When he fell through the choice of our first parents, man did not become another creature. He remained a man. He retained his rationality. He continued to choose. True, he now chose only death and corruption. But choose, he does. True, he could not choose life, but constantly he chooses death. And when grace comes, and he is renewed by the Spirit of Christ, he in principle chooses life once more. But choose, he does. In the second place, we must remember that God, the Creator and Re-Creator, places man, in distinction from the animal, in an antithetical relation, so that always man is required to choose the good and hate the evil. And so he is constantly choosing. Depraved and corrupt man always chooses darkness rather than light, death rather than life. He cannot choose both, it is either-or. No different is it when he is saved by grace. The new man in Christ chooses Christ, not Belial; to love God and to hate evil. True, he does this in an old nature that hates the light, and that delights itself in the way of death. But choose he must. Everyday, and from morning to night, he must say:

Yes, to God; and No, to evil. This is precisely the significance of the Word of God in our text.

Choose life!

That both thou and thy seed may live!

Here we are assured that the choice of life is never vain. He that chooses life will not somehow come to bitter disappointment. Rather, the converse is true. He that chooses life shall live.

And the meaning is not that the choice of life merits life. Truth is, we never merit, and he who rejoices in life now in principle and forever in heavenly glory constantly admits that of himself he forfeits all right to life and blessedness as he is by nature. We recognize the truth that our sins and iniquities which we still commit deserve God's eternal wrath and judgment.

We confess that the choice of life is due only to God's sovereign choice of us, which is first, before we could do any choosing of life. We declare openly that the choice of life is the work of His sovereign grace in us. We proclaim it loudly unto all who will hear, and to God Who always hears, that salvation is of the Lord, and the choice of life is the choice of faith, which He has graciously implanted in our hearts through grace.

And this choice of life is not merely the choice of the individual child of God, but of the church of God which He is gathering in the generations of the believers and their seed.

That thou and thy seed may live!

The choice of life is the choice which all the elect seed makes!

God's covenant shall be realized in the gathering of all the elect seed!

And they shall live!

Now, as they still walk in the flesh, in the midst of an evil and corrupt world that tends to destruction. In that world they walk antithetically, always rejecting the evil, and choosing the good; always fighting against the darkness, while choosing the light; always with the clean garments of righteousness, while they despise the garments spotted by the flesh. Choosing life!

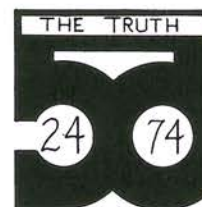
Presently, they shall live in the glory of eternal life, with the living God, in the house of His covenant tabernacle!

World without end!

Amen!

The Standard Bearer In Retrospect

Prof. H. Hanko



If one pages through the past volumes of the *Standard Bearer*, one cannot help but be impressed with the large number of articles devoted to the matter of Christian education. This fact is no doubt rooted in the emphasis which our Churches have always placed upon the doctrine of the covenant of grace.

These articles begin in the very first volume, and there is scarcely a single volume which does not contain at least one article. These articles range over a broad field of subjects, and they treat many different aspects of the problem. There are articles which urge the people of God to be faithful in their covenant

calling. There are articles which discuss educational trends in the public schools and in the Christian schools. There are articles which discuss the need for our own Protestant Reformed school system. There are articles which discuss the nature of the education which ought to be given in a school which is truly Christian and truly Reformed.

These articles also bore their fruit in the establishment of many Protestant Reformed Christian Schools throughout the country.

It was difficult to pick out a representative article from the many available in the first twenty volumes

of the *Standard Bearer*. We chose one from Volume XX. It does not deal specifically with education in the school; it rather touches upon parental responsibility in the home. We hope that it may be of benefit to our readers to remind them of their

responsibilities in covenant instruction. It is a series of two editorials (slightly edited) written by Rev. H. Hoeksema at about the time a new school year started.

* * * *

The season is there again, when more than in the weeks and months of summer-vacations, our attention is concentrated upon the instruction of our covenant-children.

Schools that have been closed for several weeks have again opened their doors and resumed their work of training the young.

Catechism classes are again conducted to instruct the children of the Church in "the aforesaid doctrine", that they may be founded in the truth. Sunday schools are prepared to add their efforts to those of the Church and of the School to instruct the children of the covenant in the knowledge of the Word.

And the long winter-evenings are more adapted than the sultry summer-nights to home- and family-life, to the "sitting in our house", so that also in the home special attention may be paid to the bringing up of the children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Home-instruction is fundamental! Let us never forget it! The instruction a child receives at home is basic with respect to all other instruction, and the character of his bringing up at home reflects itself in his manifestation everywhere else, in Church, in Catechism, in Sunday School and in the Primary School. It is true, that we cannot easily over-estimate the value of a Christian education throughout, in Church and School as well as at home. It is equally true, that the danger is not imaginary, now we have so many institutions for the purpose of instructing our children outside of the home, that we trust too much in those institutions, as if they could bear the entire burden of responsibility, and that we grow negligent with respect to the bringing up of our children at home.

Scripture emphasizes the need of home-instruction. Ultimately it places the responsibility for the education of our children upon the parent.

Beautifully and very emphatically this is expressed in the well-known injunction to Israel: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, when thou sittest in thy house and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down and when thou risest up," Deut. 6:7.

When thou sittest in thy house!

A wonderful, and, alas! a rare picture is brought

before our imagination by these words! A man, a father, a parent, sitting in his house! Our house is not the building in which we dwell, no matter how magnificent an edifice it may be. Our house is our home. And the home consists of the fellowship between the various members of one family. Be it ever so splendid, a mere house is not a home; and be it ever so humble, there is no place like home. The closest earthly, human relationships are formed and sustained and enjoyed in our "house". There are the love-relations of man and wife, of parent and children, of brothers and sisters. The home is a man's earthly sanctuary. It is his haven of rest after a day of strenuous toil. His home is strictly private. Into his home he wishes no one to intrude.

And the text draws before our mind the picture of such a home and of the actual enjoyment of home-life. When thou sittest in thy house! The parent is at home, and he is not nervously pacing the floor or busy with all kinds of outside work, but he is at leisure. And he is not sitting in his house alone, but his children are with him! For the text speaks of his instruction to his children. The family, therefore, is together. A picture that is much more rare in our modern world, even including the people of God, than it was among Israel of old. Partly, no doubt, this is due to the fact, that life in all its forms is different from the life of Israel in the promised land. Our life has become much more public. Many matters, much business, many meetings, draw us away from home, sometimes every evening of the week. Some of this cannot be helped. Much of it is also beneficial. It is a joy to see our young people make the Church their central meeting place, where they congregate to be instructed in doctrine, to enjoy one-another's fellowship in society-life, to sing, to discuss the Word of God and to pray. Yet, even good things can be overdone and thus become harmful. All these things ought not to destroy our home-life. There should be time, especially in the winter-months with its long evenings, when everything beckons us to stay inside and gather around the home-hearth, to "sit in our house". And we need not emphasize that the pleasures, which draw the people of the world from their fireside, should have no attraction for the people of God whatever.

But there is more.

Even when we do sit in our house, and even when the whole family is at home an evening, we often do

not enjoy family-life and fellowship. Many a family might just as well go out and spend the evening elsewhere, as to sit in their house, as far as actual home-life is concerned. Such is the case, to mention just one of our modern habits, when, as soon as supper is finished, the radio (we might substitute television, H.H.) is turned on and we open our home to the outside world until it is time to retire for the night. Regardless now of the question as to the material we receive over the radio and the character of the program to which we listen, the fact is, that to enjoy the radio is something radically different from sitting in our house and enjoying family-life and fellowship. And thus there are many different things that might be mentioned in this connection, that prevent us from actually "sitting in our house" when we are at home.

The text draws a different picture.

Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children!

Concretely Scripture here draws before our imagination the attractive picture of a parent, sitting in his house, entirely at leisure, and with the purpose in his heart to spend an evening at home; his children are with him and sitting about him; and he is busy teaching them.

Teaching them what?

Thou shalt teach *them*! That is, the precepts of the Lord our covenant God. For, this is the first and great commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and mind and soul and strength! And, therefore, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and all instruction is, as to its spiritual-ethical nature, instruction in the Word of God!

And in general it is evident, that Scripture here places the entire burden of responsibility for the instruction of the covenant children upon the shoulders of the parents.

Home-instruction is basic.

Education must begin at home. Begin, we mean, not merely in the sense that during the first few years of its life the child is nurtured by its parent, but in the sense that all the lines of its education must continually have their beginning in the home.

Home education is basic.

And Scripture, as might be expected, places the full responsibility of the instruction of the child upon the parents.

As might be expected, I say.

For, even from a natural viewpoint, what is more natural than that the parents should be the instructors of the children? Are they, of all men, not

most deeply interested in their education, because they love them with parental love? They certainly may be expected to seek the good of their children that are united to them with heartstrings. What, then, could be more in harmony with the ordinances of God, than that the education of the child should rest upon the responsibility of the parent? They, of all men, know their own children best, ought to know them better than any, are in a position to be thoroughly acquainted with them. They are with their children from the moment they open their eyes upon the world. They watch them and know them in their different characters long before the time arrives that they must also be educated in school and catechism. They, too, have the confidence of their children, unless there is something wrong in home-relations. Parents are the natural instructors of their children. It is but natural, i.e., wholly in harmony with God's ordinances of creation and providence, that Scripture should place the responsibility of the education of the child upon the parents.

But the Word of God is addressing covenant-parents.

It is speaking to the Church in the world.

God causes His covenant, as we know, to run and to be realized in the line of continued generations. Hence, we and our children are not our own, but belong to the Lord. Our children are not ours. They are not given us merely in order that we should enjoy their presence and delight in their love, but that we should teach them the fear of the Lord. The responsibility for the covenant-training, therefore, lies in the first place, with the parents.

And for that reason they are also expected to assume that responsibility when they present their children to be baptized. Then they promise before the face of the Lord, the whole church being witness, that they will bring up their children in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, *to the utmost of their power!*

Hence, also according to this promise, instruction begins at home. First, the parents promise that they will instruct their children themselves. It is only in the next place that they also pledge themselves to help and cause them to be instructed, when their personal efforts and powers would not be sufficient. But even then they are responsible. *They* help and, *they* cause them to be instructed.

Always the home and always the parent!

Now, that instruction in the home may be distinguished as direct and indirect, intentional and unintentional.

And it is difficult to say which of these is the more important. The indirect and unintentional

instruction, perhaps, occupies by far more time than the direct and intentional.

What do we mean by unintentional instruction of the child at home?

The atmosphere at home, in which a child grows up.

We must remember, a child grows up gradually and constantly, not only physically, but also mentally and spiritually. He does not develop by leaps and bounds. His mental and spiritual growth do not wait for us, do not stop for a while merely because we pay no attention to him and do not give him a dose of instruction. It goes right on.

And a child is very receptive. It takes it all in! It easily imbibes all it hears and sees.

It also likes to imitate. It is a natural imitator. "Zooals de ouden zingen, zoo piepen de jongen". (As the parents sing, so the children chirp, H.H.)

For these reasons the atmosphere of the home is of great importance. To this belongs, for instance, our conversation as parents, when we are not directly speaking to the children, but when the latter are present. And I may as well add: or when they are not present, for even then we are creating the home-atmosphere, and whatever may be the character of our conversations when the children are not present will naturally become their character when they are about us. To this belongs, too, our conversation when we have company and spend a social evening. What do we, then, talk about? Are the things of the kingdom of God the chief subject of our talk? Or are, perhaps, other matters uppermost in our mind and of chief interest in our conversation? Do we, perhaps, easily slander and backbite? Or, are we spending an evening talking about the latest fashion in coats and hats or the newest style automobile! Are the things of the world the main subject? And does the spirit of the world manifest itself in our talk, when we converse as parents or with our friends when we have them for a social evening at our home? And when we do speak about the things of God's kingdom, what is the tenor of our conversation? Are,

we, perhaps, criticizing severely and unmercifully and very conceitedly the office-bearers of the Church? Do we speak about them as also about the rest of the brethren as before the face of God, with respect because of their office and with love because they are brethren?

You see, "zooals de ouden zingen, zoo piepen de jongen".

The child imbibes the atmosphere in which you cause it to live.

You did not intend to instruct your child, but you did nevertheless.

You did not directly speak to him, but he was a very interested listener, even though himself was not intentionally so and greedily he drank in every word you said.

So little did you mean to educate your child that later, when you hear the child speak in the same way, when he also criticizes his teacher and minister and allows himself to speak deprecatingly about those that are placed over him, you disapprove and punish or rebuke the child.

But your rebuke is vain and your punishment of little avail. For, though you did not intend it so, the child will tacitly judge that you are rebuking and punishing him for what you have taught him yourself. Unintentionally you have instructed him and your intentional instruction is in conflict with it.

Many things might be added to this as belonging to this unintentional instruction, to the atmosphere in your home.

But let this be clear: there must be harmony between your direct and intentional instruction and that home-atmosphere.

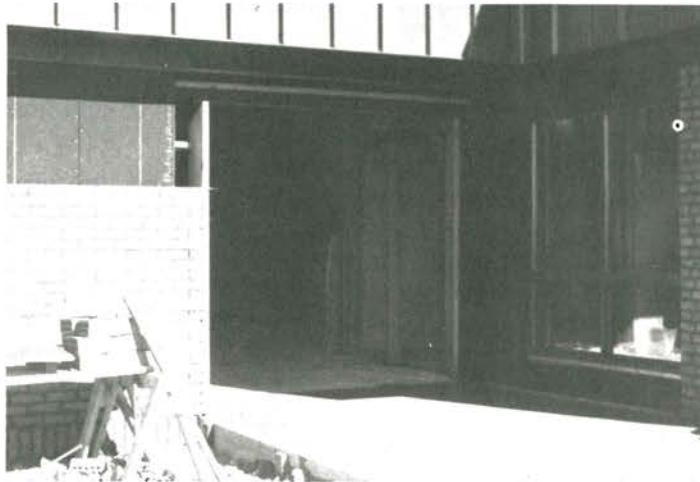
Both must be rooted in the fear of the Lord!

(Editor's note: We receive the impression from the article that Rev. Hoeksema intended to continue this series in later editorials. He did not however, return to this subject, perhaps because of other pressing matters.)

Know the standard and follow it. Read THE STANDARD BEARER.

EDITORIALS

Seminary Building Dedication Rescheduled



The above photo shows the main entrance of the new building of our seminary nearing completion. Actually the building is much nearer completion than this picture indicates. The exterior is complete, and the finishing work is nearing completion inside. It will probably be a close squeeze, but we hope to move in between semesters.

To our consternation, after we could make no more changes in the last issue of the *Standard Bearer*, we discovered a conflict in dates. The new date of the dedication program is February 15, the Lord willing. The program will be at First Church, Grand Rapids. Why at First Church? Well, frankly we are looking for a capacity audience! After almost 50 years with no home of its own, our Theological School is at last going to have its own brand new building! What a wonderful occasion! What reason for thanksgiving the Lord our God is giving us! And by "us" I mean not only the personnel of the school, but our entire denomination, to whom the school belongs. We have reason for a joyous celebration and for thankful dedication! Let as many of us as possible — from near and far — join us on the evening of February 15! And let us make the auditorium of First Church reverberate with praises to our covenant God!

A brief and worthwhile program of dedication has

been planned, at which our new professor, Professor Robert Decker, will give the dedicatory address.

Open house is also being planned.

For out-of-town visitors there will be open house at the new building on the afternoon of Friday, February 15, from 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. For any who are unacquainted in the area, here are directions. Coming from the west on M21 from Holland, take the expressway at Jenison to 28th Street. Turn right down 28th Street to Ivanrest Ave. You can recognize Ivanrest by the pedestrian overpass just before you reach it. Turn right down Ivanrest past 44th Street. After that, you can't miss it! Coming from the south on the US 131 expressway, exit at 54th Street. Go west on 54th Street to the end; jog over to 52nd Street. Follow 52nd Street to the third stop sign, which will be Ivanrest Ave. Turn right on Ivanrest, and you will be in sight of the building.

For local visitors the open house has been set for Saturday afternoon, February 16, from 1 to 5 P.M.

For those unable to attend, we will try to furnish more pictures of the finished building in the near future.

But by all means, try to be present at this historic occasion!

The OPC and the “Free Offer” (5)

Contrary to Scripture

(continued)

In this section of our critique we propose to examine, first of all, the Scriptural evidence that is adduced by the proponents of the offer-theory and to face the question whether their Scriptural evidence and their exegesis is *valid*. A second question, however, is necessarily involved, namely: is the exegesis of the Scriptural passages cited in harmony with the current thought of Scripture? To this question we shall also address ourselves.

From time to time in the course of this discussion we shall also refer to the recent booklet by Pastor Erroll Hulse, *The Free Offer*. Pastor Hulse is not Reformed, but Baptist; but he is rather widely acknowledged as a “Calvinistic Baptist,” to my mind a contradiction in terms, but a name which is used by some to denote a Baptist who holds to the doctrine of sovereign grace and the so-called Five Points of Calvinism. Because this booklet has received rather wide distribution and because its teachings continue to be acknowledged as representative of true Calvinism, we shall include it in our present critique. This can rather readily be done because the position of the booklet does not differ substantially from that of the Murray-Stonehouse booklet. Both would be termed by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, which is critical of the offer-theory, as “Modern Modified Calvinism,” – in my opinion, too good a name for what is actually a fundamental denial of Calvinism.

We begin with the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet, and we allow the authors to present their first item of proof:

The Committee would now respectfully submit some exegetical material bearing upon this question and with a view to the resolution of it.

Matthew 5:44-48. This passage does not indeed deal with the overtures of grace in the gospel. But it does tell us something regarding God’s benevolence that has bearing upon all manifestations of divine grace. The particular aspect of God’s grace reflected upon here is the common gifts of providence, the making of the sun to rise upon evil and good and the sending of rain upon just and unjust. There can be no question but all without distinction, reprobate as well

as elect, are the beneficiaries of this favour, and it is that fact that is distinctly stated in verse 45.

The significant feature of this text is that this bestowal of favour by God on all alike is adduced as the reason why the disciples are to love their enemies and do them good. There is, of course, a question as to the proper text of verse 44. If we follow the Aleph-B text and omit the clauses, “bless them who curse you, do good to them who hate you” as well as the verb “despitefully use,” the sense is not affected. And besides, these clauses, though they may not belong to the genuine text of Matthew, appear in Luke 6:27, 28 in practically the same form. Hence the teaching of our Lord undoubtedly was that the disciples were to love their enemies, do good to those who hated them, bless those who cursed them, and pray for those who despitefully used them and persecuted them. And the reason provided is that God himself bestows his favours upon his enemies. The particular reason mentioned why the disciples are to be guided and animated by the divine example is that they, the disciples, are sons of the Father. The obligation and urge to the love of their enemies and the bestowal of good upon them are here grounded in the filial relation that they sustain to God. Since they are sons of God they must be like their heavenly Father. There can be no doubt but that the main point is the necessity of imitating the divine example and this necessity is peculiarly enforced by the consideration of the filial relation they sustain to God as *their* heavenly Father.

It is just here, however, that it becomes necessary to note the implications of the similarity established and enforced as the reason for such attitude and conduct with reference to their enemies. The disciples are to love their enemies in order that they may be the sons of their Father; they must imitate their Father. Clearly implied is the thought that God, the Father, loves his enemies and that it is because he loves his enemies that he makes his sun rise upon them and sends them rain. This is just saying that the kindness bestowed in sunshine and rain is the expression of divine love, that back of the bestowal there is an attitude on the part of God, called love, which constrains him to bestow these tokens of his lovingkindness. This informs us that the gifts bestowed by God are not simply gifts which have the effect of good and blessing to those who are the

recipients but that they are also a manifestation or expression of lovingkindness and goodness in the heart or will of God with reference to those who are the recipients. The enjoyment on the part of the recipients has its ground as well as its source in this lovingkindness of which the gifts enjoyed are the expression. In other words, these are gifts and are enjoyed because there is in a true and high sense benevolence in the heart of God.

These conclusions are reinforced by verse 48. There can be no question regarding the immediate relevance of verse 48 to the exhortation of verses 44-47, even though it may have a more comprehensive reference. And verse 48 means that what has been adduced by way of divine example in the preceding verses is set forth as epitomizing the divine perfection and as providing the great exemplar by which the believer's attitude and conduct are to be governed and the goal to which thought and life are to be oriented. The love and beneficence of God to the evil and unjust epitomize the norm of human perfection. It is obvious that this love and beneficence on the part of God are regarded by our Lord himself as not something incidental in God but as that which constitutes an element in the sum of divine perfection. This is made very specific in the parallel passage in Luke 6:35, 36 where we read, "And ye shall be sons of the Most High, because he is kind towards the unthankful and evil. Ye shall be merciful, as your Father is merciful." This word translated "merciful" is redolent of the pity and compassion in the heart of God that overflow in the bestowments of kindness.

The sum of this study of these passages in Matthew and Luke is simply this, that presupposed in God's gifts bestowed upon the ungodly there is in God a disposition of love, kindness, mercifulness, and that the actual gifts and the blessing accruing therefrom for the ungodly must not be abstracted from the lovingkindness of which they are the expression. And, of course, we must not think of this lovingkindness as conditioned upon a penitent attitude in the recipients. The lovingkindness rather is exercised towards them in their ungodly state and is expressed in the favours they enjoy. What bearing this may have upon the grace of God manifested in the free offer of the gospel to all without distinction remains to be seen. But we are hereby given a disclosure of goodness in the heart of God and of the relation there is between gifts bestowed and the lovingkindness from which they flow. And there is indicated to us something respecting God's love or benevolence that we might not or could not entertain if we concentrated our thought simply on the divine decree of reprobation. Furthermore we must remember that there are many gifts enjoyed by the ungodly who are within the pale of the gospel administration which are not enjoyed by those outside, and we shall have to conclude that in respect of these specific favours, enjoyed by such ungodly persons in distinction from others, the same principle of divine benevolence and

lovingkindness must obtain, a lovingkindness, too, which must correspond to the character of the specific gifts enjoyed.

Let us get the passage from Matthew 5:44-48 before us: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

What is to be said about all this?

First of all, let us notice that the authors themselves admit that "This passage does not indeed deal with the overtures of grace in the gospel." But they they go on to state that "it does tell us something regarding God's benevolence that has bearing upon all manifestations of divine grace." This is important, in the first place, because it is a departure from the traditional dogmatic position with respect to "common grace." Dogmatically, so-called grace has always been distinguished from anything connected with the gospel. It is supposedly only temporal, and it has to do only with the things of this present time. In fact, Dr. Abraham Kuyper, Sr., wanted to insist on this difference by using a different name (*gemene gratie*, common grace), in distinction from general grace (*algemene genade*). But here the two are confused from the outset. We point this out, of course, not because we agree even with the traditional distinction; but we do so to show that this pamphlet represents a departure in this respect. Personally, we believe that the direction which this pamphlet (and also that of Erroll Hulse) takes is inevitable. After all grace is *grace*. And if that grace, favor, lovingkindness, is universal (common) in one respect, what real reason is there to hold that it is not universal (general) with respect to the gospel as well? In fact, if God is at all gracious to the reprobate, how can one possibly avoid the idea that God also wants to *save* the reprobate ungodly? And the history of doctrine has shown that the latter position has been the inevitable development of the common grace position. This was the case in the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 amid all the confusion of that synod's delegates. It has been the case in the Netherlands also; in fact, as I have shown in writing about the Netherlands situation, today they even speak of an "anonymous word of promise" that goes out to the non-Christian world. You see, any kind of

universalism with respect to God's grace is an extremely virulent poison!

But what about the *exegesis* of this "exegetical material" submitted in support of the offer-theory? As stated, we shall also judge what is stated in the lengthy quotation above in the light of the current teaching of Scripture. But even if we leave that aspect out of consideration for the time being, can the explanation as such of the passages in Matthew 5 and Luke 6 be accepted? If we consider these two passages all by themselves, can this explanation of the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet be considered valid? Can it indeed be called *exegesis*, an exposition of the text?

Our answer is negative.

And our fundamental reason for this negative evaluation is the fact that in this entire "explanation" the authors are guilty of the error of *begging the question*. That is, they *assume* that which they set out to prove. And after they have assumed it, they proceed to read it into the text.

This can be readily demonstrated.

It is done already in the opening paragraph of their explanation. The authors are on the right track when they speak of "the common gifts of providence, the making of the sun to rise upon evil and good and the sending of rain upon just and unjust." Sunshine and rain are indeed matters of God's providence. But they already confuse matters when they say: "*The particular aspect of God's grace reflected upon here is the common gifts of providence . . .*" (italics added) This is not *exegesis* whatsoever: they have already *assumed* that the "common gifts of providence" are a matter of *common grace*. And then they make another unwarranted assumption in the last sentence of the same paragraph: "There can be no question but all without distinction, reprobate as well as elect, are the beneficiaries of this favour, and it is that fact that is distinctly stated in verse. 45." We will pass by the term *beneficiaries*, although even that term is already suspect. Correct it would be simply to say that all are *recipients*. But notice that the sending of sunshine and rain has suddenly become a matter of "favour." This is surely not the same as common sunshine and rain. Nor is it the same as "providence." This is a term which says something about the *attitude* and the *intent* of Him Who bestows the common sunshine and rain. Putting aside for the moment the question whether common sunshine and rain are indeed a matter of common favor, let us simply note that the authors are *assuming* this and reading it *into* the text, not drawing it *out* of the text. Hence, when the authors conclude the paragraph by saying, ". . . and it is that fact that is distinctly stated in verse 45," their conclusion is

simply *not true*. The text nowhere states this, either distinctly or indistinctly.

This is not *exegesis*, but "eisegesis." And a child can understand this.

This same begging of the question permeates all that is written about Matthew 5:44-48. In the next paragraph the terms "bestowal of favour" and "favours" are simply substituted for the bestowal of rain and sunshine. And in the following paragraph this unproved assumption is made still more boldly. Notice: "Clearly implied is the thought that God, the Father, loves his enemies and that it is *because he loves his enemies that he makes his sun rise upon them and sends them rain*. But notice that the text nowhere states this or even implies it. Murray and Stonehouse simply state that this is "clearly implied" without an iota of proof. Again: "This is just saying that the *kindness bestowed in sunshine and rain is the expression of divine love*." But nowhere does the text say that sunshine and rain constitute kindness and that this alleged kindness is the expression of divine love. Again: "... that back of the bestowal there is an attitude on the part of God, called love, which constrains him to bestow these tokens of his lovingkindness." But the text neither states this nor hints at it.

One could go on throughout this alleged explanation and show again and again how the authors simply make unfounded statements *about* these passages, rather than allow the passages themselves to speak.

Paired with the above error is the second unproved assumption in connection with Luke 6:35, 36. There we read: "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." The authors treat this passage along with the one from Matthew 5. And while they do not state this literally in connection with Luke 6, yet from their entire argumentation it is plain that they *assume, without proof*, that Luke 6:35 states that God is kind unto *all* the unthankful and the evil. But again, regardless now of whether it be true or not, the text does not state this or imply it.

Finally, we should note how the authors slip in ideas at the end of their discussion of these passages which have nothing to do with the text and which are left entirely without proof. They write: "Furthermore we must remember that there are many gifts enjoyed by the ungodly who are within the pale of the gospel administration which are not enjoyed by those outside, and we shall have to conclude that in respect of these specific favours,

enjoyed by such ungodly persons in distinction from others, the same principle of divine benevolence and lovingkindness must obtain, a lovingkindness, too, which must correspond to the character of the specific gifts enjoyed." This, of course, is pure

philosophy; and it certainly cannot be classified under the "exegetical material" which the authors are supposed to be submitting. I suppose it would have to be called a non-exegetical bonus?

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Steadfast Standard Bearer

Rev. John A. Heys



Long before *The Standard Bearer* came into existence, long before the New Testament dispensation began, God Himself spoke of "a standardbearer."

It was in the day of shadows, that is, in the day before Christ, Who cast His shadow upon the whole Old Testament dispensation, was seen on earth by man, that God, through the prophet Isaiah, spoke those words which for fifty years have served as the name of the magazine that publishes these lines today.

God spoke these words in connection with the pronouncement of judgment and destruction upon Assyria as one of the enemies of the Church of God. The text in Isaiah 10:16-18 in full reads thus, "Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standardbearer fainteth."

Although God speaks here of a standardbearer fainting, there is not only instruction but also comfort for us in this use of the word. This ought to be plain from the fact that it is the plight of the *enemy* of the Church of God that is here presented as suffering the disaster which strikes an army and nation, and causes the standardbearer to faint. For this means, then, that the standardbearer of the *Church* remains steadfast, and that the army to whom he belongs has the victory.

Then, too, there are other and earlier references to such standards and standardbearers in God's Church. Turn to Numbers 2:2 and you will find these words which Moses and Aaron were to speak unto the Israelites. "Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about (better translated — over against) the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch." Then in verse 3 we read of, "the standard of the tribe of Judah" which must be seen on the east side of the tabernacle. Verse 10 speaks of the standard of the tribe of Reuben being on the south side of that tabernacle. And in verses 18 and 25 we are informed that the standard of the tribe of Ephraim shall be found on the west side, and the standard of the tribe of Dan shall be situated on the north side of the tabernacle.

Each standard, we may be sure, differed from the other to represent a distinct group of people. And we are not to think of a flag of cloth whipping in the wind, but rather of some design wrought in iron or brass in the form of a square, triangle or circle, and of combinations of these, placed on long poles and lifted up above the heads of the people.

They had no doctrinal significance, that is, they did not designate the separate tribes of Israel as standing for some doctrinal position that varied from tribe to tribe. Numbers 2:2 clearly declares that they were standards or ensigns of "their father's house." Each tribe had a separate symbol. They could, you know, have designed a symbol using the first letters of their names; and since Joseph is represented by Ephraim and Mannaseh here in Numbers 2, there would be no duplication of letter or symbol on that

standard or ensign. And that only four standards are mentioned is due to the fact that the twelve tribes were divided into four groups of three. These tribes were situated in their tents in such a way that three tribes were on the east of it, three on the south, three on the west, and three on the north of it. And only the tribe that was closest to the tabernacle is mentioned together with its standard. You may find the other two tribes of each group in Numbers 2 and observe how God grouped them.

But surely in the New Testament dispensation, and especially today, the Church needs a standard. "No creed but Christ" reveals a church whose standardbearer is going to faint (if he has not already), for that church is on the way to being taken over by the forces of the Antichrist. "No creed but Christ" (the war-cry of all so-called undenominational movements) means that the Christ of Scripture is not maintained. Each member may vision Christ as his flesh desires without being molested by the rest. What you have in such a group (if they practice what they preach) is that you have a "Christ" of many faces, a tailor-made Christ, one that is adaptable to every whim of man, and not one designed by God. *That* is no Christ at all. The Saviour is called Christ because He is ordained by God and qualified by His Spirit to be our Redeemer, our Prophet, Priest and King. The God of the undenominational movement is one picked out by man, in fact picked out by as many men as there are members of that group. Some may agree on certain points about him, but others will disagree. And they both worship and believe in the same Christ? How two-faced do you think He can be? He Who said, "I am the way the TRUTH and the life," can He be what you think He is, and at the same time what others with divergent opinions think Him to be? This lack of a standard and this confession of a Christ Who is all things *men* want Him to be, instead of What God has ordained and qualified Him to be, is also in all this so-called ecumenical movement that changes the confessions to get a common ground upon which all churches can unite and agree about this Christ.

For years the so-called Apostolic Creed was the standard of the Christian Church with its twelve articles. But as heresies arose and false teachers made inroads into the church, the Church had to make a more elaborate standard and ensign to define more specifically the teaching of God's Word on several points. For the heretic always claims to hold fast to the truth and to the creeds, even while he seeks to undermine these. He wants to be the standardbearer in order to have it in his possession to alter it! He will subscribe, so he says, to the truth of "God the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." And yet he will deny His almighty power and preach a

God Who would like to save all but is unable (Imagine that! An almighty God Who is unable!) because man does not let Him do so, refusing to accept His kind offer. He will preach a Creator, but not one who *calls* into being. He will claim to "believe in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, our Lord." Yet he will proceed to explain that He is Son in name only, denying the divinity of Christ, and thus robbing Him of His power to save and qualifications to be the Saviour. All these and many other errors the Church had to combat, and she continued to hold high her standard of the truth in her confessions or creeds.

After the Reformation the standard became far broader creeds than those twelve articles to let all men know what the truth of God's Word is. For the Reformed Churches it became those monumental works, The Heidelberg Catechism, The Netherlands Confession and the Canons of Dordrecht. By these the churches showed their distinctive faithfulness to the Word of God. By these they held up a standard that loudly and clearly in unequivocal language set forth the truth and the "faith once delivered to the saints."

But it not only behooves the New Testament Church, and surely the Church in the world today, to have a standard, but also to have a standardbearer, one to hold up, to bear that standard. By God's grace for fifty years *The Standard Bearer* has served this purpose. By God's grace it has not fainted and today still stands up boldly in the midst of increasing pressures and subtle heresies.

That *The Standard Bearer* has not fainted reveals that in the grace of our covenant God the churches whose doctrine it holds high and sends to the corners of the earth have not succumbed and been defeated by the numerous enemies (How greatly these churches are outnumbered by those with other standards and theories!) that grow not only in number every year but also in strength.

You see, in Isaiah 10:18, when mention is made of the standardbearer fainting, the idea is that the man who holds the standard, the ensign, the sign that marks the place of a particular army in battle faints when he sees how the side which he represents is being slaughtered and destroyed. He faints when he sees utter defeat coming to his army. All hope of victory for his army is gone, and he loses even the strength to watch the battle any further. The word "faint" can be translated as "melt away," and this can suggest that he flees, dropping his banner.

Then, too, we are told by historians that the capturing of the standardbearer signaled the defeat of the whole army. If he is captured and the standard of that army is taken away, that army loses its identity, yea, now comes under the standard of the opposing

army. And each army in those days would fight tenaciously to keep its standardbearer, in order to keep its identity, and to signify that it still was an organized force, a unit able to do battle. The capture of the standard signaled defeat; and the flight, capture or fainting of the one who bore that standard meant that the battle was over and that the army of that standardbearer went down in shame and ruin.

The meaning is plain for us, is it not? As long as *The Standard Bearer* is steadfast and continues to display and uncompromisingly hold forth the Word of Truth, our churches not only have a right to separate existence, but are very much alive spiritually, and are found to be faithful in the battle of faith. The minute that *The Standard Bearer* begins to faint at the sight of the enemy, melts away into a magazine that caters to the flesh of men, and to drop those standards of the Heidelberg Catechism, The Netherlands Confession, and the Canons of Dordrecht, our churches are already defeated. The moment our magazine begins to emit another sound than the one that it has been giving forth for fifty years, we have a sign that our churches have given in to the pressures of the enemies that persistently have assaulted us through the years of our existence.

It also means, this steadfast stand of *The Standard Bearer*, that God has been very gracious to us to cause that standardbearer, which already in the year nineteen hundred twenty-four was raised up for the defence of the truth, to stand there in all the thick of the battle. Men have come and men have gone. Editors have contributed and been silenced by death.

A new generation took over, and still a newer generation is beginning to write, and by writing holds over us the standard of the truth of God's Word, making known in no uncertain terms that we hold fast to the Word of God. Other standards and banners may have fallen, or are ready to fall. The writers have not in every instance fainted, and some courageous voices are still raised. But that the forces of evil are taking over and that a rout by the enemy is a very present threat also threatens to make these standardbearers faint as they see their churches being swallowed up by the enemies of the truth. And we may say nothing less than, "There, but for the grace of God, go we."

That we have a steadfast *Standard Bearer* is the work of God alone. Our prayer is that we may be the bearers of the standard of God's truth also in the future. While our churches remain faithful to the truth, *The Standard Bearer* will be a steady standardbearer. It will reflect the spiritual health and strength of our churches, and show whether we are about to be overcome by the forces of the lie or still are fighting victoriously the good fight of faith.

Behind, and underneath, and in us must be God Himself. Otherwise we will not stand, and *The Standard Bearer* will do worse than faint. It will bear the lie rather than the standard of God's Word. May God keep our churches strong in the faith so that we may have a steadfast, abiding, vibrant standardbearer in *The Standard Bearer*. May *The Standard Bearer* remain God's standardbearer.

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ALL AROUND US

Comfort In A World Gone Mad

Prof. H. Hanko

One who believes in the truth of the Scriptures, believes also in the sovereign rule of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures teach unequivocally that Christ, at the time of His ascension, was given all authority in heaven and on earth. His exaltation raised Him to the pinnacle of power under God so that He rules as Lord of lords and King of all the kings of the earth. Nothing happens without His will. All things are under His control. The greatest earth-shaking crises as well as the minutest details of life are directed by Him and under the control of His sovereign rule.

Nor is the rule of Christ arbitrary. He does not rule for the mere sake of ruling. There is a goal, a purpose in all that Christ does, for He rules in the name of the Father. In a wonderful and mysterious way which we are unable to understand, Christ does all things so that they may serve the coming of His own kingdom. Great things and small things, in all the universe and in heaven and hell, are so directed by Him that the passing of each event brings the coming of Christ's kingdom closer and makes the realization of that kingdom possible.

The believer finds his comfort in this truth. It is not, for him, abstract dogma, cold theology. It is really, when all else is said and done, the heart of his hope. This truth gives him courage in a world gone mad. For the faith by which he confesses this truth is the same faith which convinces him that he belongs to that glorious and exalted Christ. He belongs to Christ so completely that nothing can separate him from Christ's love. This therefore, includes the conviction that he shall someday inherit the kingdom which shall surely be established.

It is impossible to live in today's world with any kind of optimism without this power of faith. Over the past year, I have filed away in my desk drawer some of the more outrageous proposals and plans which men have concocted for our world. Taken together they chill the blood. A bit of pondering on them leaves one with cold terror seizing his soul.

Some of the more horrifying examples we mention in this article.

* * * *

In a *Newsweek* article written sometime in the past year, Dr. Kenneth B. Clark was concerned about the fact that, in this nuclear age, "a very few, fragile, unpredictable human beings have the power to decide whether mankind will survive or be extinguished." He points out that, although just a few men are charged with the responsibility of unleashing a nuclear war, these very men do not "differ from others except in terms of having this terrible ultimate power. They suffer from the same strengths, weaknesses, complexities, conflicts, anxieties, doubts and insecurities that afflict and define humanity. Their behavior is no more predictable than others. They, too, seek to mask their doubts and errors by dogmatism. The whims of the powerful are no less whims than those of the powerless — only much more dangerous." He holds before us the bleak prospect of another Hitler or Stalin, men who were on the face of it emotionally unstable, coming to power with the buttons of nuclear weapons under their thumbs.

After painting a most horrifying picture, and after showing that no present curbs on government in any land are adequate to safe-guard us, he offers his solution. The problem is a scientific one.

Researchers in America, the Soviet Union and other countries for many years have been engaged in a systematic study of the roles of various areas of the brain and the effects of certain changes in the biochemistry of the human organism on perception, thought and emotional behavior. More specifically, through these research findings and the observation of the effects of tranquilizing, depressing and stimulating drugs, it is now clear that it is possible to manipulate the feelings of individuals. With increased research the technology of direct biochemical intervention and control of human behavior will become more and more precise and predictable.

The author proposes an international scientific organization to get on with this business of perfecting these techniques; and, presumably, such an organization would also be responsible for the behavioral control of the nation's leaders so that a nuclear holocaust would be prevented. This, he believes, would be the only way to assure the survival of our race.

The dangers he sees in madmen at the control of nuclear nations is, *in itself* a very real one. But one who believes the Scriptures cannot be frightened by this sort of thing. It is, obviously, impossible for man to destroy himself no matter what happens. Christ rules over those who are in positions to trigger nuclear arsenals. And only God will destroy the world at such a time when the history of the world is finished.

But the solution proposed is absurd on the face of it. One takes the power to make war away from presidents and dictators and transfers it to a "scientific community" with the ability to alter behavior through drugs and biochemical intervention. But these men are also weak and fragile and unpredictable; men with doubts and anxieties. Only we have given to them a power greater than that of nuclear missiles, the power to tamper with the human soul. And they are now to be responsible for ruling the world? They would then have the power to decide, according to their own perverted and godless notions, what kind of behavior is acceptable and what kind is not. And they would have the power to do away with every type of opposition to their rule by reducing all men to senseless robots.

Yet something like this is exactly the goal of many today.

* * * *

What is said above is made clear by another article which also appeared in *Newsweek*, written by Nick Thimmesch, and entitled, "The Abortion Culture." The author of this article is alarmed by what has happened in this country since the liberalization of abortion laws. He does not only refer to the large number of abortions which have been performed and the gruesome destruction of life in hospitals which perform abortions; but he refers to what he calls "the utilitarian ethic" which lies behind the liberalization of abortion laws and the awful results of this ethic which has become the philosophy of America. By this he means that our moral standards are set up only on the basis of "what is useful is good." In doing this, he compares what is happening in this country with what happened in Nazi Germany.

Some of the fruits of the "utilitarian ethic" are horrifying.

1) Euthanasia advocates are at work in six state

legislatures to get laws passed to kill undesirables. These include aged, those with incurable diseases, mentally retarded and mentally ill, suicide prone people, etc.

2) There have been large numbers of experiments performed on people, experiments which have destroyed their lives. There have been experiments on free-clinic patients, students and the institutionalized. There have been experiments performed on aborted babies. There have been advocates for removing the ban on experimenting with children and mental incompetents.

3) There is increased pressure for the sterilization of institutionalized people. Psychosurgery is performed on hundreds of Americans annually. This was not done to correct brain damage, but to alter behavior of unruly children and violence-prone prisoners.

These and more have come out of the same moral position which has brought about the liberalization of abortion. And if abortion is now common place, who is to say that all these others will not soon be common practice in this country and elsewhere in the world?

* * * *

From a little different point of view, the Newsmedia in this country have reached a point of almost unbridled power. I have an article before me, nationally syndicated, in which the author speaks of the victims of Watergate. He does not deny that a crime was committed. Nor does he deny that there were those involved in all that is connected with the Watergate mess who are nothing but criminals. But he is concerned about countless innocent victims of the whole fiasco. He tells stories which tend to substantiate the point he is making. And the point is this: anyone who has at any time worked for the re-election of the president or who is even remotely related to some government agency which had connections with the White House is presently being hounded as guilty of some crime related to Watergate. He tells of jobs lost, reputations ruined, men driven to the brink of despair — all because there is some tenuous connection between them and a scandal-stained administration. He refers to many people who have not succeeded in escaping the special prosecutor's probes even though they have moved to distant parts of the country.

And he lays the blame on the Press. He writes: "Crime and Punishment, 1973" is a volume in which our country, known for its justice and humanity, bred a period of injustice and inhumanity by a national free press that has betrayed its name and could make any charge it chose from a privileged sanctuary, unconscionably destroying a human life by

a morning edition or an evening newscast. From their sanctuary, these newsmen could never be called to account. They would never have to face a press conference, for they were the press. They would not be subject to investigate reporting, for they were the investigative reporters. Their sources would remain unknown, even if their sources were themselves. Seemingly, news commentators are above the news, but, in fact, they guide the news, steer the news, and, too often, create the news."

The men who have been charged with crimes, have already been tried, convicted, found guilty and sentenced by the Press. Any future trial becomes little more than a farce because they are already ruined.

The point is that the Press has almost unlimited power in this country to mold the news. And the power to mold the news is the power to mold the thinking of the country. The result is that it has

become all but impossible to know any more what is going on in the country or the world. We are left to guess, if we distrust the Press, and we have nothing on which to base our guesses.

All of this is in the name of freedom of speech.

It seems to me that life is scarcely worth living if one does not have complete trust in the Scriptures. Only the precious promises of the Word of God give hope. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Hebrews 6:17-20.

IN HIS FEAR

A Plan To Find The Poor

Rev. D. H. Kuiper

It has happened once again in most of our churches. A certain portion of the consistory has retired after two or three years of service; among them the deacons. Deacons have been elected, served, and retired and the disturbing thing is that many of them have not performed one minute of true deacon's work. They have collected offerings during the worship service, they have kept records faithfully, and have accounted for these things before the elders; yet in all this something has been disturbingly

lacking. And this lack, for the most part, is not even the fault of the deacons. The problem extends beyond the diaconate itself. Another year of contributing for various causes and to different funds on the part of the congregation has come to a close. By scanning various bulletins which one sees from time to time, it becomes obvious that most of our churches have a benevolence, or charity, offering once a month, and the average contribution of a family for this cause *for an entire month* is two or

three dollars! Even here there is a certain rationale: where is the incentive for giving when by bulletin it is reported that the benevolence fund is swelling slowly, but it seldom, if ever, is reported that there are withdrawals to indicate that the poor are being helped?

A SERIOUS PROBLEM

We call attention to these things, first, because their seriousness lies in the fact that we deal here with the presence of Christ in and with His Church. The three-fold office of God's Anointed is reflected in His Body not only by the believer being a prophet, priest, and king under Christ, but also through the special offices of minister (prophet), deacon (priest), and elder (king). To the extent that the work of any of these offices is neglected the office of believers suffers; and sadly, an aspect of Christ's presence with us fails to be realized and enjoyed. The point here is that to the extent the labors of the diaconate are not discharged, to that extent the tender mercies of our Lord for the poor, the widows, and the fatherless (how the Old Testament emphasizes this!) are not experienced nor revealed. The Bible, the Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons, and the Church Order emphasize: "The office peculiar to the deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity, and after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; for which they shall render an account in consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the congregation, at such a time as the consistory may see fit." (Art. 25) And the position of the Reformed churches is that this office, instituted

"when a murmuring arose, because the widows of the Grecians were neglected," is for all time.

The problem is also very serious for the believer on whom the oil of Christ's anointing also rests. He is enjoined to present himself a living sacrifice to God with all that he has. This priestly function touches our possessions and our view of the poor. In fact, our regard for the poor and distressed is a matter that belongs to the definition of worship. James tells us that true religion, in part, is this: that we visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction (1:27); and the Heidelberg Catechism instructs us that the proper keeping of the Sabbath Day includes our contributing to the relief of the poor. We ought not to say, "I do this, I give once a month." The idea of Lord's Day 38 is certainly that these contributions are a *weekly* giving on the Sabbath. This is shown, in the first place, by the marginal reference to I Cor. 16:1, 2: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Further, Ursinus comments upon that which he has written as follows: "Hence it has always been the practice of the church to bestow alms upon the Sabbath day, and to perform acts of charity towards those who need our help and sympathy. 'Send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto the Lord.' (Neh. 8:10)" Those few churches in our midst which continue to take a weekly offering for the poor certainly have preserved the Scriptural, confessional idea.

REASONS FOR THE SITUATION

Undoubtedly the affluence of the past thirty years

FEBRUARY 15 IS AN IMPORTANT DATE IN OUR HISTORY;

PLAN TO BE AT FIRST CHURCH, GRAND RAPIDS,

FOR THE SEMINARY BUILDING DEDICATION.

in our land has contributed to the present situation in the church. Members of the church have, for the most part, shared in this affluence and abundance so that there are very, very few who suffer the lack of daily necessities. The standard of living (a wordly term: man's life does not consist in the things that he has) is so high that things undreamed of fifty years ago are commonplace. And yet, be assured that there are still poor. And if we don't happen to know any, then we haven't been looking, or possibly, haven't been looking in the right places. If a recession came upon us, the order of its magnitude as in 1929, the office of the deacons would suddenly come into its own. Prayers need not be offered that such times come upon us again, but this does point out that times of scarcity and want in the land are spiritually healthy times for the Church!

There has also been a steady erosion of holy things of the Church into other spheres. More and more the tentacles of big government have snatched voraciously at functions not rightly government's, and too often this has occurred without ecclesiastical resistance. The social arms of government at all levels have embraced cruelly the poor. The deacons' hands are almost tied because we have become so accustomed to turning to social agencies in times of our distress. I suppose that it is natural for man to look to Uncle Sam rather than to Christ; but is it good? And is it right? The Lord is our Shephard, and He shall feed His flock; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

But there is also a reason that strikes a bit more closely to home. Increasingly there is the tendency to simply take a collection for this or for that purpose, purposes which formerly were thought to be charitable. We have phased out, we have run rough-shod, we have bent here and there; and the result is that the poor are being helped without being called poor and the deacons are not involved. These things ought not so to be. Let us examine our local practices to see if, perhaps, we have inadvertently brought this sad thing upon ourselves.

A SUGGESTED PLAN

Because we are convinced that lively labor in all the offices is necessary for a full congregational life and for a faithful witness in the midst of the world, and because the poor remain a special object of our love and sympathy, we make a few suggestions for your consideration in the hope that through discussion and study of the same, some small steps can be taken toward the attainment of the above.

1. Schedule a benevolence or charity offering once each Sunday for the principal reasons already stated. If the need is communicated to the congregation,

believers with their children will respond and by responding will be blessed!

2. In close connection with this, the deacons must exert effort to find the poor. The second part of their office is distribution: today we must search before we can distribute! Specifically:

a. Let the local diaconate correspond with all the other diaconates inquiring as to the needs of the poor in their respective congregations. Do they have a large number of widows, hospitalized, poor? Could they use assistance in this for the mutual benefit of all? If an affirmative answer is received, perhaps this will enable you to help as much as you are able. (See the Church Order, Article 26) If not:

b. Let contact be made with deacons of other local churches. No, this is not some ecumenical scheme. This is an attempt to find the poor who have a special place in the heart and mind of God, and who may reside under another ecclesiastical roof. Some care ought to be taken here, that the integrity of the gift be preserved as it is administered by other deacons. The gift is not simply cash but mercy! Hence, we certainly have the right of stipulating that the gifts are brought to the poor with comfortable words from Scripture, and with cheerfulness and simplicity. (See Form for Ordination) What if this venture also does not yield the desired opportunity? We have not done enough yet.

c. Let a search be made among our unchurched neighbors. How are things in your town or in your section of the city? Again, this is not a call to social action . . . this is an attempt to meet our duty-privilege. What do we as Protestant Reformed Churches do in respect to the poor of this world? There were times in our churches when offerings were taken for refugees, for victims of floods and other disasters. Clearly, the Word of God cannot be brought by us to these, but does that mean we must shut up the bowels of compassion from them? We are in a sad case if pictures and news articles of the starving in this world do not move us to compassionate action. We find support for this contention in the Form of Ordination where we read: ". . . Assist the oppressed, provide for the true widows and orphans, show liberality unto all men, but especially to the household of faith."

Perhaps the title we have chosen claims too much. Perhaps there are reasons why these suggestions will not work for your church. But they ought to be considered, and the consideration of them may open up other possibilities that will work. The decline in the proper work of the deacon's office must be stopped, the trend reversed, in order that the presence of our ascended Lord may be fully revealed with us.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Eschatology--The First Period

(80 - 250 A.D.)

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

H. Veldman

In his *History of Doctrines*, Hegenbach, writing on the Intermediate State, Vol. I, 221-222, writes as follows:

The transactions of the general judgment, which was thought to be connected with the general resurrection, were depicted in various ways. Some ascribe the office of Judge to the Son, others to the Father, both in opposition to the Hellenistic myth of the judges in the under-world. The idea of a *Hades*, known to both the Hebrews and the Greeks, was transferred to Christianity, and the assumption, that the real happiness, or the final misery, of the departed did not commence till after the general judgment and the resurrection of the body, appeared to necessitate the belief in an intermediate state, in which the soul was supposed to remain from the moment of its separation from the body to this last catastrophe. Tertullian, however, held that the martyrs went at once to paradise, the abode of the blessed, and thought that in this they enjoyed an advantage over other Christians; while Cyprian does not seem to know about any intermediate state whatever. The Gnostics rejected the belief in Hades, together with that of the resurrection of the body, and imagined that the spiritually minded (the pneumatic) would, immediately after death, be delivered from the kingdom of the demiurge, and elevated to the pleurooma. The ancient Oriental and Parsic idea of a purifying fire already occurs during this period in the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Origen. This purifying fire, however, is not yet transferred to this intermediate state, but is either taken in a very general sense, or supposed to be connected with the general conflagration of the world.

Calling attention to doctrines as maintained and confessed within the church during the early years of

the New Dispensation, in the period 80 - 250 A.D., we have called attention to the doctrine of the advent or coming of Christ as confessed by the church during this time. We now call attention to what is known as the Intermediate State, the period of the deceased between his death and resurrection. Hodge, in his *Systematic Theology*, expresses it correctly when he writes in Volume III, page 724, and we quote:

As all Christians believe in the resurrection of the body and a future judgment, they all believe in an intermediate state. That is, they believe that there is a state of existence which intervenes between death and the resurrection; and that the condition of the departed during that interval is, in some respects, different from that which it is to be subsequent to that event. It is not, therefore, as to the fact of an intermediate state, but as to its nature, that diversity of opinion exists among Christians.

The common Protestant doctrine on this subject is that "the souls of believers are at their death, made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." According to this view the intermediate state, so far as believers are concerned, is one of perfect freedom from sin and suffering, and of great exaltation and blessedness. This is perfectly consistent with the belief that after the second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead, the state of the soul will be still more exalted and blessed.

Scripture certainly speaks of this continued existence of the soul immediately after death. This is true of the Old Testament Scriptures. We read in Ps. 73:23, 24: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me

to glory." The thrust of this passage is that the Lord shall guide us with His counsel, and then, as soon as this guidance shall have been concluded, receive us into glory. Hence, the Lord will not receive us into glory long after we have died and our bodies have descended into the grave. That the Hebrews regarded the souls of the dead as retaining their consciousness and activity is obvious from the practice of necromancy, and is confirmed by the fact of the appearance of Samuel to Saul, as recorded in 1 Samuel 28. And it is in this connection that Hodge makes an interesting observation (Vol. III, 717), and we quote:

The representation given in Isaiah 14 of the descent of the King of Babylon, when all the dead rose to meet and to reproach him, takes for granted and authenticates the popular belief in the continued conscious existence of departed spirits.

In the New Testament we have the most explicit declarations, not only that the doctrine of a future state was revealed in the Old Testament, but that from the beginning it was part of the faith of the people of God. The Sadducees, we know, denied not only the resurrection of the body, but also the conscious existence of man after death, and the existence of any spiritual beings. Yet, the Lord, refuting these Sadducees, appeals to the fact that in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, the authority of which the Sadducees admitted, God is familiarly called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and as He is the God not of the dead but of the living, the designation referred to proves that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are living, and living, too, in the fellowship and enjoyment of God. And that the Saviour quotes here from the Pentateuch proves conclusively that this teaching was also taught in the Old Testament Scriptures.

However, there is, of course, much more proof for this doctrine in the New Testament. In this connection, Hodge makes the following pertinent observation (Vol. III, 724 - 725), and we quote:

In support of the Protestant doctrine as thus stated (the continued existence of the soul, H.V.), it may be remarked,

1. That it is simply a question of fact. What do the Scriptures teach as to the state of the soul of a believer immediately after death? It is not legitimate to decide this question on psychological grounds; to argue that such is the nature of the soul that it cannot retain its individuality, or personality, when separated from the body; or, that it is a mere function of the brain; or, that it cannot act or be acted upon — can neither perceive nor be perceived except through and by means of the senses; or, that as vegetable and animal life are only manifest and active in connection with some form of matter, in other words, as there must be a physical basis of life, so the soul necessarily

requires a material basis for its manifestation and activity. All these speculations, or theories, are, for the Christian, of no account, if the Bible teaches the fact of the continued, personal, individual existence of the soul after the death and dissolution of the body. The Bible does not formally teach anthropology in either of the branches of physiology or psychology, as a department of human science, but it assumes a great deal that falls under these several heads. It assumes that soul and body in man are two distinct substances united in a vital union so as to constitute the man, in the present state of existence, one individual person. It assumes that the seat of this personality is the soul. The soul is the self, the Ego, of which the body is the organ. It assumes that the soul continues its conscious existence, and its power of acting and of being acted upon after its separation from the body. This we have seen to be the doctrine of the whole Bible. The dead, according to the Scriptures, do not cease to be; they do not cease to be conscious and active.

This truth is plainly set forth also in the New Testament Scriptures. We read in Rev. 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." We call attention to the fact that this Word of God teaches us that the dead *are* blessed who die in the Lord, and this certainly means that their blessedness occurs immediately after their death. In Luke 16:22 we read: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried." And in the following verse we read: "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." This is a very familiar passage of Holy Writ. And this Word of God certainly speaks of a conscious state of the soul immediately upon death, with respect to both the rich man and Lazarus. In Luke 23:43 we read: "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Jesus spoke this word to the malefactor upon the cross. We need not discuss an interpretation of the passage which would have us read the text in this way: "And Jesus said unto him today, thou shalt be with me in paradise." This interpretation is too absurd as to merit any consideration. So, to the malefactor upon the cross the dying Saviour gives the comforting assurance that that very day he would be with Him in paradise, and this, too, emphasizes the truth of a conscious state of bliss for the believer immediately upon his death. In 2 Cor. 5:1 we read: "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." A detailed explanation of this beautiful passage is unnecessary at this time. It is

sufficient to call attention to the fact that the apostle Paul, in this Word of God, declares that when the earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved, he *has* a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The thrust of this passage is that the believer, immediately upon death, at the moment of the breaking down of his body, has this building of God in the heavens. And the apostle, speaking for the church of God throughout the ages, declares that we know this; of this wonderful truth the people of God are wonderfully conscious. This text, too, emphasizes the truth of the continued conscious condition of the soul. And, finally, we would call attention to what we read in Phil. 1:23: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Need we doubt the thrust of this Word of God? The

apostle is in a strait betwixt two: to depart out of this life and be with Christ, or to remain in the earthly house of his tabernacle, and he declares that to depart and be with Christ is far better. Now the apostle certainly means to emphasize that as soon as he departs out of this life he will be with Christ. He does not entertain the thought that his being with Christ will occur a long time after his departure out of this life, but that it will occur immediately upon his death. So, from these passages of the Word of God, and many others, it is clear beyond the shadow of any doubt that the Scriptures certainly emphasize the truth that, in the intermediate state, the time between death and the resurrection, the soul exists in a conscious state. The Word of God does not support the theory of a soul sleep; the soul continues in a state of conscious existence.

Book Review

GOD'S WAY OF RECONCILIATION, by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones; Baker Book House, 1972; 380 pp., \$7.95.

This book, by the former pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, England, contains a series of thirty-three sermons which the author preached on Ephesians 2. We highly recommend this book to our reading public and urge those who desire good literature to purchase it as soon as possible. It is a valuable addition to any library and well worth the price which really is, considering the cost of books nowadays, very reasonable.

The author considers this chapter in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians to be a key chapter in the Scriptural teaching concerning the doctrines of sovereign grace. While the author is usually considered to be a "mild" Calvinist (and this sometimes comes through in the book), nevertheless, the doctrines of sovereign grace stand out in sharp focus.

The book has many advantages. It is a careful exegetical study in a very detailed fashion of the entire chapter. No less than five sermons are devoted to the first three vss. of the chapter. It can serve therefore, as a valuable commentary on this part of the epistle. But, because the book contains the sermons preached by the author, the book has far more in it than the rather cold exegesis which characterizes a formal commentary. It is filled with the warmth of lively preaching. It therefore expresses the truths of this chapter in a personal and experiential way. It is both a fine development of the doctrines of sovereign grace and a warm devotional book which easily carries the reader along chapter after chapter. The author has a knack for making the truth very lucid by means of clear and concise language and with the use of many illustrations. Anyone who buys and reads this book will possess a treasure of theologically sound and spiritually edifying truth.

News From Our Churches

Perhaps you recall that Rev. Heys spent three weeks of November in New Jersey. He writes that he enjoyed the time spent there, both in preaching on the Sabbath and in conducting mid-week Bible classes. The group is small, of course, but, both for the Sunday worship services and the other meetings, there are often "as many visiting families as there are families of the congregation."

On his return to his own congregation in Holland, Michigan, Rev. Heys gave a short report, in his Sunday church bulletin, concerning his activities in Prospect Park. He wrote as follows:

"As to our work in Prospect Park, New Jersey, we found a small congregation that rejoices in hearing sound preaching once again from the Word of God. Visitors are present at each meeting on the Sabbath and also in the mid-week Bible class which is studying the Canons of Dordrecht and receiving much-needed instruction in doctrines whose teachings they had been denied for many years. Children of these visiting families also attend the catechism classes. Their growth will be slow, and their way is hard for the flesh. Remember them in your prayers that they may receive grace to be living witnesses of the truth in the midst of much opposition."

Because of the distance which separates most of us from our young congregation in the east, we would be likely, perhaps, to forget about them. But we want them to know that, as we are kept informed by those of our ministers who travel there, our prayers are indeed with them.

* * * * *

At the time of this writing, Rev. Engelsma was considering two calls — one to serve as pastor of our

South Holland congregation, and the other as Home Missionary of our churches, with Houston, Texas, being the specified field of labor.

* * * * *

An August, 1973, letter from Rev. Engelsma to Mr. Vander Wal, included some interesting news concerning the school in Loveland. Our Business Manager kindly relayed the information to me, and I would like, be it somewhat belatedly, to pass it along to you.

"Last night," Rev. Engelsma writes, "we had convocation exercises marking the beginning of our school's instruction for another year. We have 36 pupils in 8 grades, and 2 capable, consecrated schoolmarmes. Several children are from other churches than our own. At present, we still use our church basement but we are working on plans for a school building to be built on the 2½ acres the school owns adjoining the church property. We hope to have a school building by the spring of '74, the Lord willing. This summer the men of the church, many of whom are in the building trades, put up a parsonage on a lot donated by another member. This too adjoins the church, whereas the present parsonage is about 4 miles removed."

To the above we can add the contents of a letter of more recent composition, also from Loveland, and also concerning the proposed new school building. It reads as follows:

"The Loveland Protestant Reformed School Society has voted to build a new school building, since the present church basement is crowded and inadequate. They have decided on an economical plan

(continued on back page)

PLAN TO ATTEND

THE SEMINARY BUILDING DEDICATION

ON FEBRUARY 15.

NOTICE

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Doon, Iowa on February 6, 1974 at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. The delegates should be present at the special worship service of the Doon Church on Tuesday evening, February 5. Delegates in need of lodging should notify the clerk of the Doon consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma,
Stated Clerk
Classis West

at the approximate cost of \$38,000.00. The size of the building would be 58' x 50'. The type of building is steel, with three sides of the building brick 4 feet high. It could very easily be added on to in the future.

"The Society has decided to build as soon as one half of the total cost has been acquired. This is being accomplished through fund raising drives in the church. They have approximately \$6,000.00 in the Building Fund, which leaves approximately \$13,000.00 to be raised before they can start construction. Then they still need a loan of \$19,000.00 to complete the total cost. Maybe someone in our Protestant Reformed Churches could come to Loveland's aid.

"God has blessed this school over the past years. The enrollment has increased from six students with one teacher, to thirty-six students in eight grades with two teachers. The Lord willing, maybe Loveland can send their covenant children to a new school building come next September."

The supply of news at this time of year is usually such that I find it necessary to dip into my reserve. Part of the above, as I indicated, has been in the box since early September. But what's this?! "Fourth of July Picnic" — from an Isabel bulletin dated June 24! Old news, surely, but interesting nevertheless.

"The two sister congregations of Isabel and Forbes," the bulletin stated, "will gather for fun and fellowship at Hiddenwood State Park, Selby." Dinner was to be served potluck style, and was to be followed by a short program, which included a speech by Seminarian Arie den Hartog, who spent part of his summer laboring in Forbes.

In the January 1st news column I erroneously reported the date of the dedication of the Seminary building as being February 1. If you were to go to First Church at that time, you would not only have a two-week wait, you'd also find yourself in the middle of a wedding ceremony. Try February 15 instead — at 8:00 P.M. in First Church. I guess I'd better stick to things that have already been — like Fourth of July picnics.

D.D.

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