

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.

— Deuteronomy 7: 6-9

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION

The Glorious Future

Rev. M. Schipper

"For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

I Corinthians 13:12.

In the text and throughout the immediate context the apostle compares the present with the future. In the context he informs us that now we know in part and prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. He also by way of comparison uses the figure of a child over against that of a man. When we are children, we are complete, all the faculties of what we shall be are there; but we are not yet perfect. All the faculties we possess as children are not yet fully developed. When, however, we become men, all those

faculties we possess as children are then perfectly realized. They are not then different faculties, but they are then matured.

In the text this comparison of the present with the future is most beautifully expressed, and it seems that the apostle now reflects on the spiritual faculties of sight and knowledge. Now we see through a glass darkly, and now we know only in part. But when that which is perfect is come, we shall then see face to face, and know even as we are known.

That the apostle in the text changes the relative pronouns from the plural to the singular, need not confuse us. If you look back into the chapter, you will note that he does this throughout. A study of these passages shows that what is true for the apostle is also true of all of us. He individualizes and makes concrete the truth which is applicable to us all.

The little conjunctive word "for" which introduces our text indicates that the text is a further explanation of what the apostle had written in the immediate context, especially in verse 11. The idea is, that when I see through a glass darkly, and know only in part, I am like the child; speaking as a child, understanding as a child, thinking as a child. When, on the other hand, I see face to face, and know as I am known; I am like the man. I have come to maturity, to perfection. And the former things of my childhood may be put away.

Indeed, we have here the glory of the future presented in the light of the present.

That in no way is intended to minimize or depreciate the beauty of the earthly present.

Perhaps you are inclined to be so impressed, but this is not the intention of the apostle at all.

Mistakenly we might conclude when the apostle compares the present with the future, or sets forth the future in the light of the present, that the present is worth very little, that it is unimportant. To draw such a conclusion would be a serious error. The apostle does not mean to say that looking in a mirror, as we do now, is of no value. He does not mean to minimize the significance of our present impartial knowledge. Fact of the matter is, that our experience of the present is very important, and exceedingly beautiful.

The object of our sight, though it be in a mirror, is beautiful indeed! Whatever that object is, he does not say. But as we shall learn in a moment that object is most beautiful and attractive. In reality that object which we see in the mirror is the same as that which we shall see face to face.

And the same is true also of our impartial knowledge. Though it is true that we know now only in part, yet that object of knowledge is most beautiful.

Most assuredly it is a most blessed thing that we see and know now!

That we are no longer blind and ignorant is indeed a wonder of grace!

As we are by nature, we are born blind, just as really as the man to whom Jesus gave sight was born blind (John 9). And with him we may say: once I was blind, but now I see. Only the blindness of our natural depravity is worse than the blindness of the man whose sight was given to him. A physically blind

man may by the grace of God see many things spiritually, but a spiritually blind man sees nothing at all. And such we are by nature. By nature we are not only blind but spiritually dead. But, O wonder of grace, when we are made alive, and we see spiritual things spiritually, what a blessed sight! And the same is true respecting our knowledge. By nature we are spiritually dead, and we know nothing. But when we are by the grace of God made alive, we know all things (I John 2:20). Blessed knowledge, indeed!

And the wonder becomes even more blessed as we see and know more and more!

Yet it is all in a mirror and in part.

The mirror which the apostle has in mind and uses as a figure, was not that of glass, as we are accustomed to, but of highly polished steel. But regardless of its constituency, such an instrument reflects images.

However, the apostle does not have in mind that we look into the mirror to see our own reflected image, but looking into this mirror we see the face of God in Christ Jesus. To understand this figure we ought to conceive of ourselves as standing with our backs toward heaven, and with our faces turned away from heaven looking into the mirror which is the Word of God. What therefore is revealed from heaven by God is reflected in that Word.

That we are said to see through a glass darkly cannot mean that there is something wrong with the mirror, e.g., that it is darkly tinted, or besmirched. But as the original suggests, literally we read, we see now through a mirror in an enigma; i.e., in a dark saying. And that means that the Word of God speaks to us in dark sayings which we are not now completely able to penetrate into their depths. We therefore now need constantly to have that Word interpreted to us. This in no way denies the perspicuity of the Scriptures, but it emphasizes the fact that God has provided ministers of His Word who say: "Thus saith the Lord." The same is true of our present knowledge. With all our knowledge of Scripture we still know so little. But when we shall see face to face and know as we are fully known, then it will be as we read of the Queen of Sheba who was told of the wisdom and glory of Solomon, but who, when she saw him in the flesh, exclaimed: "the half only was told me." That we know now only in part does not mean there is something wrong with our present knowledge, but it means that we do not know, that our knowledge is not as comprehensive as it will be when we shall know even as we are known.

O, the glory of the heavenly future!

It is the glory of reality in the fullest sense of that term. Then all the dark sayings are past. Then we see the glory of reality, not as in a mirror, but face to

face. No longer will our knowledge be partial, but complete. Now with all the knowledge we have, and in which we may increase, — still there are so many questions. Not so in the glorious future.

It is the glory of perfection!

How glorious to see face to face perfectly! It is the difference of looking at the object we love in a picture, and then seeing that object in reality. Though all the lines of His face are beautifully etched in the picture, there is nothing like seeing Him as He is. Also, if what I know now in part is wonderful, I can only conclude that what I shall know then perfectly shall defy all description now.

Perfect sight!

We shall see God! The Eternal, Infinite, Invisible God!

Of course, in as far as He is pleased to reveal Himself to us in the face of Christ Jesus our Lord.

No, we shall not see God as He is, nor shall we know Him in the sense that we shall be able to comprehend Him. For God is incomprehensible, and no man by searching can find Him out, as Job understood God's knowability, and so understandingly expressed it.

Also in perfection we shall be bound by revelation. And revelation now, and as we shall forever experience it, is God's condescension to make Himself known unto us. Undoubtedly also in heaven we shall not know immediately all things, but also then our knowledge will be progressive. Yet there will be no more flaws, weaknesses, that which is in part; but we shall know perfectly.

And God is pleased to reveal Himself only in and through His Son, and that Son as He came into the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Unto all eternity all that we shall see of God will be revealed in Him. Now we see Him, but in a glass darkly. Then we shall see Him face to face.

Surely this glorious prospect of the future as it is seen in the light of the present should temper our attitude to both the present and the future.

As far as the present is concerned, it should spur us on to a whole-hearted participation in it.

How wrong our attitude often is toward the present! Isn't it true that often we find so little enjoyment looking into the mirror now? In the busyness of our present life in the world the reading of God's Word is pushed into the background. And when we go away for a vacation to get away from that busyness for a little while, we may even forget to take God's Word with us. And, O, how little is the partial knowledge we now possess!

Only as we whole-heartedly participate in the beauty of the present, shall we enjoy the blessedness and have the hope for the future. Refuse to look in the mirror of God's Word now, and you will not recognize the face of the Son of God after a while. But looking faithfully into the mirror now, we shall be changed into the image of Him Whom we expect to see in the glorious future face to face. (II Cor. 3:18).

And our attitude toward the future will be one of hopeful anticipation.

Not a mystical, sickly, longing to be delivered from the present. The Apostle Paul also had a strong desire to depart and to be with Christ, but he also had a desire to remain so long as the Lord willed that he labor in His church. (Phil. 1:23,24)

But a spiritual longing of hope for perfection!

To see Him Whom my soul loveth, Whom I can see now only in an enigma, but then face to face; that is my hope.

And to know Him Who has from everlasting known me in His elective grace, that is the object of my hope. And to dwell with Him in Father's house, that constitutes the longing of my heart as it stretches into the future.

And this shall not fail, as the apostle John so clearly states it: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when we shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (I John 3:2.)

May that be your longing, too, dear reader; for Jesus' sake!

Amen!

EDITORIALS

Editor's Notes

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Publication Delay. Earlier we announced that Rev. D. Engelsma's book, *Marriage: The Mystery of*

Christ and the Church was scheduled to appear in June. Sorry, but there has been unavoidable delay at

the bindery. To those who have already ordered the book: don't worry; our Business Manager has your orders and will fill them as soon as the book is available.

* * * * *

Anniversary Recordings. Elsewhere in this issue you will find an announcement concerning availability to tape recordings of all three programs celebrating our Fiftieth Anniversary. *Beacon Lights*, our young people's magazine, plans to print the three addresses; and the *Standard Bearer* also plans to print these addresses — if possible, in the next issue.

* * * * *

Our Theological School will open its doors for the new term, D.V., on Wednesday, September 3, at 9:00 A.M. Convocation will be at 8:00 P.M. in our Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. The public is cordially invited. Prof. H. Hanko will deliver the convocation address. We expect an enrollment this fall of 15 pre-seminary and seminary students. We beg you to remember our seminary in prayer.

* * * * *

In this issue a large section is devoted to *Question Box*. We hope to get caught up in this department in the near future. We have a few more questions on hand; most of the current material in this department was prepared, however, before our Australasian tour.

Home Again!

Late on Thursday night, July 31, the Rev. C. Hanko, Mrs. Hoeksema, and I arrived home to the greetings of a large number of family and friends, after an extended tour in behalf of our churches in New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

We are glad and thankful to be home again, thankful to the Lord for His safekeeping throughout our long journey, and thankful, too, for the many contacts we might make in behalf of our churches. It was good, too, by the way, to be back home in time to share in the denominational celebration of our Fiftieth Anniversary as churches.

Many have already inquired as to a report of our tour, and not a few have suggested some gatherings at which we may report orally to our people and show some of our many pictures. Such reports will indeed be forthcoming. First, however, we must have time to prepare our detailed report for the synodical Committee for Contact With Other Churches and, eventually, for Synod. We have detailed notes to digest; and our report, I assure you, will be a lengthy one. For we contacted many churches and individuals, and we participated in a total of some 40 meetings (lectures, cottage meetings, and church services) in a span of 38 days. In that time we made 21 separate plane flights, not to mention several trips by train, bus, and private car. You will understand, therefore, that we have much to report. As soon, however, as our report is finished, we will also begin to report in our editorial columns and will try to arrange for some public gatherings in various localities.

Already now, however, there are a few things which need saying.

In the first place, we believe that the Lord has greatly blessed our tour. Contacts were made, and lasting bonds of friendship were established. And these were not only between individuals, but between churches down under and our churches. Moreover,

the Lord gave us an open door; and we believe that there is definitely work for our churches to perform in various places. We may not be selfish, but must be prepared to share our heritage as churches with others.

In the second place, we take this opportunity to express our public thanks to all those who had a part in coordinating our tour and in arranging the various meetings, particularly to Mr. W. van Rij, of Christchurch, New Zealand, to the Rev. Charles Rodman, of Launceston, Tasmania, and to the Rev. John Stafford, of Sydney, Australia. Without their help our tour could not have been successful. We also express our thanks to the many, many people who opened their homes to us along the way; these are too numerous to mention by name, for, with few exceptions, we stayed in private homes throughout our tour, often tarrying but a day or two. And though we were total strangers to many of the people, they gladly opened their homes and their hearts to us and showed us truly Christian hospitality. Brother Rodman humorously expressed the hope when he introduced us at a meeting in Tasmania that we would afterwards say, "The barbarians showed us no little kindness in their island." Well, they did; but they were no barbarians!

In the third place, we were repeatedly struck by the fact that our Protestant Reformed Churches are known in the various localities we visited through our literature — our *Standard Bearer*, our pamphlets, and our books. These have been instrumental in spreading our witness. But let me add: there is even more in this respect that can be done and that ought to be done.

Finally, we express our gratitude to our people and our churches for the confidence expressed in delegating us to represent our churches and for the many prayers sent to the throne of grace in our behalf during our absence.

Our Anniversary Celebration

What was undoubtedly the climax of this year of celebration of our Fiftieth Anniversary as Protestant Reformed Churches took place in Grand Rapids on August 5, 6, and 7 in connection with our annual Young People's Convention. We celebrated. Oh, how we celebrated!

Our Young People had cooperated with the denominational Anniversary Committee in making the theme of their convention "God's Covenant Faithfulness." On this theme the three convention addresses concentrated. And our people from near and far gathered in large numbers to listen to the addresses and to join numerous times in lifting hearts and voices in joyful praise to our faithful Covenant Jehovah. From east coast and west coast, from Houston, Texas and from Edmonton, Alberta, and from all points in between, our people came together. And what was undoubtedly the climactic event of these three days was the old-fashioned Field Day held at Douglas Walker Park, south of Grand Rapids. Some 1900 people — well over half of the membership of our denomination — came together on that never-to-be-forgotten day. The only note of regret which I heard was the regret of those who came from far away: they were sorry that their fellow members could not all have shared in the joy of the occasion.

Some of us had feared that there might be a let-down after the Field Day. But on Thursday evening, after the Federation Banquet, there was again a capacity audience in the auditorium of the Calvin College Fine Arts Center to listen to the stirring address of Prof. Hanko.

There were three things which impressed me

throughout this celebration. In the first place, as Protestant Reformed people we still have and deeply appreciate our heritage. This was evident not only from the various speeches, but also from the conversation of our people and the comments about the program. In the second place, in a very concrete fashion we experienced with a thrill of spiritual delight the firm bond of unity which joins our people and churches. This is difficult to describe to those who were not present. But the experience of this unity was very real, and it was electrifying. The fellowship in the faith and the bond of love were concretely tasted in such a way that one almost began to wish that these days of celebration would not have to end. We had a little bit of heaven on earth! In the third place, and quite appropriately, there was nothing of man and of self in all our celebration. It all ended in ascribing praise and glory and adoration to the sovereign God of our salvation!

A word of appreciation is due to all those, young and old, who worked hard and long to organize these events and to carry them off successfully. That there were many hours of planning and preparation on the part of various committees was very evident. In fact, seldom have I seen evidence of such thorough and painstaking work.

And now, in a way, it is "back to normal." And yet we do not return the same. We return with renewed confidence and zeal and with renewed dedication, as well as with strengthened conviction that the cause of our Protestant Reformed Churches is the cause of the Lord our God.

May He preserve us and keep us faithful!

QUESTION BOX

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

CONCERNING A DIALOGUE CHURCH

One of our California readers asked me to make some comments about the idea of a dialogue church, sometimes also called a modalities church. My questioner left his question general, but I assume that he desires some comments on the right or wrong of such a dialogue church, as well as on the dangers of it.

Reply

I will not comment on the whole idea of dialogue.

My colleague, Prof. Hanko, made some comments on this subject not long ago in his department, *All Around Us*. With these comments I am in agreement, and the whole current idea of dialogue is as abhorrent to me as it is to him.

Now, however, the subject is that of a so-called dialogue church, or modalities church. What is this? In brief, we may describe it as follows. In the first place, a modalities church is a denomination of

churches in which there is an orthodox and a heterodox element, an element which adheres to Scripture and the Confessions in its preaching, administration of the sacraments, and discipline, and an element which does not do so. In the second place, these groups are rather well-defined. In such a modalities church you do not find orthodox and heterodox elements scattered throughout all the congregations, but rather entire segments of the denomination which are either heterodox or orthodox. Entire congregations will be of one or the other kind. An orthodox congregation will be exclusively so, in its constituency, as to its elders and deacons, and as to its minister. And sometimes a number of such orthodox congregations, which adhere to the confessions, will band together for the purpose of maintaining their orthodox position, and will constitute a definite wing, or modality, within the denomination. In the third place, in such a situation the so-called orthodox wing is usually, if not always, a minority of the denomination. If it were in the majority, it would be able to expel the heterodox minority. And in such a situation the orthodox minority of churches and the heterodox majority live together under one denominational roof. Either by express or tacit agreement, they live in a situation of what might be called *detente*. And, finally, as to motivation, not infrequently this situation is justified by the orthodox minority on the basis of the claim that they desire and strive to reform the church from within. Now admittedly the above description is brief and does not enter into detail. But broadly speaking, this is the kind of situation which has prevailed for many years already in the so-called national church of the Netherlands, the *Hervormde Kerk*. You will find something of the same situation in the Reformed Church in America. In fact, you will find a situation of this kind existing to a degree in many of the larger denominations in this country which once upon a time were Reformed or Presbyterian. There are signs that a similar situation is developing in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands, although it remains to be seen whether such a situation will become permanent in that denomination. There are even occasionally both signs and claims made that such a situation is developing in the Christian Reformed Church in this country.

What is involved here, basically, is the matter of the marks of the church, of the church's calling to manifest those marks, and of the believer's calling to join himself to the true church wherever it is manifested. It seems to me that confessional believers and churches which live together with liberal churches under the same denominational roof are violating specifically Article 29 of our Belgic Confession, which speaks of the marks of the church. The

attempt is made, of course, to justify such a situation on the basis that the local congregations, and even whole groups of congregations, are indeed manifesting the marks of the church. But this does not take into account the matter of denominational unity and denominational and corporate responsibility. I am not now speaking of Reformed believers and Reformed churches which have differences *within* the Confessions; this is possible. But I am referring to those who differ specifically with respect to the Confession, to those who live together under the same denominational roof with those who explicitly deny the Confessions. This, it seems to me, becomes a matter of being unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

In the second place, this whole matter involves the calling of the church to reformation. And specifically, it involves the calling of the church to reformation by way of separation and instituting the church anew, if need be. This was done, for example, in the Netherlands. In fact, it was done twice: in 1834 and again in 1886. But there still remains an element in the *Hervormde Kerk*, for example, which considers its duty to be to reform the church from within. And then the question arises, of course: just how long does that process of reformation from within continue? And my answer is that when the point is reached that the heterodox element is in the majority and in control of the denomination, and when heresy is openly and officially endorsed and tolerated, then it becomes one's calling to separate. Usually, such separation, if the orthodox element is militant and vocal, will come about through a process by which the heterodox element simply casts out the orthodox element. If, however, this does not take place, it then becomes the calling of those who adhere to the Confessions to take the initiative and to separate.

Finally, the argument is sometimes made that such reformation by way of separation is no better than the attempt at reformation from within, and no more successful. In fact, there is some discussion going on about this very subject in the Netherlands at present. And those who are in favor of a modalities church and who claim to be in favor of reformation from within point to the alleged uselessness and failure of reformation by way of separation. In fact, they are pointing at present to the *Gereformeerde Kerken* as an example. The question is raised: what is the use of reformation through separation? After all, it is claimed, ultimately the church which separates will again itself become corrupt; and then a new separation becomes necessary. And so the chain of separations becomes endless, and the church becomes fragmented. Historically, of course, there is an element of truth in this. But I would call your attention to the fact that this is strictly a utilitarian

argument. We must not judge our calling by the results or possible results. But we must consider our calling in the light of the question what is right and what is wrong before the face of God and in the light of Scripture and the Confessions. And then there can be no question about the fact that it is the calling of God's church in the world to adhere to the truth of the Word of God and not to make common cause with unbelievers and deniers of that truth.

ABOUT COMMON GRACE AND THE RESTRAINT OF SIN

A Christian Reformed reader wrote in some time ago with a problem about common grace. He did not specifically write in to Question Box, but hoped that the matter mentioned in his letter could be cleared up in an editorial some time. However, I will try to say a few words in this department about the problem which he raises. He writes, in part, as follows:

"I asked for a definition of common grace, and Rev. . . ., who leads the group, stated something like this: 'Common grace is the source of all order, refinement, culture, common virtue, etc., which we find in the world; and through it the moral power of the truth upon the heart and conscience is increased and the evil passions of men are restrained. It does not lead to salvation, but it keeps this earth from becoming a hell. It arrests the complete effectuation of sin, just as human insights arrest the fury of wild beasts. It prevents sin from being manifested in all its hideousness, and thus hinders the bursting forth of the flames from the smoking fire. Like the pressures of the atmosphere, it is the universal and powerful though unfelt.'

"What confuses me is this: if the unbeliever, unconverted, reprobate is accountable to Almighty God on the day of judgment for all of his earthly blessings, and his punishment will be more severe, how can this be called grace. If it was called the restraining power of God, that I could understand. I can see where it is grace for the believer, but how can it be for the unbeliever. It seems to me if this was grace, it would be more grace if they had never received these blessings."

Reply

I can very well understand that my correspondent is confused by what is presented above. I must confess that I am also rather confused. And the chief reason for this confusion lies in the fact that there is absolutely no proof either from Scripture or from our Reformed Confessions for the above view. And yet I detect in the description of "common grace" which is offered above basically the view of the Second Point of 1924, which teaches a restraint of sin by common

grace, according to which "God by the general operations of His Spirit, without renewing the heart of man, restrains the unimpeded breaking out of sin, by which human life in society remains possible."

Concerning this, we must remark, in the first place, that the idea of the Second Point, in its teaching of a restraint of sin in the life of the individual man and in the community by virtue of common grace, is not merely the teaching that the sinner is restrained, limited, and controlled in his outward actions, so that he cannot fully execute and always carry out his evil intentions. The latter is a thoroughly Reformed doctrine. It is Reformed to confess that God holds in His power and completely controls by His providence all the deeds of the wicked, both of devils and of men, so that they can accomplish nothing against His will. God does this directly by His power, frequently frustrating the counsels of the ungodly in a way which is even beyond our comprehension: for the very thoughts and desires of the wicked are in His hand and under His control. However, God also controls and restrains the wicked indirectly and mediately. The ungodly are dependent upon and are limited by time and occasion and circumstances, by their place and position in life, by their talents and power and means, and by their own ambitions and fears, as well as by the power of the magistrates. In fact, the ungodly are limited in their sinful deeds by their own character and disposition. All this, however, constitutes an outward restraint of the sinner which has nothing to do with an operation of *grace*. And it is not this external restraint of the sinner in his sinful deeds to which the Second Point of 1924 refers. What I have described above is taught, for example, in Art. 13 (and in part in Art. 36) of our Netherland Confession.

Common grace teaches that there is an inwardly restraining operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the natural man — an operation which is not regenerating — whereby the progress of the corruption of sin in the human nature is checked and restrained in such a way that a remnant of the original goodness of man in the state of righteousness is constantly preserved and also caused to bear fruit in many good works in this present life. There are especially the following elements in this theory:

1) That there is in the sinner a remnant of natural good. This "natural good" is distinct from spiritual good, by which is meant the good that is wrought in the depraved nature by the Spirit of Christ and which is rooted in regeneration. Natural good is supposed to be a good that is not wrought by regenerating grace, but remains in man since the fall. It is supposed to be a remnant of his original goodness or righteousness. This "natural good" is said to include such important elements as a seed of external righteousness, recep-

tivity for moral persuasion, receptivity for the truth, a will that is susceptible to good motives, and a conscience that is receptive for good influences, good inclinations and desires, of which the Holy Spirit can make use in restraining sin. You will recognize some of these elements in the description quoted above by my correspondent. You see, common grace is said to have operated immediately after the fall of man, preventing and restraining the corrupting power of sin. If there had not been such an immediate restraining operation of common grace upon the nature of man, so it is said, he would have become utterly corrupt then and there. Man would have changed into a devil, the development of mankind would have become an utter impossibility, and this earth would have become a hell. But the restraining power of the Holy Spirit operated upon man as soon as he had sinned, so that he did not fully die, did not become completely corrupt, but retained some light and life, a remnant of his original goodness.

2) The second element in this theory is that of the operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby that original good that remains in man since the fall is continuously guarded against further corruption by the checking and restraining of the progress of sin. Even that remnant of good in man, so it is said, would have become corrupted long ago if there had not been a constantly restraining operation of grace in the heart of man, an operation, however, which is not regenerating but preserving in nature.

3) The third element is that there is an operation of the Holy Spirit by which this remnant of natural good in the sinner becomes active. The seed of external righteousness brings forth fruit, so that the natural man performs good works in the sphere of natural and civil life. This is especially the teaching of the Third Point of 1924. The practical result of this restraining operation of the Holy Spirit is then said to be that the natural man is able to live a naturally good and morally sound life in this world. He is not regenerated, is not ingrafted into Christ by a true and living faith. He performs no spiritual good. But by virtue of the remnant of good that is in him and by virtue of the constant operation of the Holy Spirit upon him, this natural man really lives a weakened form of his original Paradise-life. He can perform good works in this world and live a good world-life.

Now there are many objections that can be raised against this theory.

In the first place, — and this is always the chief objection — this whole theory is a very evident denial of the total depravity of the natural man. For the simple fact is that according to this theory there never has been a totally depraved man in the world since the fall of Adam and Eve. For from the moment

of the fall until the present day there is supposed to have been the operation of this restraining grace in the heart of man, preserving in him the remnant of his original goodness, according to which he is able to live a tolerably good world-life.

In the second place, this alleged restraint of sin by common grace implies the error of *resistible grace*. In the description cited by my correspondent mention is made of the idea that the evil passions of men are restrained, that this earth is kept from becoming a hell, that the complete effectuation of sin is arrested, that sin is prevented from being manifested in all its hideousness, etc. But if all this were true, there would be no development of sin whatsoever. However, it is an undeniable fact of history, and plainly revealed in Scripture, that sin and corruption do continuously develop and increase in the world until the measure of iniquity is full and the man of sin can appear. In fact, it strikes me that the whole idea of a restraint of sin by common grace in our present world is a very unrealistic idea. We live in a time when sin increasingly develops and breaks out in all its foul corruption. Increasingly the signs are there that we are moving rapidly toward the end and toward the time when the Anti Christ shall appear in his final manifestation. But how is this possible in the light of the theory of common grace? This can only be due to the fact, then, that the Holy Spirit releases His restraining hold upon the sinner and gives him over in unrighteousness. And if you inquire how this must be explained, then the answer is that the sinner resists this restraining influence of grace, and thus goes from bad to worse. But this, you understand, is the error of *resistible grace*. The power of the Spirit in such a case is not efficacious. Man is stronger than God!

In the third place, this theory conceives dualistically of sin in relation to God. It implies a denial of the absolute sovereignty of the Most High even over the powers of sin and death. It presents sin and death as powers next to God and operating independently of Him. These powers are able to work corruption in the heart and nature of man. But God checks this power, restraining a power that operates independently of Him. This is dualism. Scripture teaches, however, that sin and death are not powers which work independently of God, but that they are the result of His own cursing wrath against the sinner.

There is much more that can be said about this theory. But let the above suffice.

Over against this, we maintain that the natural man, ever since the fall of our first parents in Paradise, is wholly darkness and foolishness, corrupt before God in all his ways, incapable of doing anything that is pleasing to God, always inclined only to evil, unless and until he is regenerated by the Spirit

of Christ. This is Reformed. Surely, there is left in him a remnant of natural light. He remained a rational, moral being, endowed with reason and will, able to distinguish between good and evil. This has nothing to do with any so-called common grace, however. And by the way, we must remember that sin and the fall did not change things *essentially*. The whole idea that man would become a devil or a beast, that this earth would become a hell, were it not for common grace, is nonsense. Sin did not change the *nature* of things. Man remained man. The devil remained a devil. The animal remains an animal. The earth remains earth. But sin changed things spiritually, ethically. Man, a rational, moral being, became a *depraved* man. There is nothing left in him of the light and knowledge according to which he may know and love that which is good, nothing left in him of righteousness and holiness, nothing left of his original moral integrity. From the moment of the fall he became totally corrupt. His knowledge of God changed into darkness, his righteousness into unrighteousness, his holiness into corruption. At the fall his nature became exactly as corrupt as it could become. This is the teaching of our Confessions, particularly of Canons III, IV, 1-4.

Nor do we deny that there is development of sin in the world throughout history. But we maintain that the manifestation of this corruption of the human nature in the actual sins of the human race goes hand in hand with the organic development of the human race and follows this development. Adam's sin was a root sin, which bears its fruit in all the actual sins of the entire race until the measure of iniquity is filled. As the human race developed and as life with its many and various relationships becomes more complex, sin also reveals itself as corrupting the whole of life in all its relationships. And this organic development of sin takes place exactly as fast as possible. However, this progress of sin is controlled and limited by many factors. First of all, there is the all-overruling power of God, Who, in His providence indeed gives men over unto unrighteousness and in His righteous judgment punishes sin with sin, but Who also in this very process controls the progress of sin and leads it into those channels which are conducive to the realization of His counsel. In this connection, in the second place, there is the limitation that is imposed upon every man by the measure of his gifts, his powers and talents, his time and place in history, by occasions and means and circumstances, by character and disposition. Every man does not commit the same sins. Each person sins according to his place in the organism of the race and in history. This is not difficult to understand. Cain, for example, could not commit the same sins as did Pharaoh at the time of Israel's bondage: the circumstances and opportunities and means were not the same. In the

third place, sin is determined and limited by various and often conflicting motives, such as fear and shame, ambition and vain-glory, natural love and carnal lusts, malice and envy, hatred and vengeance. It is also influenced by the power of the magistrates and by the fear of the sword-power. But in all these channels and under all these controlling and determining factors, the current of sin and corruption moves onward without restraint and interruption, until it shall have served God's purpose and the measure of iniquity shall be filled and the Man of Sin shall be revealed.

ANOTHER QUESTION ABOUT MATTHEW 5: 45

From a California reader I received this question some time ago:

"Are editors supposed to have a facility with words and able to put 'handles to meaning'? We have heard, 'Motion is not always action,' and, 'If the job is not worth more than the pay, it will never pay more,' and, 'The grace of gratitude,' and, 'Particular grace,' etc., etc.

"Now there are other graces and blessings to men and animals, Jew and Gentile alike, of which Jesus Himself speaks in Matthew 5:45.

"What, in one short sentence, could these be called?"

Reply

We have written about this passage several times of late. But in reply to this question I wish to point out:

1. That the text itself does not call rain and sunshine graces, blessings, or tokens of God's love and favor. This is the mistake which is commonly made in interpreting this passage. The text does indeed say that God sends rain and sunshine upon the just and the unjust. It does *not* say that rain and sunshine are blessings, or manifestations of God's love to all alike.

2. We may indeed call these gifts of God. Moreover, they are in themselves good gifts, too. Scripture itself speaks such language, Acts 14:17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

3. Whether these gifts which are bestowed upon the just and the unjust constitute blessings or curses is another question. We must remember that neither blessing nor cursing resides in things as such. The question of blessing and cursing is a question which is one of the attitude of God. And this question, in turn, is inseparably connected with God's counsel of election and reprobation. The Lord our God bestows all things upon His elect people in Christ in His favor, blessing them. He bestows all things upon the repro-

bate in His eternal hatred and wrath, cursing them, setting them in slippery places, and bringing them down unto destruction.

QUESTIONS ABOUT LOVE AND GRACE

From the same California reader I received the following:

“Could you explain some day the difference, if any, between God’s love and God’s grace.

“‘It is *fun* to be saved’ is a common expression in our days among some. Is not fun something you make yourself? So you save yourself. I can only make myself say: ‘It is a *blessing* to be saved’ (by Christ, from death and hell).

“Now one may be able to wish a blessing upon someone, but only God can bless or *give* a blessing. Right?

“Returning to the first question, we can say that God *is* love, and that (sometimes) we *have* love. Also: God is grace; but can any of us extend grace?”

Reply

First of all, I can agree with my questioner concerning the expression, “It is fun to be saved.” This kind of language is heard not infrequently from a certain type of very shallow “happiness evangelists.” But it is neither Biblical nor correct. My questioner is certainly correct in speaking of salvation as a blessing bestowed by God in Christ Jesus. And Scripture uses this language very, very often. And in this connection, we must remember, too, that this blessing of being saved, according to Scripture, involves pain, anguish, sorrow, because of our sins and misery. And he who thinks that salvation is “fun” has not learned the a-b-c of salvation.

In the second place, my questioner is correct as to the matter of blessing. It is certainly correct that we may be able to wish a blessing upon someone, but that only God can bless or give a blessing. God’s word

of blessing is efficacious: it effects the very blessedness which it pronounces. Our word of blessing is not efficacious, that is, it cannot effect that which it states.

In the third place, without going into great detail let me say a few words about the question of the distinction between God’s love and God’s grace. All such ideas as that of God’s love, God’s grace, God’s mercy, God’s goodness, and God’s compassion are closely related in Scripture. In general, we may say that love is that spiritual bond of perfect fellowship that subsists between ethically perfect, personal beings, who, because of their ethical perfection have their delight in, seek, and find one another. And the attribute of the love of God is the infinite and eternal bond of fellowship that is based upon the ethical perfection and holiness of the divine nature, and that subsists between the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Grace, as an attribute of God, is that divine virtue according to which God is the perfection of all beauty and loveliness, and contemplates Himself as such with infinite delight. For a more complete explanation of these ideas, I refer the reader to H. Hoeksema’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 103-112.

Finally, with regard to the last question on this subject, my questioner is correct, on the basis of Scripture, when he states that God *is* love, and that we *have* love. To this I would add: we *have* love, when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by His Spirit. In this same connection my questioner asks whether any of us can extend grace? To this my answer is: no. God alone can and does extend grace to His people in Christ Jesus. We can, of course, wish one another God’s grace, or pray for God’s grace upon one another, in the same sense in which we can wish a blessing upon someone.

The above answers are very brief, and they deal with important Scriptural concepts, as anyone will understand. If my questioner is not satisfied, he may call again.

ALL AROUND US

Christian Schools and the Law

Prof. H. Hanko

Several decisions which have recently been made by the courts have repercussions for our Christian Schools. The first has to do with matters of racial discrimination and tax exemption.

A recent article in the *Grand Rapids Press*, entitled

“IRS Bars Discrimination in Tax-Exempt Church Schools” speaks of an Internal Revenue Service ruling. We quote the article here in its entirety. The whole article is not altogether clear on some points, but the general thrust of the ruling is clear enough.

The Internal Revenue Service announced Thursday that tax-exempt status would henceforth be denied to church-affiliated primary and secondary schools that refuse to accept children from all racial and ethnic groups.

Tax-exempt status will be denied even in cases where the denomination running the school claims that its exclusionary policies are required by its religious beliefs, the IRS said.

Such a claim has no more validity under the first amendment than the claims previously rejected by the Supreme Court that the use of illegal drugs in religious rites is protected by the First Amendment, the IRS said.

Private schools with discriminatory admissions policies, other than those that are church-affiliated, were denied tax-exempt status under a ruling issued by the IRS in 1971. The question of tax-exemptions for schools with religious affiliations was left open at that time because IRS officials found it a difficult issue that they wanted to consider at greater length.

A grant of tax-exempt status under Section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code means that contributors to the exempt church, school or other organization may deduct those contributions on their tax returns. This is generally considered an important incentive for such contributions.

The ruling issued Thursday will halt any new grants of exempt status to denominational schools that discriminate in admissions.

It is likely to be some time, however, before any present tax-exemptions are revoked under the ruling. An IRS official explained that the agency had not yet written its instructions to its field offices.

He said the agency hoped to have these instructions completed before the start of the next school year.

IRS officials were unable to say just how many schools might be affected. They noted that in addition to schools that exclude blacks, which are chiefly but not solely located in the South, there are some denominational schools that bar whites which would also be affected.

Some schools run by Black Muslims and some schools in Hawaii fall into the latter category, an official said.

The ruling affects only schools that operate an educational program that is a recognized substitute for public schooling in the grades where school attendance is mandatory.

Thus it would not affect any educational institution above the high school level.

Neither would the ruling affect exclusionary policies that were solely religious. A denominational school could restrict its students to the members of that denomination and retain its tax-exempt status.

Christianity Today commented also on this:

A court in Richmond, Virginia, in ruling that blacks cannot be barred from private schools because of race, upheld a lower-court ruling based on the 1866 Civil Rights Act. The act prohibits refusing to enter into a contract with blacks because of their race. If upheld by the Supreme Court, the decision will affect the hundreds of segregated schools that were organized to skirt the high court's 1954 public-schools desegregation ruling. Many of the schools are run by churches.

Relatedly, private schools would be required to submit annual proof of racial non-discrimination in order to qualify for income-tax exemption under an Internal Revenue Service proposal.

It is clear from the ruling of the IRS that tax-exempt status will no longer be granted to any private school which practices racial discrimination. It is also clear that the IRS is making plans to withdraw tax-exempt status from those private schools which now have such status, but which practice discrimination. This latter will take a little time, according to the article; but that day is near. It is also clear that this will have a profound effect on many existing private schools.

There are however, a couple of points which are not so clear. One point that is not clear has to do with the last paragraph in the *Press* report. The paragraph reads: "Neither would the ruling affect exclusionary policies that were solely religious. A denominational school could restrict its students to the members of that denomination and retain its tax-exempt status." This paragraph seems to mean that as long as a particular school limited its enrollment to members of the denomination which operates the school, such a school could keep its tax-exempt status. But there are questions. In the first place, does this apply to parental schools which are not denominationally operated, such as our own Christian Schools? If our schools would, for example, limit enrollment to children of parents who are Protestant Reformed, would this satisfy the IRS? The answer is not clear.

In the second place, the paragraph speaks of "exclusionary policies that (are) solely religious." Does this mean that, if our schools could prove to the IRS that the truth as we believe and confess it is taught in every subject in the curriculum, and that our discriminatory policies were not on the basis of *race*, but on the basis of *creed*, that then we could retain our status? This has always been our policy. We have never given any thought to discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin. But we have discriminated sharply on the basis of creed. Is this sufficient to satisfy the IRS? Again, the answer is not clear at this point.

In the third place, if the ruling of the IRS means that there are no reasons at all why a school can refuse admittance to any student, will the government pay the tuition of minority group students and students from the inner city, if the government wants them enrolled in local Christian schools? This has been suggested to me in the past by some. It has been said that the government aims to get inner city students in the Christian School system: that the government will do this even if the government must pay the busing and tuition costs, and that failure to admit these students will result in the loss of tax-exempt status, and ultimately of accreditation. If this is ultimately what the government has in mind, this will mean the end of the Christian Schools.

I doubt that, at least for the moment, the government has anything quite so drastic in mind. Nevertheless, ultimately I firmly believe that the government will not tolerate indefinitely a Christian School system which is genuinely Christian. There are a couple of reasons which lead me to believe this. In the first place, we must never forget that the government is basically and fundamentally hostile to the Church. We are sometimes tempted to forget this when we do not experience overt persecution. But the government is under the control of Satan and manifests the political power of Antichrist. There is a basic antipathy against the Church and against the truth which is the deepest spiritual motive for all the government does. Sooner or later this will be directed against the Christian Schools. This is especially true when we consider the fact that those who educate children have the means to direct the lives of these children as long as they live. This is why God ordains covenant instruction as the means of perpetuating His covenant in the line of generations. But this is why the government remains vitally interested also in educating the children of the nation. The government wants its future citizens to be amenable to governmental policies whatever they may be. In the second place, it is simply a fact that, in large measure, the public school system is a colossal failure. I was reading in the *Press* a couple of weeks ago that the University of Michigan now requires literacy tests for admittance because many students who apply for admittance cannot read or write above a third grade level. When literacy tests are required for admittance in a University, something bad has happened to schools where children are trained. The Christian Schools on the whole have much higher academic standards than the public schools. The result is that the very existence of the Christian Schools is a constant testimony of the failure of the public school system. The government will not indefinitely tolerate such sharp condemnation of its efforts to educate. To tolerate this kind of testimony is to be forced to

admit its own failure. But such is not likely to happen. The alternative is to use various ways and means to drag the Christian Schools down to the level of the Public Schools. And these recent rulings are the beginning of that effort.

Hence, if we soberly evaluate recent trends, we ought to be able to see that storm clouds are gathering on the horizon of history, and that presently the storm will break in all its fury against the Church and against our covenant schools. What ought we to do? First of all, we ought to condemn sharply such practices of the government at every opportunity. Secondly, we ought to be doubly thankful for our Schools, and we ought to support them with every means at our disposal as long as the Lord gives them to us. And finally, we ought to prepare now for the evil days which are soon to come. We ought to work while it is yet day, ere the night cometh in which no man can labor.

* * * * *

There are two other matters of interest which I can only briefly mention.

In the first place, according to *Christianity Today*, "an Appeals Court in Cincinnati declared unconstitutional a 1973 Tennessee law requiring public-school texts to give equal time to creationist views." Especially the Creation Research Society has been working actively and with some success to get the public schools to give such equal time to the doctrine of creation. Tennessee had such a law which stated that evolutionism had to be labeled theory and could not be taught as scientific fact. This same law required biology textbooks to include the Genesis account of creation. But the court agreed with the National Association of Biology Teachers and ruled that the law established a preference for the biblical viewpoint.

In the second place, according to a sheet mailed by the Nebraska Association for Christian Action, "five Christian School parents from Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania have filed suit against the Blackhawk School District and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania alleging that their First Amendment civil rights are being violated by the necessity of their paying taxes for public education as well as tuition for the Christian education of their children." The article gives a history of the matter and informs its readers that the case went to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals on May 15. The parents intend to carry the case all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary. The article asks that "we join in prayer . . . that the Court will rule in favor of the U.S. Constitution and freedom for Christian education."

According to the article, one of four directives being sought asks the Court to: "... direct the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to put into effect with all deliberate speed an equitable and just distribution of public school tax monies so that plaintiffs children will enjoy the use of school tax funds on a per capita footing equal with all other students of the Commonwealth without reference to religion."

In these columns I have expressed often the fact that there is grave injustice in these matters in our country. But I am, without reservation, opposed to Christian Schools sharing in tax monies. It is simply a fact that support from the coffers of government will lead to government regulation. And, in the light of the government's increasing encroachment on Christian School terrain, it seems irresponsible to invite the government in via a share of tax dollars.

GUEST ARTICLE

The Idea of the Sabbath

Rev. Meindert Joostens

The topic to which we desire to devote a few moments is not a new one. However, we do believe that it is one in which we ought to be periodically instructed and continually admonished. Sabbath observance, as we are all well aware, can be a rather touchy subject. In discussing it one can discern a wide spectrum of opinions regarding it, ranging from legalism to antinomianism. Yet, we believe that if one has a truly scriptural understanding of it, both the extremes can be avoided and one can walk soberly before God with regard to the fourth commandment. Therefore, it is our purpose to take a brief survey of the idea of the Sabbath as found in Holy Writ and, in conclusion, to come to some understanding regarding its observance.

We do well to begin at the beginning, that is, with the Sabbath of the week of creation. The institution of the Sabbath belongs to the creation narrative, and it is unfortunate that the chapter division between Genesis 1 and 2 does not reflect this. It is certainly a mistake to sever the seventh day from the foregoing six. The Scriptures themselves point to this when they proclaim that God ended His work which He had made on the seventh day. Also the numbers involved dictate this to us. Never in the Bible is the number six attributed to God but always to man apart from God. The number six symbolizes that which is incomplete, where as the number seven always designates completion. The week of God is one complete unity or whole and must be characterized by the number seven. This points us to the fact that the creation of all things finds its completion and purpose in the rest of God. The whole creation is linked to God in the seventh day.

Although God pronounced all things to be good on the individual days of the creation week, His blessing was upon the seventh day in which He entered into the rest of enjoying His work.

We read, "... God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work..." (Gen. 2:3) We must come to a correct understanding of the rest in which God engaged. In so doing we must be aware that it has to be in harmony with the very being and nature of the living God. Most generally the word rest, or more literally sabbath, means to sit down or to sit still; but in addition to this meaning of inactivity it can also mean to cease or to desist. We immediately perceive that the first meaning can never apply to the living God Who is continuously and constantly active, yet never fainting. Thus it must be clear that on the seventh day God ceased — left off — doing one thing only to continue another activity. The activity of resting! If we understand the idea of rest with regard to the sabbath in this manner, as we must, then a common fallacy falls by the wayside. That is, the misunderstanding that Sunday ought to be a lazy day of inactivity. On the contrary, God continued active in His rest. We must be busy upon the Sabbath. Yet, that business must be a ceasing from our every day routine, even as God left off creating.

Thus understanding the idea of rest, we read that God bestows His blessing upon the seventh day. God's blessing is tantamount to His favor. Where the blessing of God resides there is prosperity, benefit and true happiness. Therefore, God's blessing is a characteristic of the Sabbath. We understand, of

course, that the blessedness of favor of God upon the Sabbath must be for the benefit of man. For it is nonsensical to speak of a blessed day in the abstract. God made the Sabbath day a day of happiness and benefit to man. The Sabbath was made for man, as he is God's king-servant of the whole creation.

In addition to blessing this day, God also sanctifies it. To sanctify means to make holy or to consecrate toward a certain purpose. Even as the priests in the old dispensation had their mitre engraved with the words "holiness unto the Lord," or as the child of God sets himself apart from the world in a life of sanctification, so God made this day holy, separating it unto a certain purpose. And that purpose was that He might rest in the enjoyment of His creation. So also, the Sabbath day is sanctified for man that he may in a special way concentrate all his attention upon God and His glory!

All this will be made yet clearer to us as we see the idea of the Sabbath in connection with the scheme of the ceremonial laws of the nation of Israel. The obligation to keep the Sabbath was formally given to Israel when the voice of the Lord thundered down from Mt. Sinai in that form of the fourth commandment. The time and place in which it was given to Israel, are significant. The Israelites stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Behind them was the miraculous exodus out of the bondage house of Egypt, ahead of them was the long journey through the wilderness and finally the entrance into Canaan. The writer to the Hebrews instructs us as to this significance. As he is fond of doing, so here, he connects for us the Old Testament type with the reality or antitype. In the fourth chapter he speaks of the eternal rest which we have in Jesus Christ. But in so doing, he makes reference to the Old Testament picture by quoting from Psalm 95:11 where we read, "unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest." This reference is to the dire oath which shut the Israelites out of the land of Canaan. Canaan was the Sabbath land. The ordinances of Leviticus 25 make this very clear. For six years they were permitted to sow but the seventh year the land had to rest. Seven times seven years or the forty-ninth year was the year of jubilee in which each man would return to his possessions and family. It was the Sabbath land as a picture of heaven! Toward this land Israel journeyed, being afforded one day in seven to rest and pause, to meditate upon their promised inheritance.

But the writer to the Hebrews does not let us stop here. We must not remain with the type and picture but move on to the reality. Let us read verses 8 and 9 of chapter 4, "For if Jesus (i.e. Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to

the people of God." This rest is not the rest of Paradise from which Adam fell, not the rest of Canaan into which Joshua led Israel, but the rest of heaven into which Christ leads His people. What a beautiful progression in the revelation of God unto us.

The book of Hebrews again draws a striking parallel. Let us notice verse 10, "For he (Christ) that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from his." As God created first, then entered into the enjoyment of His works and as Israel journeyed and then possessed the promised land, so also Christ labored in order to enter in. And the labors of Jesus Christ were the labors He performed as the Servant of Jehovah. That is, Christ labored in the work of our redemption from His birth to His death. We do well to consider carefully and ponder at length the labors which Christ performed on our behalf! From these labors Christ ceased. He left off laboring when He had completely borne away the burden of God's wrath and righteous indignation against our sins. And He sanctified Himself for our sakes, that we might be sanctified through the truth. And thus He made the eternal Sabbath a blessing unto us in Him.

Christ entered into that rest at His ascension. Yet, for us entering into that rest must wait because this flesh and blood cannot inherit heaven. Christ received His glorified body at His resurrection but we must wait until we are changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Yet, His resurrection is the earnest of ours, and Christ being in heaven is a sure pledge for us.

All this means, of course, that we principally partake of that eternal Sabbath even now. The heavenly Sabbath extends into time. It is exactly this that is the force of that beautiful 103rd answer of the Heidelberg Catechism, "... that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me; and thus begin in this life the eternal sabbath." For Christ has sanctified us unto that sabbath. The old man of sin no longer has any control over us, but we are free in Christ. Israel has to labor in order to partake of the typical rest, but our labors have been completed by Christ, for He fulfilled the law for us. Therefore we walk in sanctification seven days a week!

We would be grossly negligent if we did not apply some of what we have learned to the proper observance of our Sabbath days. Though it is not our purpose, we may point out that we ought to observe the first and not the last day of the week. Many arguments are put forth against this. Some cleave to the original institution, others tell us that Paul admonishes us not to esteem one day above another,

etc. Yet we must notice: God created and rested, Israel journeyed and entered in, Christ labored and ascended into His rest; but our labor has been completed in Jesus Christ. Therefore we celebrate the first day of the week upon the basis of Christ's completed labor. And for this occasion we meet in God's house to be replenished with water from the rock, Jesus Christ, to sustain us during the week ahead, that we may fulfill the admonition of the Heidelberg Catechism, as we noted earlier.

Yet the question remains: how must we celebrate the Sabbath day? It is true that we principally observe every day as Sunday, yet practically we rest one day and labor for six days. Returning a minute to the type and picture, we might ask ourselves the following. Where are we? In Egypt? In Canaan? No! We have been delivered from the bondage of sin of which Egypt was a picture. But we are not yet in heaven, the real land flowing with milk and honey. We are in the wilderness journey of this life, as pilgrims and strangers wending our way toward our homeland. On our journey the Lord gives us one day in seven to rest. Sunday is an oasis in the midst of a dry desert land. This means, that we certainly ought to "rest" on Sunday. By this we mean that we must

cease from our daily labors and take our minds off the carnal and earthly cares of our lives. It is improper to use Sunday as a physical rest day in order that we may feverishly labor during the week to accumulate earthly gain. Nor must we contemplate on Sunday how to make a "fast buck" on Monday. We ought to realize and our children made to understand, that on Sunday, in a special and different way, the emphasis is upon the eternal Sabbath.

Oh, we know that we are often guilty of the sin we abhor so much in our children when they ask, what may or may I not do on Sunday? May I ride my bicycle, take a pleasure ride? Must I go to church once or twice on Sunday? And the list could be compounded, as we well know. Let's be positive, shall we. If we are in doubt as to any of these things, let us stand before the face of the Most High and answer in His presence the following question. Is this which I am about to do on Sunday conducive toward making me concentrate upon God and the eternal rest which He has prepared in Christ? Or does it serve my own carnal pleasure? Let's not see what we can "get away with" on Sunday but how we can make it spiritually more beneficial to us. Then the day which God has sanctified will be a blessing to us.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Big "Eye"

Rev. G. Van Baren

On various occasions and in different ways, I and others have had the opportunity to say somewhat concerning television. Bear with me in that I am constrained to do this once more.

The occasion for this article is two-fold. First, I am reminded of the fact that Scripture speaks of Christ as the Light of the world. He comes from the Father and gives witness to His people. He reveals the Father to us. He does so through His Word and directly while here on this earth. His people could see and hear of the wonder-work of our God. But over against Him, there is the world with its devilish imitation of revelation. The world seeks to produce a substitute "light" or "revelation" which will the rather please man. Certainly his modern inventions, and especially television, become the means whereby the man of this world seeks to influence and direct the course of history. It is the "eye" through which the observer can behold the world. Through this "eye" may be seen many amazing things: events which are taking

place the very moment one beholds in his home. Through this "eye" one can behold frightful things: the corruptions of the world about us. But this must be noticed: there is here the "light" which the world uses to make an impression upon all who see.

Secondly, I have read recently again a number of articles which call attention to the awful content of television programming and its effect upon the viewer. Though some of these articles are written from a Christian perspective, many are written by those who do not care about the Word of God. Yet these latter recognize great dangers which result from the programming of television today. If the world itself is concerned, then what ought our position to be who have infinitely higher standards?

Our churches have consistently, to the present date, condemned movie attendance. We have pointed out that such attendance is inconsistent and incompatible with church membership. We are opposed not

to movies themselves, but particularly the dramatization presented on the screen. In some cases, members have been disciplined because of their unrepented sin of movie attendance. Upon the young people especially we try to impress the wrongness of attendance of these movies.

But these same young people come up with an objection which is difficult to refute: if movie attendance is wrong, how can so many of our people watch essentially the same thing on television? Mothers become addicts to the soap-box sagas each week-day afternoon. Families are glued to the t.v. in the evening to see there one story after another. Sometimes it is argued that one watches only the "true" stories, but one watches nevertheless. Young people, and especially evening baby-sitters, watch the late movies on television. Plus, of course, there are the many other presentations on television designed to arouse greed and envy. And young people want to know: what kind of hypocrisy is this which condemns theatre attendance but allows all sorts of television viewing?

And we must be honest. Anyone who can and does watch the dramatizations on television has lost the right to condemn others who attend the theatre.

But what must be said of the dramatizations of television (and, of course, the movie as well)? It is of interest that television programming has not only come under the scrutiny of many intelligent people of the world, but much of it has even been condemned by them.

An article which many of you may have read, appeared in the July issue of the *Reader's Digest*, entitled, "What You Can Do About TV Violence". The thrust of the first part of this article is to suggest that the violence presented on t.v. is oftentimes imitated by unstable people. Instances of this are presented. Details of t.v. murders were copied by others. The article states positively and emphatically: "The evidence is overwhelming that televised violence inspires imitation." And again: "Dozens of studies by behavioral scientists reiterate the harmful effects of television violence. In March 1972, the Surgeon General reviewed findings of a panel of social scientists and declared: 'The casual relationship between televised violence and antisocial behavior is sufficient to warrant immediate and remedial action.'"

This article points out further the great amount of violence portrayed on t.v.:

Television, as we have allowed it to develop, constitutes a massive stream of violence pumped daily into our homes. Approximately 97 percent of U.S. households have television sets, and the average re-

ceiver is on six hours and 14 minutes daily. Every day, television reaches an estimated three fourths of our 60 million youngsters.

For eight years, the University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School of Communications has charted the violence broadcast by the three networks. Defining violence as "overt physical force intended to hurt or kill," they find that it prevails steadily in four out of every five hours of evening prime time and weekend morning drama. In the average hour, eight violent episodes occur. Moreover, the Annenberg researchers found that heavy viewers of television (more than four hours daily) develop an unreal view of the world. They significantly overestimate the frequency of violent crimes and also the likelihood of their being involved in violence

Take a look at what happened last February 10, 9 p.m., when ABC aired a two-hour fictionalized dramatization of the 1892 trial of Lizzie Borden, accused of the ax murder of her father and step-mother. The final half-hour portrayed incest, necrophilia, murder and nudity. At 10:30 p.m., according to a Nielsen survey, the audience included 3.3 million 12-to-17 year olds and 1.7 million 6-to-11 year olds.

The above evaluation ought to be both of interest and concern to us. The point of the article was to show the possibility of "cleaning up" television. I think it very questionable whether any degree of such a "clean-up" is possible. But what is of special interest, I think, is the emphasis by worldly authorities that "televised violence inspires imitation". This statement could also read: "Television inspires imitation." The imitation of *violence* is of concern to the world. The world does not want people running around pouring gasoline upon others and making bonfires of them — as the article relates. The article was not concerned with other kinds of imitations — but *we* ought to be. We have an "antidote" to the violence and wickedness portrayed on t.v.: the law of God. The child of God is aware of the evils of that portrayed — even while he watches those same evils. He knows that this law of God forbids others, and himself, the right to violate any law of God.

Yet this fact of imitation remains. The big "Eye" brings us directly into the world. It has become a powerful tool of the devil. Though one cannot condemn the invention itself, yet one can see how Satan has used this instrument in the service of sin.

But there is the whole matter of imitation. If the devil can persuade us to imitate the world, little by little we will look like that world. There is not only the question of imitating violence. There is the possibility of imitating the morality presented on t.v. The "morality" of man has increasingly been in violation of the law of God. Divorce and remarriage, triangle situations, homosexuality, nudity — all these

and more are presented as almost acceptable. The world has come to accept many of these as “normal”. The churches have, increasingly, done likewise (consider the present-day stands on remarriage, homosexuality, etc.). Whether we admit it or not, we also have been greatly influenced by this “morality” too. We are not greatly shocked anymore at the suggestion of divorce and remarriage. We have also imitated styles of dress adopted by the world to emphasize the sexual. Ask yourself: How much have you not already imitated the morality of the world?

There is the real danger of imitating the world’s attitudes toward God and His Name. Swearing is commonplace on t.v. No one pays much attention to that anymore. Some of us even commonly use certain of the expressions we repeatedly hear on t.v. The mockery of the idea of God is also commonplace in the world. We, all too easily, can imitate this evil attitude toward God and His Name.

Or one can imitate the materialism of the world. One’s attention is directed constantly (especially on t.v.) to those things which are earthly. One is repeatedly told why he ought to have this or that product. A person can hardly help but recognize within himself this inclination to imitate this, which the world advocates.

And children are the biggest imitators of all. These who grow up with television as their “baby-sitter”, can be expected to imitate everything they see. If the world gives so much instruction to children within the church, how else will these grow up but as worldly and filled with all manner of lust?

Yes, television inspires imitation. We have been already greatly affected by this inciter of imitation. Satan has gained easy access into many homes. Even if some succeed in removing the violence from television, all of the other sins of the world will still be presented there for imitation.

For the Christian, it is a time for spiritual evaluation. Face the fact: we can never “clean up” television so as to make its programming all acceptable to children of God.

We may make use of this instrument — which is not itself a sinful thing. But there must be the constant and deliberate turning away from the corruptions which are presented there. Let’s not be hypocritical — condemning something because it appears in the theatre but allowing it in our living rooms.

There is to be no fellowship between light and darkness. Christ and Belial can not join hands. The Christian may not find his pleasure in the world. And surely there is not a place in the life of the Christian to imitate the world about him. We are in the world but not of it. We are to be imitators of God — not imitators of this world.

We are to be spiritual. One who seeks the Light of the world, can not find pleasure in the “light” of this world. For the Christian, the more he turns his eye from that “Eye” into the world, the more he also will seek that which is heavenly. Be not deceived by the devil. Beware his clever attacks against the child of God. And hold fast to the Word, looking to that which is eternal. God grant that to us.

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Keep Thy Tongue!

Rev. J. Kortering

What do you think is the worst sin?

Granted, that is quite a question.

The worst sin!

Typically, we might be inclined to back off by raising a related question. Is there such a thing as bad, worse, and worst sins as far as God is concerned? Are they not all terrible? Certainly there is not such a thing as a “little” sin in God’s eyes?

Fair question.

No, we agree, that before God no sin is considered

small. Nevertheless, this is not the same as saying that all sins are equally bad. There are degrees of sins as well as degrees of sinners.

DETERMINING DEGREE OF SIN

Perhaps your reaction is that we beg the question. Prove, you say, that there are degrees of sin before God.

Consider what Ezekiel saw in the “vision of God”, recorded in Ezekiel 8:6. “He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the

great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again and thou shalt see greater abominations." God's evaluation of Omri is that he, "wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him," I Kings 16:25. Paul warns Timothy that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," II Tim. 3:13. Consequently, God will reward and punish according to the degree of good or evil, "And, behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be," Rev. 22:12. There will be greater condemnation for the wicked who have done greater evil, "Beware of the scribes . . . which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater damnation," Mark 12:38-40. So also for God's people, those who are faithful unto death shall receive the greater reward, Matt. 5:12.

To pursue this point a brief moment, we might add a related question: what determines the degree of good or evil? Matt. 11:24 sheds some light on this, "But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." Why would Sodom, which was destroyed by fire and brimstone, have it more tolerable in hell than the people of Capernaum? The answer is clear, because Christ preached in the city of Capernaum and the degree by which one is exposed to the light of the truth, by that degree they shall be judged. All men have the light of nature, and all are thus held accountable, whether they hear the preaching of the Word or not. Those that hear the preaching of the gospel are more accountable. For this reason there is no grace (favor) for all who hear the gospel. There is grace only for those who believe. Similarly, for God's people, those who hear the Word and *do* it shall receive a greater reward, especially if they are faithful unto the ultimate test, giving their life for the sake of the gospel. This reward is the reward of grace.

THE WORST SIN

Now, let's get back to that question once again.

What do you think is the worst sin?

Alas, in answer to this, a vast panorama of human depravity passes before our minds. A brutalized body lying in a pool of crimson makes one shudder. The accounts of torture penned in the books of the history of the church can only cause one to cringe before man's inhumanity to man. Crime is a vicious assault upon many helpless victims, especially children and aged. How low can anyone stoop to unleash the ferment of a decayed soul?

What is the greatest sin?

Since sin is ultimately against God, the answer to

this question must not be determined by the degree whereby man sins against his fellow man as such; rather the worst sin is determined by man's dealing with God. Along this line the Bible speaks of an "unpardonable sin". Reference is made to this in Matt. 12:31, 32, "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." Similarly in Heb. 6:4-6, I John 5:16. Usually this is explained as one who has been in contact with the gospel, rejects it, and despises God and His Word, going so far as attributing the work of God to Satan. It is an expression of hardness of heart which is so great that repentance is out of the question, hence also beyond divine forgiveness.

Along this line our Reformed fathers also evaluated the sin of taking God's name in vain. They do not put it in the category of the unpardonable sin, but they evaluate it in the light of a person's deliberate attack upon God and His Holy Word.

Hence the question is raised, "Is then the profaning of God's name, by swearing and cursing, so heinous a sin, that His wrath is kindled against those who do not endeavor as much as in them lies, to prevent and forbid such cursing and swearing? Answer. It undoubtedly is, for there is no sin greater, or more provoking to God, than the profaning of His name, and therefore, He has commanded this sin to be punished with death." *Heidelberg Catechism*.

And there you have it!

The worst sin? Taking God's name in vain.

If we think for a moment, we can well understand why this is considered the worst sin.

Of all that God owns, and He owns everything, nothing is more precious to Him than His name. His Name is His honor, His glory, His own Being as He stands in relation to the creature. Everything was created for His own Name's sake! The Psalms make up one long declaration of praise to Jehovah's Name. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the earth," Ps. 8:1. "I will wait on thy name for it is good," Ps. 52:9. "In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel," Ps. 76:1. "Holy and reverend is his name," Ps. 111:9.

We have a little reflection of that in our own life. Our name is also identified with us. Whenever we hear people use our name or make reference to us by name, we become extremely interested, wondering what they are saying. Our name is our reputation, and the Bible also reminds us that a good name is of greater value than great riches.

No one can take God's name in vain without doing it deliberately. Whenever we take God's name on our lips, we are consciously making use of God's name.

When we swear, we are trying to take God down from His holy place and not only put Him on the level of sinful man, but worse yet, drag Him into the mud and treat Him in a way that we wouldn't even dare treat our fellow man. One can do this thoughtlessly, but always deliberately. Nothing is more offensive to God and incurs greater guilt than such a practice. Hence, in the Old Testament times the offender was removed from Israel by the sentence of death as a testimony that God's judgment rested upon such a person.

No sin was greater than that, and it deserved the extreme penalty.

OUR INVOLVEMENT

Today is no different. Even though we do not put to death people that swear and use God's name wrongfully, this does not mean that it is any less evil. It is the worst sin also today.

And we so easily commit it.

Sometimes we can become pretty conceited with our piety. We can look at the wickedness about us and act like that Pharisee who just about broke his arm patting himself on the back when he prayed to God, "I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess," Luke 18:10-12. Sure there is crime, apostasy, every form of abomination that increases as the end of the world comes upon us. How easy for us to look around and say, we aren't that way! We go to church, we study our catechism, we attend a Christian school. We have a long list of things we do. Yes, indeed.

Yet, how often do we commit the *worst* sin?

Worse than murder, worse than messing up one's life with drugs and sex, worse than frittering one's life away with the pleasures and treasures of this world, is taking God's name in vain.

Oh, yes, I know the ungodly do this also. It is becoming more and more difficult to practice what the Heidelberg Catechism tells us in question 100, that is that God's wrath is upon those who "do not endeavor as much as in them lies to prevent and forbid such cursing and swearing." Public swearing is increasing. You walk down the street and can't help but hear the passersby using God's name in vain. The radio, television, and printed page are full of it. You work amongst the world, and sometimes the air is polluted with this verbiage of rebellion against God. How can one begin to correct all this? Yet, we must do our utmost to testify against this evil. It only shows that depravity is increasing as the return of our Lord is near.

Yet, when we swear and take God's name in vain it is far worse. Our guilt is determined by the degree

that we know God's name; and we, who are born and raised in the covenant, taught to use God's Name with reverence from infancy on, have no excuse at all. None have excuses, certainly we do not. We stand responsible before God. We know what we are doing more than anyone else.

Don't you see the need for repentance by us as covenant young people?

Sometimes we like to think it is smart to swear. Sometimes we take God's name thoughtlessly. Other times we get angry and let loose with an uncontrolled volley of evil. If you stop to think what this means, don't the chills go down your spine at what you are really doing. At such times we are committing the worst sin.

There are other times we don't quite dare to be so brash. Maybe we are like some of our parents who are tempted to swear also and who do it in Dutch. It's a cover-up. But isn't that also true of gosh, gee, heck, holy cow, guy, golly, etc. They don't make any sense taken by themselves. Yet, they are substitutes for words that are attributed to God, His virtues, and His Holy Name.

God looketh not as man does, but Jehovah looks upon the heart.

He hears all those cuss words, those curses, those expressions of swearing, those willful expressions of blasphemy.

No, we don't have to become proud with our piety and imagine that the cesspool of corruption is filled with the sins of others. We have plenty of our own, even the inclination to commit the worst sin.

Well may our tears flow in repentance.

Well may we humble ourselves and plead for mercy.

Well may we realize that God has given His Name to us to be used in a way that gets to Him the glory that is due unto Him.

Yes, we have a mind, we have speech, we have the knowledge of God's greatness. Rather than busying ourselves in man's greatest depravity, may we busy ourselves in man's highest calling, that is, to take God's Name upon our lips with praise and thanksgiving.

The Word of God instructs us, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord . . . Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile," Ps. 34:11-13.

Keep thy tongue from evil!

Let's make it our prayer, "Father, hallowed be Thy Name".

May the Father in mercy forgive us and strengthen us.

*FROM HOLY WRIT***Exposition of Hebrews 13: 5, 6***Rev. G. Lubbers*

The position of the Hebrew Christians in the world was very precarious; they are surrounded by cruel foes, not the least of their own country-men. They have need of patience, that, after they have done the will of God, they may receive the promise. They are pilgrims and strangers in the world as were their patriarchal fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And it was needful that they walk in faith as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 10:36-11:1,2)

This is the presupposition in this passage which we now seek to interpret. It speaks of not fearing "what man can do unto me." (Hebrews 13:6) The quotations, both from Joshua 1:5 and Psalm 118:6, indicate that the church of the New Testament is also surrounded by those who would destroy them. And in view of this the church is admonished not to set affections on things like money and earthly possessions, but rather to be content, resting in the fatherly providence of God. Theirs is to be a certain basic, positive attitude in which all their trust is in the covenant God, the faithful and almighty Father of His children. For puny man cannot harm the church of God.

IMPOTENT MAN VERSUS THE MIGHTY PROTECTING GOD (Hebrew 13:6)

There is only one way in which the saint in the world can be "content with the present". It is the contentment of the child who knows that his heavenly Father is near to help him in the time of need. That is true of every earthly child in relationship to his earthly father and mother. Only when we are sure that the Lord is "on my side" will we be free from all anxious cares. This truth Jesus underscores and teaches in Matthew 6:8, "For your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." It is only blessed to live in the assurance that "herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by his fatherly hand". (Ques. 27, Heidelberg Catechism) In the text the heavenly Father is called the "Lord". He is "Jehovah" in the Old Testament passage in Psalm 118:6. This "Jehovah" is extolled in Psalm 118; the people of God all join in "giving thanks unto the LORD." That is the keynote in the Psalm. That is the first utterance and the last utterance in this beautiful Psalm. The constant and abiding mercies of the Lord are to be remembered

over Israel. And this mercy manifested itself in Israel's distress as they are harrassed and oppressed by the enemy most sorely. Back of Israel at this point is the terrible history all through the coming of the kingdom of God, from the time of the Judges till the Babylonian captivity under Nebuchadnezzar. And ever Israel could only be content in the present affliction, even when they were so sorely thrust by the enemy that it seemed they would utterly fall and perish.

In the midst of this the church is ever admonished trusting in the Lord to be "content with the present", with their food and raiment, their clothing and shelter, their amount of money and earthly possessions. They are not to begin to think that life and joy and happiness consists in the abundance of riches (Luke 12:21); but they are to be rich toward God in humble trust, and not to place their confidence in the things of this life. We must then notice how God deals with the sparrows which do not sow, nor gather into barns. God feeds these sparrows. We must then notice that God clothes the grass, and beautifies the flowers with more glory than king Solomon in all his earthly splendor in Jerusalem. Such a mighty God can also much more take care of us. We need not feel that our bread and sustenance is dependent on men, princes in high position; but it is all firmly in the hand of Jehovah God, who has put the government of the world in the hands of Jesus Christ.

The saints are to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and believe the word of Jesus that "all these things shall be added unto you". (Matthew 6:33) Here we see that all men are impotent, great and small, and less than nothing, compared with the mighty Creator and Sustainer of the universe. All the Gentile nations are concerned with bread and butter. But the saints have the assurance that their bread is certain and their water sure. The Psalmist rejoices and says, "I have been young, and now I am old, but I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." (Psalm 37:25)

CHARACTER FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY (Hebrews 13:5)

The KJV translates the term "*ho tropos*" as being "conversation". Evidently this refers to the total "walk" and attitude of the church in relationship to the things of this present life. The term really means the basic "turn of the mind". This basic turn of the

mind Jesus portrays very masterfully and instructively in the parable of the rich farmer in Luke 12:13-21. We do well to take our Bibles and read that section very carefully; it is a very good commentary of what is a basic, constant "love for money" and what is the basic attitude of all who put confidence in the flesh, in man and princes, and not in the living God. Such believe that one must have "abundance of things" in order to be blessed, to feel secure in this life. It is the man who finally desired to find the utopia of "total security" in life. And hence he is never "content with the present". He will build bigger barns, until he can say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." Enjoy life, the good life here, the abundant life of an affluent society. But such a man is a fool. He cannot take it with him in his coffin and in the grave. Naked he comes into the world, and naked he goes out!

Hence, we should have the fundamental and basic attitude which prays, "Give us this day our daily bread". Give me neither riches nor poverty, but feed me with bread convenient. (Matthew 6:11; Proverbs 30:8)

Have not the Hebrew saints come to mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem? Are they not different from the world of unbelievers and profane such as Esau was? (Hebrews 12:16) Esau could sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. All he sought was this world. He was a fornicator and a glutton. His basic attitude was love for money. The Lord's protection he did not know or cherish in his heart. Let, therefore, that basic attitude of love for money be far from us. For the fashion of this world passes away. (I Cor. 7:29-31) Hence, it is sure that the time here is short on our pilgrim journey. The reality is that they who have wives be as though they had none, and those that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use the world, as not using it to the full, for the fashion of this world passes away — constantly.

Contentment with the present means that we see the present things in the light of their meaning for the present moment in our pilgrim journey, passing through this vale of tears to the new heaven, the new earth where righteousness shall dwell.

THE LORD HIMSELF HAS SAID (Hebrews 13:5)

The end of all contradiction is what "the Lord has said." The tense of the verb here is perfect in the Greek. This means that what the Lord has said is still being said by Him as recorded in His Holy Word. This is not merely a "record" of what the Lord has said. It is what He is saying to us up till this present moment in completed state.

This word of assurance reads in full, as follows, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." This word of promise the LORD spoke by Moses His servant to all of Israel in the plains of Moab before they entered into the land of Canaan to take the land by faith. They shall surely take the land even as they had slain the great kings on the east side of Jordan. They are, therefore, reassured in the following words, "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, be not afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee nor forsake thee." This same promise is once more spoken by the Lord directly to Joshua after Moses has died, and when he stands before the awesome task of casting out the Amorite out of the land of promise. At that time the Lord says to Joshua, "... As I was with Moses so will I be with thee, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage..." (Deut. 31:6; Joshua 1:5,6)

Now this word of the Lord is still spoken to the church of the ages. It was spoken to Israel in their deepest night of darkness in Babylon. The Lord was with Israel when they were compassed about by the enemy. And this is the Word which is laid upon the hearts of the Hebrew saints in this text. And this is the Word which the Lord speaks to us today as churches, as individual believers. Be strong and of good courage. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Daily the Lord is with us. We need not become lovers of money; we may surely be content with the present boon of good gifts from our Father's bountiful supply.

In view of what the Lord has said, and still is saying, we, too, may say something in the response of faith. We may say: we will not fear what man shall do to us. We may say this boldly and most confidently. We need not doubt the right and appropriateness of saying this. Fact is, that is the expected answer: that we boast in the Lord and His ever-abiding mercies. This is very personal. The Lord is *my* helper in every time of trouble.

For the Lord has a New Covenant of grace. He is not related to the church and Israel by any covenant that can be broken. It is on the chief corner-stone that our faith rests. It is rejected of men (Psalm 118) but is chosen of God and precious. And if God there has showed His great love to us His people, He will surely give us all things with Him. Lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world. That, too, the "Lord has said". He said that to His disciples and, in them, to the entire church. He ever says: fear not, for I am with you. It is the Father's good pleasure, little flock, to give unto you the kingdom. Be not then lovers of money, but be content with the present bounties of God's hands as pledges of future glories and riches untold.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL OUR READERS!!!

Tape recordings of the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of our Protestant Reformed Churches are now available. These recordings include the two speeches given at the Young People's Convention and the two programs at the Field Day Celebration, plus the musical portions of all four gatherings. Tapes can be obtained by writing to: THE REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION, PO BOX 6064, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49506. Cost per set (either cassette tapes or 7 inch reels) is only \$8.00.

NOTICE!!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Isabel, South Dakota on Wednesday, September 3, 1975.

Rev. D. Engelsma
Stated Clerk

Notice

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will convene on Oct. 1, 1975, at 9:00 A.M. at Hope Protestant Reformed Church. All material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least ten days prior to this date.

Rev. M. Joostens, Stated Clerk
7194 20th Ave.
Jenison, Mich. 49428

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory and congregation of Lynden express their Christian sympathy to their beloved Pastor, Rev. B. Woudenberg, and family in the recent passing of Rev. Woudenberg's father, BERNARD WOUTENBERG SR.

Our prayer for them is that they may be comforted by the Gospel which assures us that: "the grave has no victory and death has no sting." (I Corinthians 15:55)

Henry VanderMeulen, Vice-president
Hans Vander Veen, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 1, 1975, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Gritters will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, their children, thank our heavenly Father for giving them the grace sufficient to instruct us in His covenant love and faithfulness.

We pray that He may continue to bless and sustain them as they go down life's pathway together.

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." Deut. 7:9

Mr. & Mrs. Jerry VanderKolk
Mr. & Mrs. Ed Karsemeyer
Barry Gritters
Michael Gritters
Roger Gritters
Ricky Gritters
and one grandchild-Brian VanderKolk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 5, 1975, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. PETER J. LUBBERS, WILL CELEBRATE THEIR 35TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY. We, their children, are thankful to our Heavenly Father for the Christian home and spiritual guidance they have given us. Our prayer is that God may continue to bless them together.

Their Children,
Mr. and Mrs. Jason Redder
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Smith
Mr. Larry Lubbers
Mr. and Mrs. Klaire Berens
Mr. and Mrs. Roger Berens
10 Grandchildren

Hudsonville, Michigan

News From Our Churches

Did you know that Rev. Kuiper has a vanity plate? Well, we wouldn't really call it vanity, but, with a view to this year's celebration, he did request and receive a car license plate which reads PRC - 50.

An estimated 1900 of our people already know about that, for it was announced over the public address system at Douglas Walker Park on the afternoon of August 6. It hardly seems necessary, therefore, to report on the activities of that memorable week, because most of you experienced them personally. At the Wednesday afternoon program, in fact, it was found, when Mr. Ed Ophoff read the role of Protestant Reformed churches, that every single one of our congregations was represented there. But, it was too wonderful an occasion to let it pass unnoticed in the *Standard Bearer* news column. So, we'll say a few words about it.

Had the day been a rainy one, Wednesday's activities were to be held in the Calvin College Field House. But it was a beautiful day — a little bit chilly in the evening perhaps, but, apart from that, we could not have hoped for more pleasant weather. The canteen, which was set up for lunch, apparently did a booming business. (Rev. Joostens, incidentally, was

seen to buy an R C Cola, and pour it into a baby bottle. "Of course," said my informant, "I don't know if he got that for himself or not.") Prior to Rev. C. Hanko's "Recollections of the Past," Ed Ophoff led in some spirited outdoor singing — accompanied by organ and piano perched on the back of an old International, and by cicadas overhead. One of the songs, we should note, was "Happy Birthday," sung in honor of Rev. Lubber's 66th, as he stood waving his straw hat to the friendly gathering.

The complete supper was catered; and, considering the number of plates that had to be filled, it came off with remarkable dispatch. The committee had everything planned to the smallest detail. And perhaps it helped, a little, that Rev. Slopsema, to make amends for having been near the beginning of the long line, assisted in refilling coffee cups, after he had emptied his own plate.

After supper, and after a game of tug-of-war, with a rope that broke repeatedly, it was time for the second of three convention speeches. Rev. Engelsma spoke on "The Historical Realization of the Covenant." Finally, there was opportunity to again join our voices in singing. By that time, most of us

were shivering a little in the cool evening breeze. Rev. Van Overloop, who chaired the activities that day, suggested that some of the cold might be dissipated by the singing under Mr. Ophoff's direction. But it didn't work. "In spite of what the chairman said," remarked Rev. Veldman before he closed the evening with prayer, "my feet were getting colder and colder."

Rev. Engelsma's address, as I mentioned, was one of the three speeches of the Young People's Convention. The young people had planned their convention around the theme of our denominational anniversary celebration. As Prof. Hoeksema mentioned in the first of the speeches, the federation is to be commended for that. It showed, he said, "a healthy denominational consciousness and loyalty." And, further, "it gives the lie to the idea that there is any serious generation gap among our people. We are together at this occasion, old and young, and, may I say, middle-aged."

All in all, the events of the week constituted what the writer of Southwest's bulletin called a "thrilling experience." Perhaps it was summed up best by Prof. Hanko, in the final address. Permit me to conclude with his remarks.

"It was for me a very moving experience. This was especially true of the Field Day yesterday; and I'm

sure that this was the experience of you all. It was one of those days you almost wish would never end. And yet, in a sense of course, it *will* not end. Because, what impressed me more than anything else yesterday, was the spirit of unity that prevailed among us. And I'm sure that as, after this evening we return to our homes and to our congregations, this unity that we experienced so richly yesterday and throughout the convention, will continue with us. This convention, therefore, and the activities connected with it, as we commemorate together the 50th anniversary of our churches, are in their own way evidence of God's covenant faithfulness to us. We must have felt that very keenly. God gave to us in this week tokens, memorable tokens, tokens that will linger with us, of His great faithfulness to us. And that very fact should also give us courage and confidence for the future. God has told us in His Word that He Who is faithful will continue faithful in the future. It matters not what the future may hold. It matters not what the future may bring. God remains our faithful covenant God. We sing something of that in the last verse of our Psalter's rendition of Psalm 89. 'Blest be the Lord for evermore, Whose promise stands from days of yore. His word is faithful now as then; Blest be His Name. Amen, Amen.' "

D.D.

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

Classis East met in regular session on July 2, 1975 at the First Prot. Ref. Church of Holland, Michigan. Each church was represented by two delegates. The session was brief, the business routine, but the fellowship experienced and the unity evidenced was plenty reason to give thanks to God for calling the representatives of the congregations together. Rev. R. Van Overloop chaired this session of the classis.

After the preliminaries, the classis heard the report of the Stated Clerk; there was no report of the Classical Committee. The stated Clerk informed the classis that he would be absent for a year teaching in Redlands, California. Classis elected Rev. M. Joostens as assistant stated clerk for a one-year term to take care of the duties of the Stated Clerk in his absence.

Perhaps the highlight of the entire meeting was the report of the church visitors. Sometimes we take it for granted that there is peace and harmony in our denomination but it is reason for thanksgiving to God that he continues to abide mightily in our midst with His good and Holy Spirit, giving us unity and harmony.

Kalamazoo requested classical appointments for the next three months. Classis adopted the following schedule for Kalamazoo: July 20 — Van Overloop; August 3 — Veldman; August 17 — Schipper; August 31 — C. Hanko; September 14 — Joostens; September 28 — Van Baren; October 12 — Heys. Rev. Joostens and Elder James Heys served on this committee to construct the schedule.

In other committee assignments and reports, Elders P. Koole and E. Kortering served on the Finance Committee. Classis approved expenses for this session of \$294.86. Elder G. Hoekstra thanked the ladies of Holland for their catering services.

The questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and satisfactorily answered, the concept minutes were read and adopted and classis stood adjourned. The next meeting of Classis East will be held in Hope Church on October 1, 1975.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Huiskens, Stated Clerk