

The STANDARD BEARER



A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

.... But there is more involved in adhering to the doctrine of effectual calling, you see, than that it is a doctrine explaining the fact that only some heed the preaching and believe. It is Reformed not merely to adhere to this doctrine as an explanation of men's reaction to the preaching of the Word, but to proclaim this truth as an integral part of the good news of salvation! And if you hold to the offer-theory, you simply cannot do this. (See page 77)

November 15, 1973

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1 NOVEMBER 15, 1973

MEDITATION

Jacob Justified

Rev. M. Schipper

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them."
Numbers 23:21

Blessed, indeed, are they unto whom the Lord will not impute sin!

And let no one condemn those whom Jehovah their God justifies!

Such is the truth most beautifully expressed in the text to which we now direct attention.

Jacob-Israel was approaching the promised land, having been delivered from Egypt, the house of bondage. At the moment, they had pitched their tents in the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan. Resting they were from the most recent encounter with the armies of Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, who together were totally discomfited.

When Balak, king of the Moabites, with his people observed this destruction, their hearts melted with fear. They surmised that the same lot would befall them. Consequently Balak sent to Balaam, that hypocritical soothsayer, who dwelt in Pethor among his people, that he would come over and curse the children of Israel. With rewards of divination were Balak's messengers sent to entice the seer.

Balaam, so it appears, exudes with "piety" when he learned of Balak's urgent request. He informs the messengers that he has no answer until he has first inquired of the Lord what he shall do.

The Lord forebade him to go with the messengers, nor is Balaam allowed to curse the children of Israel; for they are blessed.

Balak, however, is persistent. Again he appeals to Balaam to come and curse Israel. This time he weights his request with promises to promote the seer to great honour. And this time Jehovah allows him to go, but Balaam may speak that only which the Lord shall put in his mouth.

And Balaam took up his parable, and said, "Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of

Zippor. God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it."

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel . . . !"

Here is Jehovah's sovereign perception of His people!

He beholds, but not like a man!

When man sees, the objects of sight must first be there to behold. When Jehovah sees, He causes the objects of sight to be. When man sees intelligently, he must first be instructed concerning the object of sight; it must be explained to him what it is he sees. When Jehovah sees, He knows intuitively what it is that He has brought into being. When man sees, he can look only on the outward appearance. When Jehovah sees, He beholds not only the outward appearance, but He knows the object of sight as it essentially is. His searching eye penetrates into the inner recesses, and nothing escapes His vision. As He by His Spirit searches out the depths of His own eternal being, so He also beholds all things outside of Himself.

O, how infinite, and perfect is Jehovah's perception!

And what is true of His perception with regard to the creatures in general, is particularly true of His perception of His people.

Of this they are taught to echo the refrain of the sweet psalmist of old . . . !

O Lord, my inmost heart and thought
Thy searching eye doth see;
Where'er I rest, where'er I go,

My ways are known to Thee.
 From Thee, O Lord, I cannot hide
 Tho' darkness cover me;
 The darkness and the light of day
 Are both alike to Thee.

Jacob-Israel, Jehovah sees!

Significantly, as so often in Scripture, these appellations stand together, and always they have their own speech.

Surely this people cannot be divorced from their progenitor, Jacob, the twin brother of Esau. He it was who held his brother by the heel at the time of birth, to pull him back as it were into the womb of his mother, in order that he might be born first. From the moment of his birth Jacob is the heel-holder who would wrestle for the preeminence in the things of God's covenant. What so significantly marked his birth also characterizes the whole life of this chosen of God. Always struggling to attain unto the things of God's covenant. O, to be sure, often in his own strength, and not always with pure and holy motives; for more than once he was charged with supplanting, so that some rather call him supplanter than heel-holder. But, make no mistake about it, heel-holder, wrestler he is. At last he even wrestles with God, and overcomes with weeping and supplications.

Hence, the Lord changes his name to that indicative of victor. "And he (the Lord) said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed," (Gen. 32:28; Hosea 12:3, 4).

Jacob becomes Israel!

He overcomes with the power of God!

He it is whom Jehovah beholds with sovereign perception!

He it is whom Jehovah beholds as righteous in His holy sight! No iniquity does Jehovah perceive in him, nor does Jehovah discover any wickedness in Him! Positively, this means that God judges him as being perfectly justified!

But how is this possible?

Does not all that the Word of God reveals concerning Jacob, and subsequently concerning the people of Israel deny this divine judgment? Can the sin of deception of which Jacob made himself guilty when he tricked his brother into selling him the birthright be covered up? Can Jacob be exonerated when with his mother they lied to his blind father in order to receive the patriarchal blessing? And when we consider the history of Jacob's descendants only from the time of their deliverance from Egypt to the time of our text, was not that history replete with sin upon sin? Did they not all the way from the Red Sea

to the plains of Moab live in constant rebellion against the Lord? And when you review the history of Israel from the moment of their entrance into Canaan to the time of their captivity, is it not true that the Lord through His prophets denounces that people as a stiff-necked and rebellious lot? Does not the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost charge this people with the crime of the ages, saying: "Ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain the Just One?"

No iniquity in Jacob? No perverseness in Israel?

Should not Jehovah's sentence of judgment be changed, and has He not erred in His perception? Should not the conclusion rather be . . .

Jacob, sinner?

Israel, ungodly?

Does not Balak have sufficient ground to request that the people be cursed?

Indeed, such would be the finite judgment of man!

But Jehovah is not a man, that He should lie!

The possibility therefore of Jacob's justification is not to be found in Jacob-Israel, but in Jehovah, the God of Israel!

Marvelous grace! Sovereign Lord!

God justifies the ungodly!

But surely this cannot mean that Jehovah, the thrice holy God, looks at sin and sinners as it were through His fingers, - that He ignores the sinful condition of His people. To do so, would be to deny Himself, and this is forever impossible.

Rather, He deals with His people's sin and corruption in such a way that He Himself pays their debt, and removes from them their guilty stains, by blotting them out in His own blood.

The Lord his God is with Him!

Jehovah identifies Himself with His people in such a way that He takes their place in judgment. He attaches Himself to His people in elective love from all eternity. And in time He dwells among them in the Person of His Son in human nature.

Beholding His people from all eternity in His Son, He beholds them spotless and clean, perfectly righteous, and so He judges them. Never did He see iniquity in Jacob, because Jacob in Christ was eternally justified. And this must mean that from God's point of view the cross is as eternal as Jacob's justification. And therefore also from the point of view of time the victory over sin and death was in evidence in this people in Christ, centuries before the cross was planted on Golgotha's brow.

The shout of a king is among them!

Not an earthly king, you understand; for Israel has no such king at this time. And even when they did obtain a king centuries later, he was only a shadow that was cast by the King of Israel, Jehovah, their God in the face of Christ Jesus.

This tumult of a king, Balaam is made to hear!

Let all the Balaks of the world understand, - this people which rests quietly on the plains of Moab, is not a poor defenseless, worthy-to-be-cursed people! They are the people of the living God, whom He justifies, and whom none may condemn. Not on any basis of righteousness inherent in that people, but on the basis of His own righteousness which He sovereignly prepared and manifested in His Son, their "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that

glorifyeth, let him glory in the Lord."

Shall such people be cursed? No never!

Shall those who have their sins blotted out and forgiven, be condemned? God forbid!

Even if God has to use a wicked, impious, hypocritical soothsayer to express it, let the truth be loudly and clearly spoken . . .

Blessed is Jehovah's Jacob-Israel!

And with their justification they have the right to the adoption of sons, and to eternal life and glory!

Blessed Jacob!

Victorious Israel!

Gracious and glorious God!

EDITORIALS

Editor's Notes

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

GREEN SHEET. Your attention is called to the Green Sheet enclosed with this issue. Please take note of the combination book-and-subscription offers on this sheet. Here is an opportunity to obtain good Reformed literature and a subscription or a renewal-subscription to our magazine at bargain prices. If you are looking for gift ideas, here they are!

* * * * *

SPECIAL ARTICLES. In this issue some of our regular departments have been crowded out by several special articles. First of all, we call your attention to the Thanksgiving Feature from the pen of Rev. Rodney Miersma. While we mention this, we wish to make mention of the fact that several of our ministers who are not staff members have agreed to contribute one or more articles to our magazine. They are: Rev. R. Moore, Rev. R. Miersma, Rev. W. Bekkering, Rev. R. Van Overloop, and Rev. M. Kamps. We thank these brethren for their willingness. Secondly, you will find in this issue three articles about our Jamaica Mission — one from the Mission Committee, one from Missionary Lubbers, and one from Candidate Mark H. Hoeksema. Mr. Hoeksema is a 1973 graduate of our seminary who was appointed by our Mission Committee to assist Rev. Lubbers for several months. Mr. and Mrs. Hoeksema will be in Jamaica, the Lord willing, until about Christmas time.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hoeksema has accepted the call to our Forbes, North Dakota congregation where he expects to take up his labors sometime after the first of the year. In the third place, you will find in this issue a special article by Mr. Jon Huiskens from our Theological School Committee. By means of these articles we are trying to keep our readers informed concerning our denominational affairs. Finally, a special word of thanks goes to my colleague, Prof. H. Hanko, who is editing the department which appears in each issue of this Fiftieth Volume, *The Standard Bearer in Retrospect*.

* * * * *

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT. Through an oversight, we failed to acknowledge those responsible for the anniversary symbols being used throughout this volume. They are Mr. Ronald Hanko, a pre-sem student at our Theological School, and Mr. Randall Meyer of First Church. Thanks!

* * * * *

QUESTION BOX. We have on hand several interesting questions for this department, and your editor fully intended to make a beginning in answering them in this issue. However, this will have to wait until next time, due to a week-long bout with some persistent flu bugs on the part of your editor.

The OPC and the “Free Offer” (4)

CONTRARY TO THE CONFESSIONS (continued)

We have been busy, in our recent articles on the above subject, evaluating the theory of the “Free Offer” in the light of our Reformed confessions. Murray and Stonehouse in their pamphlet do not appeal to the confessions at all. In the Clark Case, which gave rise to the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet, it was at least attempted (though it was a dismal failure) to criticize Dr. Clark on the basis of the creeds. We, however, refuse to be bound by the failure of the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet to appeal to the confessions. It is Reformed methodology always to look to the confessions *first*, and not to turn directly to Scripture when testing any doctrine. Why? Not because the confessions are on a par with Scripture, but because the confessions contain the systematic exposition of what Reformed (or Presbyterian) churches believe to be the truth set forth by Scripture. Hence, if we want to know what Presbyterians hold to be the truth of the Word of God, we look to the Presbyterian creeds; if we want to know what the Reformed hold to be the truth of the Word of God, we look to the Three Forms of Unity. And if we want to *test* any doctrine in Presbyterian or Reformed churches, we apply the test of the confessions *first*.

We maintain that if this test is applied to the theory of the “Free Offer,” it will be discovered that the theory is entirely foreign to the spirit and the letter of the confessions. The confessions are particularistic throughout. They breathe an entirely different spirit than that which is breathed by the doctrine of the “free offer.” The theory of the “free offer” sets aside (though giving lipservice) the doctrine of sovereign election and reprobation, and sets up a general will of God unto salvation. The theory of the “free offer” sets aside the doctrine of definite, or particular, atonement; and while in most cases the “Reformed” proponents of the offer-theory do not dare accept the logical consequence of universal atonement which follows from their theory, yet even in this regard they find it necessary to weasel with words. And in some instances (as in the infamous Dekker Case, which grew directly out of the offer-theory of (1924!) the atonement is openly generalized. Why? Because even a child can understand that if Christ died only for the elect, there simply is no salvation to offer the reprobate. The

same is true of the doctrine of the calling. The confessions teach plainly the doctrine of irresistible grace and effectual calling. But the whole spirit of the offer-theory militates against the doctrine of effectual calling. Yes, I know, the offer-theoreticians will loudly claim that they hold to the doctrine of effectual calling: as Reformed men, they *must* do so. But in the preaching, effectual calling is silenced; and the “offer” is given the prominence. You see, it makes no sense to anyone to say that God wills the salvation of all and lovingly offers salvation to all and at the same time to say that He effectually calls only some and brings them to salvation. But there is more involved in adhering to the doctrine of effectual calling, you see, than that it is a doctrine explaining the fact that only some heed the preaching and believe. It is *Reformed* not merely to *adhere* to this doctrine as an *explanation* of men’s reaction to the preaching of the Word, but to *proclaim* this truth as *an integral part of the good news of salvation!* And if you hold to the offer-theory, you simply cannot do this. Still more, implicitly if not explicitly the offer-theory must lead to a denial of the Reformed doctrine of total depravity. Why? When you make an offer, this implicitly assumes ability to accept the offer on the part of those to whom it is made. It makes as much sense to offer salvation to a man *dead* in trespasses and sins as to offer life to corpses in the cemetery if only they will accept! And again, remember, please, that this affects the *preaching*. Total depravity is not merely a neat theory to explain the *necessity of sovereign grace*. No, it is *Reformed* to say that total depravity, the doctrine that man is *dead* in trespasses and sins, is *an integral part of the good news!* Does not our Heidelberg Catechism beautifully stress this when it teaches that to enjoy the only comfort in life and death the first thing I must know is: how great my sins and miseries are?

All of the above deserves to be emphasized. In the first place, it renders suspect the entire approach of the proponents of the offer-theory that they do not appeal (and *cannot* appeal!) to the confessions for their theory. In the second place, it reminds us of the importance of knowing our confessions. Not only must ministers and elders know the confessions, but also all of God’s people should be thoroughly immersed in the confessions. The confessions should

be of the very fiber of our being. We should understand the *line* and the whole *method of thinking* of our confessions, not just some individual articles to use as ammunition against this or that theory. And we must learn more and more to *think* confessionally. Then such theories as that of the "offer" could never gain entrance among Reformed people. For the entire theory is out-of-kilter with the line of thought presented in our Reformed creeds.

Now we turn again to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The first article which we quote is of special interest because the term *offereth* occurs in it. We refer to Chapter VII, 3:

Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second (Gal 3:21; Rom. 8:3; Rom. 3:20, 21; Gen. 3:15; Isa. 42:6), commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved (Mark 16:15, 16; John 3:16; Rom. 10:6, 9; Gal 3:11), and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe (Ezek. 36:26, 27; John 6:44, 45).

Now those who hold to the offer-theory in Presbyterian circles will be quick to grasp at an article like this. But they are grasping at straws. Let alone the fact that the article indeed employs the term "offereth," (though not in the current sense), and let alone the fact that the article itself by no means speaks of a *general offer*, but is particularistic, are you going to rest an entire theory, and that, too, a theory which militates against the thought of the entire confession upon a single use of the word "offereth" in an article which by no stretch of the imagination can be said to set forth a *doctrine* of an "offer?" To say the least, this is poor theologizing!

But let us examine the article. In the old Clark Case the complainants said that they found it strange that Dr. Clark was reluctant to admit that the gospel is an offer and an invitation; and they appealed to this article of the Westminster Confession to

condemn this reluctance of Dr. Clark. In commenting on this, Rev. H. Hoeksema wrote as follows in Volume 21, page 408:

But how superficial is the reasoning of the complainants here! Dr. Clark is reluctant to speak of the gospel as an offer and "invitation" in the sense in which the Arminians, and also the complainants use these terms. They understand these terms as meaning that in the gospel God sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobates. But the Westminster Confession in the passage quoted knows nothing of this modern connotation of the terms. This should be evident from the fact that the word *offered* is used in the sense of the Latine "*offert*" from *obfero*, and may be translated just as well by "*present*". (Or: *set forth*. In the Dutch: *voorstellen*. HCH) But that it was far from the minds of the authors of the Westminster to teach that in the gospel God is sincerely seeking the salvation of the reprobate is especially evident from the rest of the same passage: "and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe." This, then, is the promise of the covenant, the promise that must be preached: *God will give to all the elect His Spirit*. But the complainants are not satisfied with this. They insist that Dr. Clark must preach and teach "that in the gospel God sincerely offers salvation in Christ to all who hear, reprobate as well as elect."

The Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet and all who hold to the offer-theory teach and believe that God is filled with an earnest desire to save all men, elect and reprobate alike.

To anyone who can read, it is plain that this theory is in irreconcilable conflict with the Westminster Confession, which consistently teaches that God wills to save and does save, and that, too, by sovereign grace, only His beloved elect.

The former position Reformed believers must reject and abandon.

To the latter position they must cling if they wish to be Reformed. For what the confessions teach is Reformed, and that only.

Gift idea? Gift subscription!
21 issues for \$7.00.
Write our Business Office.

ABOUT JAMAICAN MISSIONS

The Jamaican Field

Have you ever read one of those magazine stories in serial form with short installments appearing each month? Then you will also remember wondering how many chapters were still forthcoming. In fact, some single chapters were strung out so long that one even wondered when he would be introduced to a new chapter. Well, the story of our work in the Jamaican Mission Field is one such, with parts of chapters written in installments. This time we will start another chapter. Start, I say, because you will have to wait for another installment to see the end, probably written by Synod of 1974.

For the preceding chapters we refer you to the back numbers of the *Standard Bearer*, the first installment written back in 1963, or thereabouts. You will remember that emissaries had been sent there two by two. The Reverends Hanko, Harbach, Heys, Lubbers and the brethren Meulenberg, Feenstra and Zwak came and went as mandated by the Mission Committee. And, in an exciting installment, you learned that Rev. Lubbers accepted the call to be Missionary to the Island! That was in 1970. Those two stalwart souls, Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers, labored diligently in that new field; preaching, teaching, exhorting, leading, and not least, distributing clothing sent from the States. That was Mrs. Lubbers' domain, plus accompanying her husband up those steep hills to locate the well-hidden churches.

We have now begun a new chapter, one which will be "continued in the next issue" of course. This chapter began with the 1973 Synod, and will have to be finished by the Synod of '74. But as in the case of the magazine serials we never knew if that chapter would be the last, so again. We cannot look so far into the future of this story. The '73 Synod decided, with Rev. Lubbers' consent, to send our Missionary back to the Island for another year. The faithful two went back, but this time they had company. Candidate Hoeksema and his wife, Ruth, were requested by the Mission Committee to assist the Lubbers duo. The first few letters winging their way back to the Committee were somewhat more encouraging than those which came before the Synod meeting. But soon the tenor of the missives changed. The six-letter word, *futile*, cropped up very often. Finally, Rev. Lubbers wrote to ask the committee to terminate his labors, preferably in December of '73.

Weighing all the facts as reported by Rev. Lubbers, and corroborated by his youthful assistant, the Mission Committee, in conjunction with the calling church, made its combined decisions: to notify our Missionary that we were suspending his work in December; to move all his possessions back home; and, await the evaluation of that mission field by the 1974 Synod! The Missionary's reply was prompt! We had made him very happy because he felt that his work there was finished, and that therefore his presence was no longer required.

Well may he hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Rev. Lubbers had accomplished much. He had also experienced many sorrows, such as seeing ministers and their flocks leaving our communion; and meeting furtive, secretive opposition, and some quite open! But his accomplishments also bore much fruit. He had faithfully instructed the people in the Reformed Faith and seen many cleave to this truth. But his monumental work was the Seminary which he set up for the instruction of four young aspirants for the ministry! He was the entire teaching staff! If we allow you to "peek" into a future installment, you can see that those four will graduate in November. Candidate Hoeksema was added to the Staff in July and helped the students cram through the courses expected of them. The Mission Committee co-operated with the Staff in sending some fifty dollars worth of books for each student as a graduation present.

No, we are not leaving the faithful people in Jamaica in the lurch. The Mission Committee has decided to send two of their most experienced emissaries to the Island in the Spring to evaluate the field, to learn what effect our temporary absence has had upon them; and to provide guidance to the Committee and to Synod, so that Synod can make its own evaluation.

What shall the future installments reveal? Shall we try to send another full-time missionary? Shall we help them by sending part-time emissaries? How shall we help them with our financial aid? All those answers will be found in future installments. No more "peeks" into the next issues. You'll just have to wait!

(Continued in the next installment.)

J.M. Faber, sec'y., Mission Committee

News From Jamaica

Rev. G. Lubbers

At the annual meeting of the Staff of the *Standard Bearer*, undersigned promised to send in some news from time to time for our readers. I believe that this is not only interesting, but also very important; it is necessary that our people be informed of the facts and developments in the field. Sometimes this is not an easy task. One must not lose the necessary objectivity in reporting. And when one is personally involved in the happenings, this becomes still more difficult. On the other hand, only the Missionary, who has been in the field for almost four years' running, (since April, 1969), is in a position to write knowledgeably on the matters to be reported.

There is another reason why it is important that some news be forthcoming from the Jamaica field. It is the fact that upon my request and upon the reasons assigned, the Mission Committee and the calling church (First Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.) have decided "to suspend Rev. Lubbers' labors in the Jamaican Mission field in December and to instruct him to return home with his possessions." Now there is room for some reporting by the undersigned on this important and far-reaching decision. It was also decided — and that correctly in my judgment — "that any further missionary work in Jamaica, either by another full-time missionary or by emissaries will be decided by the Synod which meets in June of 1974."

This decision does not mean to write off the mission field here in Jamaica, nor does it mean that the Mission Committee or the undersigned consider our work here as being an ecclesiastical and missionary debacle. Such is not the viewpoint of the Mission Committee. On the contrary, the Committee encourages the brethren here to hold fast to the Reformed faith, that they retain the name Protestant Reformed Church in Jamaica for the sake of the keeping of the unity; advise the Board of Trustees to meet regularly to discuss the well-being of the churches; supervise the care of the buildings, and give the Mission Committee reports of their activities. This is a rather positive stance. Whether this advice to the Jamaican brethren is optimistic or lacks realism, the future will tell. I believe that this advice is correct. At any rate, the Mission Committee does not close the field.

This could only be done by the Synod of our churches. There is a very important decision taken by the Synod of 1973, Art. 113, which reads as follows: "In light of the developments in the Jamaican field

Synod instructs the Mission Committee in conjunction with the calling church to evaluate carefully the field in the next year to determine by next year's Synod whether this work should be continued beyond June of 1974." This decision is clear and concise; it spells out a definite mandate for the Mission Committee to follow, and also for the calling church. It seems to me that both this Committee and the Ecclesiastical Assembly, in their decision to refer this matter to the Synod of 1974, are correct.

There is another decision of the Synod which must pass in review at this point. This decision is found in the Acts of Synod of 1973, pg. 29, Art. 119, which reads, "... that Synod instruct the Mission Committee to see to it that the present school work for the students be finished this year. Carried."

Now both of these decisions were directives in the Missionary's request that in December of this year he be honorably discharged from his duties here on the Island.

To begin on the positive note, it was the conviction of the Missionary and also that of brother Mark Hoeksema that "the present school work for the four students" could very properly and reasonably be finished by the month of December. School was begun on August 1. The data which Synod and its Committee had before them concerning the "school work" was that these students needed a course in New Testament History, that the course in Old Testament History needed to be finished as well as the course in Doctrine. The courses in Homiletics and Hermeneutics, which have been very ably taught by Rev. J. Heys were finished. The students needed practice preaching. It was the certain conviction that the necessary courses have been taught to the students. The course covered three years of instruction in the following branches: Heidelberg Catechism (doctrine), Church History (Ancient and Medieval and a bit of Modern), Old Testament History (in depth), New Testament History (a course commensurate to what is given in our own seminary), Homiletics, and Hermeneutics, and even some instruction in music, not to forget a solid course in basic English and composition. These we consider necessary courses, and we believe that we have given these men the tools and skills to "teach others." These men are making good progress in preaching also, and they preach Reformed, Protestant Reformed,

doctrine. In many ways they are young and untried, as is to be expected. But they will be teaching in the indigenous Protestant Reformed Churches in Jamaica, and not in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

We hold that we have done what Synod instructed the Mission Committee to do, namely, to finish the present school work of the students this year. And we say this with great gratitude to the Lord!

On a more negative note, permit us to observe that there are no little discouragements, even though there are some positive developments. Synod decided that after careful study it would be decided whether we should continue our labors beyond the Synod of 1974. There is here not much for me to report. What I have reported in former articles must stand. I shall here content myself by simply quoting from my request (in part) for an honorable discharge. I quote the following:

The task which I undertook when I assumed this office before the face of the Lord *is ended*. It is true that there is some difference of opinion whether we have exhausted the resources here, and whether a "different method" should be used in working on the Island. Article 114 speaks of the instruction of Synod to the Mission Committee concerning "method of labor." (*) This evidently refers to the view of an esteemed colleague that we should labor with each congregation in a catechetical manner, and that after the pattern of what we did here with the students. Much as I respect the sincere attitude and attempt herein set forth, I believe that I should point out (a) that I have done this wherever possible for three years, (b) that it is physically impossible to accomplish this goal when one is in a given church only once in five or six weeks, and when there is no evident attempt of the people to cooperate. I believe that this would only show up the futility of such intensive indoctrination on the part of the Missionary alone and single-handed. Besides, the very idea and genius of teaching students is that these in turn "shall be able to teach others." (II Tim. 2:2) I believe and hold that here too, my task is ended, and it now falls upon the shoulders of the young men, whom we have instructed, and upon the shoulders of the Rev. Elliot and Rev. Frame.

I do not believe that it should be necessary for me and Mrs. Lubbers to remain on the Island and to supervise the work indefinitely. Perhaps this is very futile too. It is one thing to set up the machinery of church government here on the Island, but it is quite another thing, and far more difficult, to have the churches operate within the framework and structures. . . .

If these churches need help, such help can be given them by sending qualified and knowledgeable men here to meet with the Board of Trustees and with the Elders' Conference at stated times should this be

possible. There is no need of the undersigned to stay here to referee the churches under the rules and regulations. If the two-fold organization, the Board of Trustees and the Elders' Conference do not work, it shows that the churches cannot or will not function as such. . . .

We ask you to take steps to facilitate our honorable discharge from the field here set forth above.

(*) As a footnote I will add that Article 114 does not refer to the labors of this year here, but refers to a consideration of work-method "should we continue" after the Synod of 1974.

Both the Mission Committee and the Consistory of First Church have acceded to my request, subject to the confirmation and the approval of the Synod, of course.

Now it my earnest prayer to God for these churches that they may prosper well. I do not believe that our leaving here will or can shorten the hand of the Lord. I commend these churches, ministers, and students unto the hand of the Lord, Who is able to keep them and give them a place among all those who are sanctified.

I only humbly confess that we have worked faithfully, depending upon the Lord's mercies which were new every morning. If the Lord in His inscrutable wisdom sees fit to send another man or men here, more youthful than Mrs. Lubbers and myself, I can only gratefully and thankfully praise God's Name.

I do not believe that my usefulness in God's kingdom has ended. My work has ended here. What the Lord has in store for us I leave in His hands and wait His bidding. We did not go here in our own strength, nor do we leave in our own willfulness. His Name be praised.

Meanwhile we are thankful for the presence and aid of Mr. and Mrs. Mark Hoeksema on the Island. Mr. Hoeksema works with vigor in the school. The students love him very much, as they do Mrs. Hoeksema. It will be a rather sad day to depart from these people here, and particularly from the students whom we have instructed these three years in school. We also will leave with sadness from the ministers. Then there are some very good elders which have stood in the fray. Nevertheless, we do leave in the consciousness of the Lord's approval, without which we could not leave.

Remember us all in your prayers, and not the least these churches in Jamaica, that they may continue in the faith delivered unto them.

May the Lord grant the guidance of His Spirit to all who must make decisions in His Name.

Two Wise Men and a Fool

Candidate Mark H. Hoeksema

Once upon a time there were two wise men and a fool. All three were motoring along a road which traversed a mountainous island. The road was a dangerous one; rough, narrow, hilly, and winding, it was bordered on the one side by the sheer rock wall of a mountain cliff, and on the other by emptiness ending in the sea far below. The one wise man was wending his way carefully along the road, sounding the horn of his car at every blind curve, when he noticed that another car had approached quickly from the rear and was following him closely, obviously waiting for a chance to overtake him. "Another fool," the wise man sighed to himself, knowing that there would not be a safe place to pass for several miles.

Meanwhile another wise man was picking his way in the opposite direction through the pot-holes and fallen rocks. Like the first wise man, he was proceeding slowly and carefully along the narrow road, unaware of the two cars approaching him.

The first wise man approached a sharp bend in the road. The way was steeply uphill, and the impatient fool behind him was beginning to wear on his nerves. As if in answer to his wish, the fool pulled out from behind him, sounded his horn, and began to overtake. Quick alarm rose in the wise man. "He can't see . . ." He waved the man back, but the fool, paying no attention, changed gears and stamped the accelerator to the floor. The wise man's heart leaped into his throat, for suddenly around the bend ahead another car had appeared. Visions of spinning cars, sounds of tearing metal, and the smell of burning rubber all flashed through his mind in the instant before he applied his brakes as hard as he could. The other wise man, as alert as the first, also saw the impending disaster and he, too, jammed on his brakes with all the force he could muster. With tires screeching and gravel flying the two wise men slid to a stop almost alongside each other. The fool, never slowing or hesitating, whipped his car between the other two and bounced madly around the bend. "He who hesitates is lost," he chuckled to himself. As the snarl of the fool's exhaust faded into the hills, the two wise men looked at one another, slowly shook their heads, and continued on their respective ways.

* * * * *

The little story above is illustrative of the Jamaican way of life generally. There are many things which

can be said about Jamaica, its people, and the way of life on this Caribbean island. But to speak of the various facets of Jamaica in any kind of detail would be to write a book, at the very least. It is my purpose, however, to attempt to describe briefly the situation in Jamaica both in general and as it particularly concerns the mission work of the Protestant Reformed Churches. A general background is necessary in order to understand the religious situation in which the work has been performed.

The driving in Jamaica as already intimated, is somewhat hazardous. It may perhaps be best described as a combination of playing "chicken," the Indy 500, and a demolition derby. Not only are the drivers maniacal — their one objective is to get there *first* — but also the roads are hazardous. With few straight pieces of highway and few level stretches, the normal dangers are compounded by the narrowness and roughness which are universal characteristics of the island. Add to all of this the fact that driving is done on the left side of the road with right-hand-drive cars, and the result is a challenge to any visitor. With all of these factors present it is no wonder that the fatality rate (and by logical consequence, the accident rate) is 11 times that of the United States. An English friend of mine on the island recently summed it up rather well: "I say, old chap, it's positively *wicked!*"

The driving is not the only thing that is characterized by foolishness. Money, around which most problems revolve, is also the source of much grief and trouble. The general economic situation is at present very bad. The government has shown amazing ineptness in most of its financial dealings. Because of import bans and tariffs many items are "finished," as the Jamaicans say — simply non-existent. Labor problems add to the difficulties; not a day goes by without news of two or three strikes, with the workers demanding wage increases of a mere 50%. Stealing and theft of every imaginable kind are widespread. But all of this is hardly surprising when one recognizes the general motto of the people: If you get a dollar today, spend it, because there will be another tomorrow. In light of all this it is not difficult to understand why foreign investment and capital are rapidly falling off.

Political instability is another contributor to the island's ills. Politicians prate piously of their accomplishments when they should have done twice as much twice as well in half the time. They rave

about Jamaica's problems while sitting on their hands; they proclaim panaceas while doing little else than holding pompous official ceremonies; they make impossible promises while avoiding anything that smells of responsibility. Small wonder then that Communism is making inroads, especially among the poorer masses in the Kingston-St. Andrew area. Some think that the nation is headed for anarchy. If the present foolishness is perpetuated, they could be right.

There are many favorable aspects of the island which could be pointed out: the wonderful natural beauty of the island, its beautiful bays and beaches, its rugged green-covered mountains, its hot and humid climate, the slowness of life's pace. But all of these cannot balance the nation's ills, a few of which are enumerated above. And these ills can be traced to foolishness. Foolishness according to the way man measures it, and foolishness according to the way God measures it. And unfortunately, the proportion of fools to wise men is not the same as in the little story. One must search to find a wise man among the fools.

Unhappily, though not unexpectedly, what is true of the island generally is also true of the Protestant Reformed Churches of Jamaica. Money is the focal point around which most other problems directly or indirectly (usually directly) are concentrated. And naturally the quantity of the money is the major stumblingblock. The Protestant Reformed Churches in America are a never-ending source of money, according to the thinking of most in the Jamaican churches. Money for whatever purpose in whatever location and circumstance must come from one place: America. There are those, of course, who would attribute such an attitude to the fact that the Jamaican people are socially underprivileged and financially deprived. There are those who perhaps would point out that a comparatively rich church should be happy to do its duty of sharing with its poorer neighbors.

But if we listen to the proponents of such views we are very shortsighted, for we do not account for many other factors. One is that the Jamaicans — our church people — are in the habit of asking for far too much; they request outrageous sums for unnecessary purposes. There is only one name for such an attitude, and that is *greed*. Further, there is the added fact of the general ingratitude of the people. Instead of accepting the gifts from America with the proper respect and gratitude, they act as if it is all owed to them. Still worse, they often complain that they have not received as much as they asked for, and are rarely seen wearing the clothes donated by the American Churches. The proverb which speaks about biting the hand that feeds one can be concretely demonstrated

without difficulty; such conduct is not likely to insure the continued good will and good dollars of the American churches. Add to all of this the fact that the money given them is often used foolishly by the Jamaicans. Saying it isn't "proper" to have a church without windows, they set about with the money meant for other purposes to put expensive louvered windows into a pole-and-tin church building. Such windows are not necessary because boards or pieces of zinc are more than adequate; the people do not come to church when it rains anyway. If the whole situation were not so serious one would laugh at the ludicrousness of it all.

All of this foolishness seems to pose an insoluble problem. Obviously it is foolishness. Even men in general realize that it is not possible to look a gift horse in the teeth forever and get away with it. But all of this is foolishness in the eyes of God and therefore sin. Until the sin-problem is solved, the money-problem will continue.

Moreover, ecclesiastical life in general, both doctrinal and practical, is characterized by foolishness. A general rejection of the Reformed truth has become evident during the years that the Protestant Reformed Churches have done mission work in Jamaica. There has been a general refusal to turn from the errors prevalent in the situation which existed previous to our coming here. And there are many serious errors. Holiness thinking is almost universal; with a disproportionate emphasis upon the work of the Holy Spirit this form of mysticism is the death of solid doctrinal faith. Baptist influences are very strong, both with respect to the practice of the sacrament of baptism — immersion in the sea is necessary — and with regard to the doctrine of baptism — "converted" adults are the proper candidates. Pentecostalism, which seems to be world-wide, finds fertile soil in Jamaica because of the basic mystical tendencies, and the results are predictable, manifesting themselves particularly in tongue-speaking and faith healing. Further, remnants of the Old Testament economy can be seen; foot-washing and fasting in a completely wrong Old Testament context can be observed. Finally, *obeah* has a strong power among the people of Jamaica. Though this form of black magic and witchcraft has been legally outlawed, and though almost none of the people will discuss it, particularly with a foreign white man, there are unmistakable evidences that *obeah* is very much a part of the lives of the Jamaican people, including those in church.

From all of these errors the people have consistently refused to turn. The wrongs have been pointed out time and again, and the positive line of the Reformed truth clearly set forth. The people nod and agree, and then simply go back to their old ways,

ignoring what has been said. Though they do this in what they think is a subtle manner, they do not realize that the emissaries from America are aware of their foolish duplicity.

In addition to these doctrinal errors there are many practical faults as well. Jamaica as a whole is a matriarchal society, a fact which dates from the days of slavery. The church is no exception to this. If women are not the outright leaders in the church, they are at least the power behind the man who serves as figurehead. There is continual vying for prestige and leadership within the church, also among the officebearers. There is no conception of family, either in Jamaican society generally or in the church. Almost never do families attend church; the father, the mother, or the children are present – but never at the same time, and usually not from the same family. There is little formal marriage and a great deal of illegitimacy, also among the people of the church. It is not surprising then that the whole idea of the covenant is completely foreign to the Jamaican way of life. And perhaps most frustrating to one of European-American Reformed background, there is so little order in the church. Again, this is a reflection of the general social situation, and therefore is understandable. But it is not excusable, for decency and good order in the church have been taught faithfully. After such painstaking instruction to see such haphazardness is almost more than one can bear.

* * * * *

What conclusions are to be drawn from all of this?

In the first place, there is obviously much foolishness, both in Jamaican society as a whole, and consequently in the church, with which we are more particularly concerned; foolishness as men count it, and foolishness as God counts it. To be a fool is to fail to apprehend and to adapt to reality, the reality of God, His Word, and His truth. To be wise is to apprehend spiritually the truth of God's Word and to adapt one's life according to it. There are not two standards of wisdom, one for America and one for Jamaica; there is but one standard for all, and there are few that measure up to it in Jamaica. Unhappily there are not two wise men for every fool. In fact, one must search to find a wise man among the fools.

But the situation must be kept in perspective. Though most seem to be fools, there *are* wise men. The students whose training is almost finished have shown wisdom; there are elders who are wise; and there are people who have shown wisdom. They are a minority, but they do exist.

Against such a background the decision of the Mission Committee to terminate the labors for the present is certainly justified and wise. Some would perhaps object, saying that there are many Reformed people on the island. Such need to be reminded that singing Psalter numbers does not make one Reformed. Some would object that the people must be taught and catechized intensively on a congregational basis. But such an effort would be utterly impossible for many reasons. There is insufficient time and manpower, distances are great, it would be very difficult to assemble an entire congregation on a regular basis, and perhaps most important of all, there is little or no desire on the part of the people for such teaching. It is time to leave the Jamaican churches on their own. Rev. Lubbers has labored long and hard on the island. If his work has positive fruit the churches will continue; if there are enough truly wise men there will be viable congregations in the future. If the present foolishness continues, there will soon be only a memory of the Protestant Reformed Churches in Jamaica, a mere footprint upon the sands of time. Only time will tell.

But even if the churches in Jamaica cease to exist, this should never be a negative reflection upon Rev. Lubbers or any of the others who have labored here. Rather, such an event should be proof that the labors have been successful, for the two-fold power of the Word must always be remembered. The work in Jamaica has ended; but it has not been futile. Also here the Word has had its effect. Whether or not the effect is what we would like it to be does not matter; the Word never returns to God void.

We as churches must now turn to the other mission fields the Lord has opened for us. But we must learn from our experience in Jamaica. Of all that can and should be learned we cannot speak now. But we must learn. If we do not, then we are fools. If we do, then we are truly wise.

REFORMED DOGMATICS, (Second printing). \$9.95 postpaid.

FROM OUR THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

They're Off and Running

J. Huiskens

The assignment given me at a recent Theological School Committee meeting was to write for publication in *The Standard Bearer* a brief summary of the activities of the committee and the seminary. In trying to fulfill this mandate I found that it is not easy for a neophyte member of this committee to write such a summary. There is so much history and therefore so much learning and adjusting to do that one scarcely has the time to reflect long enough to report in any detail what has happened. It is like jumping in midstream and not knowing the many curves and rapids that have been passed in the years gone by. I chose, therefore, not to report simply in a factual manner but rather to give a rather subjective view, my impressions, of what has transpired in the short while that I have been a member of this committee.

In the first place, we can report one sure thing: the seminary is off and running for another academic year. And, in observing the beginning of this academic year one cannot help but be impressed. The seminary faculty is a very able trio; they know what they are doing and they do it well — in the classroom not only, but administratively as well. It was a smooth beginning — evidence, of course, of planning and hard work.

Further, I think it can be said that there has not been a year recently when the faculty and the Theological School Committee began its work with such enthusiasm. We and the faculty were, of course, highly pleased and grateful to God that Rev. Decker was led to accept the call to labor in the seminary. And, yes, he is off and running, too. His teaching duties began immediately. The now Professor Decker and his family are comfortably settled in the northeast section of Grand Rapids. For those who could not or did not attend Professor Decker's installation on Wednesday, October 3, you missed something. This evening, too, was cause for an increased measure of enthusiasm — for the newly-installed professor, for his colleagues and for the people present. The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly the sermon preached by Professor Hanko. Professor Hanko chose as his text the well-known words of I Timothy 2:15

and in the course of his sermon gave excellent advice — God's advice and truly scriptural advice — to his new colleague, to the students and to all the people assembled there. Advice, which if followed, will lead to much prayer, much hard work, and much blessing. The evening was a truly blessed event. An added bit of joy was also brought to the new professor when he welcomed sizeable contingents from his former pastorates. For there were not only some who drove from South Holland, but there were also six couples who made the trip from Doon, Iowa. As Rev. Decker put it: the presence of these people and the whole night certainly did much to ease the pain of leaving his congregation.

I think, then, that it can be said without question that the morale in the seminary — faculty and students alike — is high. Professor Decker's presence is an answer to much prayer, and it is, therefore, with renewed zeal and eager anticipation that Professors Hoeksema and Hanko began this year's work. And, in that regard, I want to emphasize that work they do! I know of no other faculty that works any harder. Consider for example, that these men teach 18-20 hours per week (mostly at the graduate level). This is a normal load. In a day when college and university faculties are demanding lighter loads (graduate faculty members at present rarely exceed 6 hours) we can certainly thank God for ambitious, energetic, conscientious men. But quantity is not all for which we can be thankful. Quality is there, too. One does not need to talk long with all three professors to know that they demand a lot of themselves and their students. These men demand much of themselves and they produce quality study materials. A recent conversation with a certifying official of the Michigan Department of Education was evidence of this fact. Upon reviewing the seminary curriculum, there was no doubt in the mind of this official that the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches was no mail-orderhouse diploma mill. The standards are indeed high for both faculty and students.

Another source of delight to the committee, the faculty and students, and, I believe, to the entire

constituency of our churches is the prospect of a new building. For those who live in the Michigan area one need only drive up the Ivanrest hill to realize that that building is no longer a dream but is rapidly becoming a reality. The exterior is all but finished and the interior is fast being finished. The furnishings have already been bought — at a tremendous savings, by the way, thanks to the gratuity of Steelcase, Inc. through its institutional grant plan. It certainly is not hard to imagine being settled in this new plant by the second semester.

There certainly are many reasons for enthusiasm and rejoicing even in this short while that I have been a member of the Theological School Committee. God has been truly good to us and has provided for the needs of our seminary: He has given us able and dedicated professors, men dedicated to the true and careful exegesis of the Scriptures and men who hold with might and main to truths of the Reformation; He has given us the wherewithal to finance the new building, He has worked within the hearts of our people the willingness to contribute liberally; He has given us students and continues to call young men as is evidenced by three new faces again this year; and,

above all, He has preserved us in His truth, He has given us the privilege of continuing in the line of the Reformation, the privilege of maintaining the Reformed heritage. And, in all of this our seminary is in the forefront. Thank God for its establishment and its continued existence.

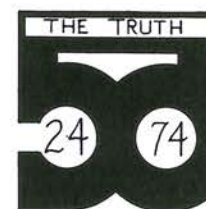
We need not dwell long, then, need we, on whether the seminary is worth every dime spent on it. Several congregations, the one of which I am a member included, have experienced directly the fruits of the training of our seminary. Young men who are dedicated to the true and careful exposition and exegesis of the Scriptures and who are dedicated to the Reformed faith and who are recent graduates of our seminary occupy our pulpits from Sunday to Sunday and thus serve as a constant reminder of the worth of our theological school. They have been well prepared for the task to which God has called them.

The seminary is indeed off and running for another academic year. The Theological School Committee rejoices in that fact and prays God for His continued blessing upon us as we direct this institution and upon all the personnel of this institution. We trust that your prayers, too, are similar.

The Standard Bearer

In Retrospect

Prof. H. Hanko



The *Standard Bearer* has always been a *doctrinal* paper. It began that way; it has continued that way until the present. This is very deliberately the path which *The Standard Bearer* chose to walk. There are reasons for this. *The Standard Bearer* has as its main purpose the defense and development of the truth of the Scriptures. It arose out of doctrinal controversy and has always appeared as one periodical intent on maintaining and developing the Reformed faith. It never has been the view of the editors however that doctrine is an end in itself. The doctrines of the Reformed faith are precious because they are the knowledge of God Whom to know is eternal life. They are precious because they are the hope and blessing of the Christian. They are precious because they form the foundation for the whole walk of the child of God in

the world of sin. Without doctrine a godly walk is impossible.

It is not surprising therefore, that we find innumerable doctrinal articles in the early volumes of *The Standard Bearer* already. Many of these articles dealt with the common grace controversy. This is to be understood. The common grace controversy was the immediate occasion for the beginnings of our paper. And the editors went to great lengths to expose the errors of common grace, to point out specifically where these errors were in conflict with the Reformed faith, to warn repeatedly of the evils and dangers of common grace both in doctrine and life, and to set forth the truth of God's Word overagainst all this.

Nevertheless, *The Standard Bearer* was not exclusively negative. It was always positive. In this article therefore, we reproduce an article which appeared in Volume III and which treats a matter which is pertinent yet today. It was originally

prepared as a speech by Rev. H. Hoeksema, and was published on pp. 336-371 in the year 1927. The reproduction below has been sharply edited. In its original form it took up over 5½ pages. We have reduced it considerably. It is entitled:

GOD'S COUNSEL AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

The thoughts of men have been divided on this subject and radically opposite solutions have been offered of the implied problem. On the one hand there have been and there still are those that are always careful to defend and maintain the freedom and extol the dignity and majesty of man, regardless more or less of the effect such an attempt would have upon their conception of God. On the other hand there always were those, although they were generally fewer in number, that were chiefly concerned about the vindication of the sovereignty of God. And it may be added immediately that generally the former brought the indictment against the latter, that they destroyed the responsibility of man, were of a single-track mind, and that this single track of their thinking ran in the direction of determinism. It is the old controversy between Paul the apostle, as he develops the truth in Romans 9, and his opponents there mentioned; between St. Augustine and Pelagius; between Gottschalk and his persecutors; between Calvin and the church; between Gomarus and Arminius and between their respective followers in our own day.

Nor did I determine upon a discussion of this subject because I flatter myself and would have you expect, that a complete and ultimate solution of it may possibly be attained, a solution in the sense that all mysteries connected with it have been cleared away. It may be well to exercise our mind upon such problems as these, if it bear no other fruit than to make us humbly confess our insignificant smallness overagainst the eternal One.

I must remind you of the fact, that the old accusation, always brought against people of strictly reformed convictions by Pelagians of every color and kind, has been revived against us, the indictment already mentioned, that we deny and destroy the accountability of the rational creature, more particularly of man, because of our presentation of the truth of election and reprobation. I will answer the indictment and prove that it is false.

I. The Problem As Such.

God's counsel is, let us remind ourselves of it, no mere dead plan, even as an architect draws a plan with detailed specifications of a proposed structure; but it is the eternal will and mind of God with regard to all things in time and eternity. The counsel of the

Most High, said our fathers characteristically, is the living counselling God. We must also call attention to certain attributes of that counsel of the eternal God, that have a direct bearing upon its relation to the accountability of the moral creature. First of all this counsel is all-comprehensive. It does not only imply the things that are made, but as they are created at the beginning. Such is the nature of an architectural plan. The architect can probably determine in detail how the structure that is to be raised shall be, but he cannot determine what shall become of the building; its history and destiny lies beyond his control. But such is not the case with God's counsel. When Scripture teaches us that it is all-comprehensive, it signifies that God from eternity counselled how things should be created at the beginning, how they should develop in time, and what should be their eternal destiny. And this must be understood in its strictest sense. It implies that every creature, great and small had its shape and history in this eternal divine decree; that, therefore, nothing happens in earth or in heaven, in the light or in darkness, with respect to brute creation or to God's moral creatures, but it has all been determined from before the world was. Secondly, I call attention to that attribute of God's counsel, which negatively expressed we call its irresistibility and positively denoted is the absolute efficaciousness of God's decree. God is in the heavens and He performs all His good pleasure. Nothing ever withstood His counsel or ever shall be able to thwart it. Every drop of rain surely falls according to that counsel; every sunbeam shoots its golden shaft into the wide expanse of space in harmony with God's decree. Every tree grows, every flower blooms, every heart beats, every child is born and every being breathes its last, every mind thinks and every man moves, yea every angel sings and every devil rages according to this determinate will of God. It is irresistibly executed in all the wide world. And lastly I want to mention the immutability, the unchangeableness of the counsel of the Most High. What is determined from eternity is fixed forever and nothing can induce the Lord, whose name is I Am, to alter His will or to change His mind. With absolute certainty and unchangeableness the entire course of the whole universe, and of every last creature in detail, is fixed from before the beginning of all things.

Now, in that whole of the divine, eternal and

unchangeable scheme of the universe and its destiny, there are intellectual, moral, rational beings, beings that are responsible, accountable to God and are treated as such. What is a moral being? It is a being with a will, a rational will of his own, a being, who is not simply determined, but who in a sense, in some way, also determines himself. He is a being, that not simply develops and grows, like a tree; whose movements are not simply determined from without, like that of a stone rolling down the mountain; but who acts, who performs deeds of his own choice, determinately, consciously, willingly and rationally. It is a being that stands in a certain relation to the law of God, who knows God and His will and who determines from within his own attitude to that will of the Most High. He is, therefore, in this respect like God, though in a creaturely way and measure he wills and thinks and acts, and thus becomes the author of certain deeds, for the which he is accountable to God because he is a creature. And he is so accountable and responsible, that he will be brought into judgment for all he thought and willed and did, and will receive from God according to what he did, whether it be good or evil. The question now arises: How is all this possible, if we maintain the all-comprehensiveness and efficaciousness and immutable character of the counsel of God?

There is still another element that must be taken into account if we are to see the seriousness of the problem. For God did not only freely and with absolute sovereignty determine all things in His eternal counsel, but He Himself also executes that counsel and does all His good pleasure. How then can the moral, rational creature be held accountable, so that he will receive reward or punishment, according to what he has done, whether it be good or evil, if God is really the deepest determining cause, by His almighty will controlling and directing the frail will of man to His own purpose and end?

What makes the problem so serious is, of course, the existence of evil, both moral and physical. Of course, principally the problem would exist, even if sin never entered into the world and death through sin. For though man never did anything but what is acceptable in the sight of the Lord, the question still would be, how in the light of God's eternal counsel and almighty Providence, this good man could be accountable and receive credit and reward for the good deeds he performed. But the seriousness, the practical weight and pressure of the problem is aggravated nevertheless by the fact of the existence of evil in the world. Men are held accountable for their morally corrupt state of their nature and for the wicked deeds they commit. And because they are held responsible, there is in the world also physical evil, suffering and death as the wages of sin. Now,

especially with a view to these facts, the problem we are dealing with assumes a very grave aspect. For not only does the question arise and urge itself upon us: How can God punish His moral creatures, if we must believe that even in their sinful deeds they accomplish His counsel, yea, that He is the controlling power in it all? But the other question also follows: How is it, that God is not the author of evil in its moral sense, if He is the cause of all things and, even when wicked men sin, executes His counsel? Thus we must state the problem.

II. The Solutions Which Are Offered.

Now in attempting to solve this problem, it is destroyed by many, because either the absolute sovereignty of God or the moral agency and freedom of man is denied. In the one case we lost God; in the other we lose man; or they are really both destroyed by merging them into one.

Pantheism must needs deny and destroy all moral freedom and responsibility, even as it denies the personality of God and His essential distinction from the universe. According to this conception, God is the world itself. The being of God and the essence of the world are one. But while the pantheist derives all things with causal necessity from the *being* of God; the reformed man finds the cause of all in the intelligent *will* and *counsel* of a personal God. All difference between good and evil, all moral self-determination on the part of man; all consciousness of accountability must needs cease, if pantheism were true. Pantheism destroys the problem we are discussing, because it has neither a personal God nor a personal man.

Not otherwise it is with all materialistic conceptions. Materialism denies the existence of spirit as a distinct substance. All is matter, and outside of matter nothing exists. Matter is the sole God; that is, if you wish to speak of a God at all. It is the gospel of the flesh, the theology of mammon. Man is only material, not spiritual. The soul of man is not a distinct spiritual being, an entity; what we call soul is nothing but the sum-total of so-called psychical phenomena, and these are nothing but the results of his material existence functioning. We have no dispute with materialism on the ground that it teaches that all things occur with necessity; but as we find the necessity of things in the wise and intelligent will of an absolutely good God, materialism finds it in the cold despotism of blind matter. With regard to the subject under discussion we may say, that materialism has no problem because it has no spirit, no mind and will, either in God or man. Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die!

But the problem is also destroyed in still another way. It cannot exist for all that follow the deistic line

of thinking. In a sense deism is the very opposite of pantheism. The machine of the world is finished and now runs according to its own laws and by its own inherent power; the ship of the world is built and launched and now sails on the wide ocean of history without its builder. You understand, that deism with relation to the will and moral freedom of man is Pelagianism and Arminianism. It is the exaltation of man over against his Creator, the maintenance and vindication of human majesty. Man, in all his thinking and acting is absolutely free and there is no control or direction or cooperation on the part of God. His will is as sovereignly free as the will of God. The latter does in no wise determine the former. The absolute sovereignty of the Most High is thus denied. God is placed outside the doors of His own house and is not allowed to intervene in the life and acts of him who is now sovereign within that house, the glorious man! Also on the basis of this view we have no problem as regards the counsel of God and the responsibility of man, but we rid ourselves of the problem by discarding God! And this price is certainly too high and precious! I am bold to say, that if in the attempt to solve the problem we must lose either, God or man, then let us keep God, and lose little man.

Lastly, to come a little nearer home, I call your attention to that view, that is satisfied to leave the counsel of God and the responsibility of man stand side by side as an irreconcilable contradiction, though in the faith, that what seems contradictory to us, is not in conflict with each other in God. These speak generally of two wills of God, that cannot be brought into a higher unity as far as our understanding is concerned, though this higher unity exists. The will of command is related to our responsibility; the will of God's counsel has respect to God's government of all things. And these two run parallel as far as eye can see, and all attempts to penetrate more deeply into this mystery are necessarily futile. We have this objection against this prevalent view, that there is in it not even an attempt to gain a conception of the relation between God's counsel and man's responsibility. Nor does it even try to express itself with regard to the proper conception of the relation between the two, though certainly it must be admitted that God's counsel and the moral freedom of man cannot be co-ordinated, even though we should ultimately not be able to reconcile them. Besides, in practice this view often leads to a certain Arminian presentation of the matter. It is emphasized, that we have to do with the will of command; the doctrine of God's counsel is relegated to an almost forgotten place, and a practical Pelagianism is the result. It is not infrequently these very people that are first to ring alarm when in their estimation one would seem to over-emphasize the truth of God's absolute sovereignty.

III. The Proper Conception Of The Matter In The Light Of Scripture.

Now, it is not necessary for me in this connection to prove that the Word of God teaches that every man is responsible to God for all his deeds. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Neither is it necessary to quote the Word of God with regard to the truth of God's counsel as such, or of the providence of God in general. But I will quote the Word of God to show that His counsel is executed in and that His providence overrules even the deeds of men, whether they be good or evil. In other words, I will show that we may not present the matter as if God's overruling counsel and man's responsibility must simply be placed side by side, co-ordinately; but that the latter is subordinate to the former. I would like to make the distinction between God as first cause and God as author, and maintain, that God is the cause of all things, the deepest cause also of the deeds of men, whether they be good or evil, though He is not their author. This has been in principle always accepted by men of reformed faith. We may not have two determining causes of things; to postulate them means that we fall back into ancient heathen dualism. It is not true that God is a cause and the devil is also a cause, co-ordinate with and independent from God; but it is thus, that God is also the determining cause of the devil and of all his works. Let us refer to Scripture in support of this. Prov. 21:1. Certainly, if the Lord turns the king's heart at will, He overrules and directs the issues of that heart, his will and mind, his thoughts and all his desires. And if it is true of the king's heart it is equally true of every other heart of men. What about God's relation to the evil deeds of men and devils? It is true, is it not, that in the history of God the devil must obtain permission from the Lord before he can accomplish his evil purpose? And what does the man of God say when the devil, through the means of Chaldeans and Sabeans, wind and fire, made Job poor and miserable? "The Lord hath taken away." The devil and his instruments were after all but instruments in the hand of the Lord. *He* took away! What is the truth of the matter when Ahab is about to go to war with the Syrians, and Micah is interrogated as to the Lord's counsel? What is the word of the Lord by the mouth of Micah? That the Lord sent a spirit of error, a lying spirit into the heart of the prophets of Ahab to persuade him through these false prophets to go and fall at Ramoth-Gilead! I Kings 22:20ff. Who sends wicked Shimei to curse David? The Lord and none other, II Sam. 16:10. What do we read of the sons of Eli? That when their father weakly admonishes them because of all their wicked deeds, they hearkened not unto the voice of Eli, because the Lord would slay them! I Sam. 2:25. Who hardens Pharaoh's heart, that he may not listen to the voice of the Lord and exalt himself

against God? Who makes the heart of wicked Israel fat and their eyes blind, that they may become ripe for destruction? The Lord, Ex. 8:15; Rom. 1:26, 28. Or turn your attention to that heinous sin by which the Lord of glory was nailed to the accursed tree. What do the Scriptures say of this? The Lord was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God to be crucified by wicked hands. Acts 2:23, Acts 4:27, 28. On the basis of Scripture I can make this first statement, that God is the first cause, also when men are moral agents, it makes no difference whether for good or for evil. Our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased. Ps. 115:3.

Of course, this gives us a conception of the proper relation between the sovereign God and man, the moral agent; but it does not quite solve the problem. Two questions must yet be answered, to see a little light on this subject. The first question is: How *can* man be responsible? What is responsibility? Does moral accountability presuppose sovereign freedom and moral independence? If that is the case, we must come to the conclusion that man is no responsible agent, for such sovereign freedom he never did possess, not even before the fall in paradise. Even as for his bodily existence he is from moment to moment dependent on the living God, thus it is no less with his spiritual, intellectual, moral life. He is always creature. When we assert that man possesses freedom, we must add, that in his freedom he is dependent, utterly dependent. But it is not true, that accountability requires an absolutely and sovereignly free agent. But it does require that man is the conscious and rational and willing subject of all his actions, that he does things because he wills them and chooses them. A man, consciously and willingly committing sin, or performing what is good, remains accountable, no matter how his deeds may be overruled otherwise, by the counsel and providence of the Most High. Man is responsible, because he always remains the moral, the conscious and willing subject of all his deeds. Judas betrays the Lord because he wills it. Not for one moment does he feel compelled by an outward force, that urges him against his own will and choice to deliver his Master into the hands of sinners. Neither, let me add, was any such external compulsion exerted on Judas. And because this is the truth, Judas is the responsible

agent, the author of his sin, and God's judgment as well as his own conscience condemns him. Thus it was no different with regard to the first sin of Adam in paradise. There was no external force which made it compulsory for Adam to sin against the choice of his own will. It was his own, morally free, act. And thus it is with all the acts of men.

The second question that must be asked is: But *what* then does God determine and how does he so co-operate with men, that they always perform His counsel? To this it must be answered first of all, that God never intervenes between the will of man and the deed. His determining influence does not interrupt the action of the will, its manifestation and execution. In other words, never does the Most High so control the deeds of men, that He forces them to commit what they do not will to commit or to perform. The thoughts and desires and deeds of men remain always their own. God stands behind it all, behind the mind, behind the will, behind the heart of man, to turn it as rivers of water, whithersoever He wills. And secondly, I would answer, that the Lord does this through His Holy Spirit. The manner of this operation of the Most High is a mystery to us. We cannot trace the ways of the Infinite. But this must be said, nevertheless, that it is the Spirit of God that convicts men of sin, and that binds the responsibility of every man upon his own heart. For that reason it is impossible that man should ever lose the consciousness of his responsibility. God justifies Himself. He justifies Himself in the cross, both as to the condemnation of the world and the redemption of the elect. He justifies Himself in the conscience of every man, convicting the world, because they believe not in Christ and bringing His people to confession and humiliation before Him. And He will justify Himself in the day of judgment, when all deeds of men shall be manifest and irrevocably and undeniably be bound upon the conscience of every man. And all will confess that God is just and overcomes when He judges. Only thus may we conceive of this problem, though we admit that even so we cannot fathom the ways of God. For only thus is it possible to maintain that God is God alone, that He does all His good pleasure. And even with sin and evil, with the devil and his host, we can commit ourselves safely in the hands of Him, who only is the cause of all things!

TRIAL SUBSCRIPTION: 10 Issues for \$2.00.

Write our business office.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Deviation Breeds Deviations

Rev. G. Van Baren



In the anniversary year of our *Standard Bearer*, each writer of this magazine has been asked to devote one article which relates the anniversary to the general theme of his rubric. It has been my task in various articles to remind ourselves of the signs of the times about us. One of these signs is apostasy – and with it, doctrinal deviations of every sort. In this connection it is not difficult to remind again our reading public that the *Standard Bearer* came into existence to combat doctrinal deviation, or, more bluntly: heresy. It can be shown, too, how the effects of that deviation are seen in current developments within the Christian Reformed Church (and others) both as this has been related to walk and also to doctrinal positions. I am aware that we are accused of relating each step of departure from the truth in our “mother” church to common grace. And perhaps there have been times in which we were overly inclined to blame every deviation we have observed in the C.R.C. to their adoption of that deviation of common grace. Certainly there are other factors which do enter into the problem of doctrinal apostasy.

However, it has also been true within our “mother church” that many have closed their eyes and minds to the real and dreadful effects of the common grace theory within their denomination. Those who are even still aware that there was a common grace controversy would usually relegate the claims of the “P.R.’s” to the realm of religious fanaticism.

Recently, in the *News Bulletin* of the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen (Aug. 1973), these brethren, it seems, relate all of their current problems in the C.R.C. to the Report 44 on the “Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority” adopted by the Synod of the C.R.C. in 1972. They write:

Dear Christian friends, the Christian Reformed Church is desperately S-I-C-K unto DEATH. The ACRL has pointed out for a long time definite symptoms of the disease. Now it must be said – and said very plainly – that the above-mentioned symptoms are rooted in the deep-seated internal CANCER of REPORT 44/B which the CRC is UNWILLING TO ERADICATE.

Now, that is an extremely serious charge. I would remind these brethren, too, that if they are truly convinced of what they write (their church is “S-I-C-K unto DEATH”), they ought to read carefully Rev. 3:14-22. God’s Word there clearly prescribes the course they are obliged to follow. However, my point in giving this quotation is to show that there is no reference at all to the “common grace issue” in their diagnosis. I would not have expected the writers to have done this, of course. Yet, this failure has distorted their diagnosis and suggests, at best, only a partial prescription for cure. These would allow the root-problem to remain.

It is refreshing, therefore, to read from some of the leaders in the C.R.C. the recognition of a clear relationship between the common grace controversy and the present-day Report 44 controversy. Recently, some have done this in the *Banner*. Though the two articles I read on this subject represented thoughts of men on the “opposite side of the fence” concerning Report 44, these made some pertinent comments which deserve also our notice – for both recognized a close tie between Report 44 and common grace.

For our information, I could state that Report 44, which treats the “Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority,” was presented to and approved by the C.R.C. Synod of 1972. Within C.R.C., this report has commonly been presented as having an “A” and a “B” side (supposedly two sides of one coin). Concerning this Report 44 with its two sides, Editor De Koster of the *Banner* wrote a series of articles (before the Synod of 1972 approved the report) emphatically maintaining that “oil and water do not mix.” Part “A” of this report presumably presents the traditional and Reformed position that the Bible is, in its entirety, the infallible Word of God. About part “B”, however, there is much continuing controversy. Presumably, part “B” presents “biblical revelation” as “an *exclusively* saving revelation” (cf. *Banner*, June 8, 1973, p. 22). Perhaps this gives a bit of an idea of what the C.R.C. constituency has had to face. And it is this point “B” segment which, it is claimed, opens the door to the denial of Scriptural inspiration and introduction of many heresies.

Concerning the relationship between Report 44 and the common grace issue, an interesting article is to be found in the *Banner*, Aug. 24, 1973, by Rev. "Lionhearted" Verduin, entitled, "Will the Real C.R.C. Please Stand Up?". In substance, Verduin insists that the C.R.C., if it is to remain consistent, must "either repudiate Report 44 or repudiate 1924" (common grace). He is in favor, of course, of repudiating Report 44 and maintaining 1924. His reasoning may seem rather strange, yet he has a point. He writes:

At about the time I was in training for the ministry in the C.R.C., that church declared that "over and above" (the Dutch original has *behalve*) the redemptive grace of God there is a non-redemptive grace, known as "common" grace. This declaration, so said the C.R.C., it had derived from the Scriptures. Although the C.R.C. did not at that time make this declaration part of its "Forms of Unity" it was very serious about it; it expected people in pulpit as well as pew to abide by it. Some honest souls, unable to abide by it, thereupon withdrew, to form a secession church. It was seriously meant. (Did these "withdraw", Rev. Verduin, or were they put out through suspension and deposition from office? G.V.B.)

Now, at the end of my ministry, the same C.R.C. has declared that the authority of the Scriptures extends as far, and no farther, than its message of redemption. This it declared in accepting the so-called "Report 44," on "The Nature and the Extent of Biblical Authority."

These declarations cannot both be true, cannot both be biblical. If the Scriptures do indeed teach that there is a non-redemptive grace, a grace that is "over and above" the grace that issues in salvation, then the Scriptures speak authoritatively on at least this non-redemptive theme. If so, then in Report 44 the C.R.C. has plunged itself into an inner contradiction.

May I humbly suggest, Rev. Lionhearted, er, I mean, Verduin, that the "inner contradiction" you have detected in the C.R.C. is really not (as you claim) between Report 44 and 1924. The inner contradiction for the C.R.C. is to be found in 1924 itself. Report 44 represents a long step in the *wrong direction* towards resolving that contradiction (a step Verduin evidently does not want to take). The contradiction of 1924 was that it posited the two-level grace (special and common). Report 44 has, as Verduin detects, dragged even that "special" all the way down to the common. Of this inevitable consequence of 1924 we had warned the C.R.C. from the beginning. To resolve this "inner contradiction," Verduin must not merely advocate return to the two-level grace theology. That would only be a half-way cure which retains the inner contradiction. The C.R.C. must repudiate the two-level grace theory

and return to that Scriptural and Reformed truth of a single, absolutely Sovereign (special) grace of God only. Then, I am convinced, it will have the answer to much of its present difficulties. And it is our sincere desire that this should happen, too.

On the other side of the fence stands Dr. James Daane. He is a man well acquainted with Rev. H. Hoeksema's teachings and the stand of the P.R.C. In the past, he has taken many opportunities to repudiate that position. He, too, recognizes a relationship between Report 44 and 1924. Those who oppose Report 44, he insists, are really opposing 1924. In the *Banner* of June 8, 1973, under "voices" (pp. 22, 23), he writes:

If the 1973 Synod alters or rescinds its 1972 position on the exclusively saving nature of biblical revelation in order to make room for a Bible whose nature and intent is to both save and to damn, then its very next decision should be the extension — with considerable apologies — of a hearty invitation to the Protestant Reformed Churches to come back home. . . .

The contention that biblical revelation is not exclusively saving but also damning, is a grave and fundamental error. If the 1973 Synod honors these overtures (which request repudiation of Report 44 — G.B.V.), the theology of the Christian Reformed Church goes back to pre-1924 days. Such action would not only remove all ground for what 1924 meant by common grace and the well-meant offer of the gospel, it would also violate the very nature of biblical revelation, and with that the nature of the gospel itself. . . .

The issue with which these two overtures confront the 1973 Synod differs in no essential way from the issue with which Herman Hoeksema confronted the 1924 Synod. The 1924 Synod disposed of Herman Hoeksema, but the deepest motifs of his theology were not wholly eradicated from the Christian Reformed Church. The 1973 Synod has the opportunity and obligation to reject them again.

The C.R.C. Synod of 1973 upheld Report 44 by rejecting overtures against that report. The Synod, evidently, heeded Daane's advice to further "eradicate" the "deepest motifs of Hoeksema's theology" in the C.R.C.

Though Daane's conclusions appear the direct opposite of Verduin's, yet Daane has indeed touched upon the heart of the issue. He recognizes that the "well-meant offer of the gospel" of the first point of common grace necessitates ultimately a Report 44B. A "well-meant offer" to every man head-for-head, must imply a biblical revelation which is "exclusively saving and totally redemptive." If one casts out that idea in Report 44, he must logically and consistently cast out the idea of the well-meant offer too. That same "well-meant offer," a few years ago, led Prof. H.

Dekker to the conclusion that such could only be based on a love of God for all men and an atonement of Christ for all men. Deviation indeed breeds deviation.

The hope and solution for the C.R.C. is not to rid itself of Report 44, or of its decisions regarding homosexuality, or of removing this or that professor

from his office — that would only represent cosmetic changes. No; rather the C.R.C. ought to get at the heart of the matter: to root out that deviation which has bred all these recent deviations — even if this means “considerable apologies and a hearty invitation to the P.R.C. to come back home.” Would that not be wonderful?

FEATURE

Giving Thanks Always

Rev. Rodney G. Miersma

We are now only a few days from Thanksgiving Day, a national heritage. As he has done in the past, the President of the United States has declared that all the citizens of America should pause on the twenty-second of November to offer thanksgiving to God. In response to this tradition most American churches will reflect upon thanksgiving in some special way. Many will even hold special services on this day.

But there is something strange about all this. I am sure that there will be many people who will go through the formality of offering prayers and expressing thanks to God while at the same time they have no right to do this, nor should they be so hypocritical to imagine that they even can. This may sound strong to many, yet this is the Scriptural truth. As can be seen from several passages in Holy Writ, thanksgiving is a spiritual exercise which only the believer in Christ can perform. One such passage is Ephesians 5:20 where we read: “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Another is II Corinthians 4:15: ‘For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.’ And in Philippians 4:4, 6 we read; “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Then one more, this time I Thessalonians 5:16-18 where Paul once more instructs: “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give

thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

From these passages three ideas stand out very clearly: 1) that thanksgiving is not a matter of particular occasions, but must be the characteristic of our constant attitude, 2) that it is not concerned with some things while others are excluded from the thanksgiving, 3) that it is the fruit of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord. In connection with this national holiday, the Church surely is reminded of the three great truths just mentioned. But because Thanksgiving Day is national we are in danger of imagining that on that day, at least, to give thanks is a national affair. That it is something in which all the citizens can participate for all are the recipients of the “common grace” of God in one form or another. Yet this is not true on Thanksgiving Day any more than on any other day.

There was a time when the nation, Israel in the Old Dispensation, was also the church of God. However, this is no longer true, for the middle wall of the partition is broken down. The church is among all nations, but no nation is the church. Thus, even on Thanksgiving Day it is only those within the nation that are in Christ Jesus that are able to give true thanks.

Originally, Thanksgiving Day was instituted as a harvest feast. Consequently, two erroneous ideas concerning this day immediately arise. First, because it only comes once a year people regard thanksgiving as a matter for only special occasions. Secondly,

because with a view to harvest we concentrate on material things, we set aside that which we consider evil in order to give thanks only for the good. The Word of God, however, as we saw in Eph. 5:20, says that we must give thanks *always*. This means that giving thanks must be characteristic of our entire life and walk, every day of our life and every moment of our existence. It also means that giving thanks must not be centered in things, for true thanksgiving is *joy in the Lord*. This does not mean that we can not and may not be thankful for *things*, but that in giving thanks for things we may not give thanks for some things and exclude others. It must include everything: all our experiences in life no matter what they may be, regardless of whether they be pleasant or unpleasant according to the flesh.

Specifically, we are thankful for all that is good. This includes our earthly life and all its gifts and powers and talents, health and strength to labor, daily bread, clothing, shelter, prosperity and abundance. In addition there is the home and family, our place in church among the people of God. And we must not forget the rain, sunshine, fertility of the soil, growth of the seed, the grain of the fields, and the fruit of the trees. But there is also the other side of life described by the Baptism Form as "nothing but a continual death" for which we must be thankful. Death surrounds us on all sides, for there is not only joy, but also sorrow; not only health, but sickness, pain, suffering, and agony; not only abundance, but also scarcity and want; not only peace, but wars and rumors of wars; there are fruitful and barren years; rain and sunshine, but also hail, fire, and scorching heat. All these are included in the exhortation to give thanks. Seemingly it is a paradox. How absurd it would seem if our President would enumerate all these things as ground for thanksgiving! Instead we hear "Kind Providence has supplied us with an abundance of good things." Or "the Almighty" has filled our barns with plenty, the wheels of industry are spinning. And the war which we wage is abundant proof that we have not yet reached the perfection of "the more abundant life." Then he may end his speech, saying, "In spite of many sorrows and sufferings, troubles and anxieties, there are many things to be thankful for."

Yet before we become too critical of one who makes such statements, we must look at our own life. Who of us would give thanks for Viet Nam, the Middle East crisis, or Watergate? Which one of us that has been sick for weeks gives thanks to God for the very bed of languishing? And when God comes and takes our dear child from our bosom, do we look at it in such a way that we give thanks? What farmer praises the Lord for the hailstorm which destroyed his crops in a matter of minutes? Indeed, it seems paradoxical

to be thankful for such things since "to give thanks" presupposes that we have received good things, and implies that we are conscious of them, that we count them, name them one by one. Moreover, it presupposes that we rejoice because of the good we have received and do receive. At the same time it implies that we know that they are all gifts, gifts of God, and that we merited none, yea, that we are unworthy of the very least of them. To give thanks is to point to the Giver of all these good things, and praise his holy name for all the goodness, grace, mercy and lovingkindness to us, as they become manifest in all his benefits. But to give thanks *in everything* implies more. First that we give thanks on the ground of everything, because of everything; secondly, that we rejoice because of everything that we receive; and finally, that we acknowledge our God as the giver of it all.

Such giving of thanks for the natural man is impossible for he is rich in things, but not in God. Consider, for example, the parable of the rich fool. Here was a man of abundant wealth who did not acknowledge the fact that it came only from God. He was rich in the things of this world but not in God, and failing completely to acknowledge the fact that corn is in no way food for one's soul. To such men thanksgiving to God in everything is foolishness, for they are "men of this world, which have their portion in this life," Ps. 17:14. They are men "whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things," Phil. 3:19. So foolish are they that they think that their houses shall continue forever. No, they do not give thanks at all for they rejoice in things, never in the Lord. Let us remember that when we gather with our families and friends about the dinner table on Thanksgiving Day, for a joy in the *abundance* of our thanksgiving dinner is quite different from the joy of thanksgiving. A cruel thanksgiving it would be if measured by the abundance of things, for then it would be only for the rich with nothing to say for the poor. The rich eat, drink, and are merry, for tomorrow they die. Hence, they glorify God not as God, neither are they thankful.

True thanksgiving is possible only for the believer in Christ. Does he rejoice in evil, in suffering and pain, sorrow and grief, war and depression? Or does he by sheer power of his will, set his face like flint and show himself victorious over the sufferings of this present time as did the Stoic of old? Of course not! How then is it possible to give thanks in everything? *Because he belongs to Christ*. Christ is the solution to this apparent paradox because He is Lord of all. He was anointed before the foundations of the world to be heir and Lord of all things. Thus, He was and is the Firstborn of every creature and of the dead; and unto

News From Our Churches

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST October 3, 1973 Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church

Classis East met in regular session on October 3, 1973 in Hudsonville. The churches were each represented by two delegates. Rev. R. Van Overloop led the classis in opening devotions; Rev. H. Veldman presided over this session.

Those who attended the October session will no doubt count this day as being well spent. The delegates and visitors were eyewitnesses of the covenant faithfulness of God. They saw in the examination of Candidate Meindert Joostens that God cares and provides for His church; He continues to supply us with undershepherds. The presence of the delegates from the newly organized Prospect

Park, New Jersey, Protestant Reformed Church was evidence that God has given us fruit upon the mission labors in the eastern states. Classis experienced a busy session but the remark was made by more than one delegate that the work of this session was such happy work compared to the work of some of the prior sessions of classis.

The delegates *ad examina* from Classis West, Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. D. Kuiper and Rev. G. Lanting, were, of course, present for the examination of Pastor-elect Joostens and were given advisory vote. Their presence added to the joy of the day.

As most already know, Candidate Joostens successfully passed his examination and now already is Rev. M. Joostens. He has taken up his labors in our Faith Prot. Ref. Church in Jenison, Michigan. It can

(continued on back page)

(continued from pg. 94)

Him and by Him were all things created. As such He is the Head of His body, the Church, for which He came in the fulness of time to realize their redemption by taking upon Himself their sins upon the accursed tree, carrying them away forever. But death could not hold Him; He was raised by God, justifying Him and us in Him. And at the appointed time He shall take us to the heavenly tabernacle where we shall see Him face to face.

Therefore, to belong to Christ means that He is my Lord in everlasting love for we were in Him when He died and was raised and are now in Him by faith, looking for His return. That is why it is possible for us to give thanks in everything, for to belong to Christ does not only mean redemption and comfort during this life concerning my sins, but also that what seems evil in this present time is in reality good. Consider the following: "For all things are ours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's," I Cor. 3:22, 23. Also, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God," Rom. 8:28. That is why we give thanks in everything, always, for our joy is in the Lord. Then, with the prophets of old we can confess "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength," Hab. 3:17-19.

Resolution of Sympathy

The Southwest Senior Young People's Society wishes to express its sincere sympathy to two of its members, Dawn and Rhonda DeJong, and to their father in the recent loss of their mother, and wife,

MRS. RUTH DEJONG

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (I Peter 5:10, 11)

Mr. Jim Schipper, Pres.
Cindy Buiter, Sec'y

Wedding Anniversary

On November 18, 1973, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. RAYMOND VAN TIL, JR. will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. With them, we thank God for His grace toward them in years past, and are thankful for the covenant love and instruction they have given to us. We pray that they may continue to experience God's blessing in the years ahead.

Children: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Van Til, Richard, Mrs. and Mrs. Marvin Berkenpas, Jr., Raymond, Marilyn, and 4 grandchildren.

Denominational Fiftieth Anniversary Committee NOTICE

All churches and organizations who have been contacted by our committee, please send in your material immediately. We are beginning to compile the history and prepare the anniversary book.

We request all churches and schools to send in a *black and white* picture of your building. A glossy snap shot will do, preferably a 5 x 7 enlargement.

We appreciate your cooperation in making our anniversary booklet a meaningful part of our celebration.

Rev. J. Kortering, Sec.
P.O. Box 248
Hull, Iowa 51239

be reported that the pastor-elect gave good account of himself both in the preaching of his sermon based on Psalm 65:4 and also in the several hours of questioning in the loci of dogmatics, in the knowledge of the confessions and scripture, in controversy, and in practica — an exhausting but assuredly most rewarding day for the classis and the examinee.

Following the examination of Candidate Joostens, classis busied itself with routine business. The usual committees were appointed and reported. Rev. J. A. Heys and Elders W. Clason and T. Nelson served on the Classical Appointment Committee. Classis honored requests from Prospect Park and from Classis West (for help in supplying South Holland). The following schedule was adopted for these churches: PROSPECT PARK: November 11, 18, 25 — J. A. Heys; December 2, 9 16 — R. Van Overloop; SOUTH HOLLAND — October 21 — C. Hanco; November 18 — H. Veldman; December 9 — R. C. Harbach; December 16 — M. Joostens; December 23 — M. Schipper.

The finance Committee of Elders J. Van Baren and G. VanDenTop reported expenses totaling \$620.34. Deacon C. De Groot was appointed to thank the ladies of Hudsonville for their catering services.

A subsidy request for aid through December 1974 was approved for Prospect Park. Classis approved subsidy of \$1,740 without a pastor and \$9,888 with a pastor. This request has been forwarded to the Finance Committee of Synod for final action.

In other business, the reports of the stated clerk and Classical Committee were received, the term of the present stated clerk was extended for another three years, the church visitors were given another three-month extension, and the Randolph Church was given permission to contact the churches of Classis East for collections for their new church building.

After the questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and satisfactorily answered, classis adjourned until its January 3rd, 1973 (Thursday) meeting which will be held in Southeast Church. Rev. C. Hanco closed the session with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Huisken, Stated Clerk
Classis East

THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.
Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Prof. Robert D. Decker, Mr. Donald Doezeema, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Cornelius Hanco, Prof. Herman Hanco, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. Dale H. Kuiper, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman

Editorial Office: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema
1842 Plymouth Terrace, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Church News Editor: Mr. Donald Doezeema
1904 Plymouth Terrace, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Reprint Policy: Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
P. O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Business Agent for Australasia: Mr. Wm. van Rij
59 Kent Lodge Ave.
Christchurch 4, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$7.00 per year (\$5.00 for Australasia). Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st or the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

CONTENTS

Jacob Justified	74
Editor's Notes	76
The OPC and the "Free Offer"	77
The Jamaican Field	79
News From Jamaica	80
Two Wise Men and a Fool	82
They're Off and Running	85
<i>The Standard Bearer</i> in Retrospect	86
Deviation Breeds Deviations	91
Giving Thanks Always	93
Consequences of Israel's Apostasy	94