

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The preaching of the Word is central! It is all-important. It is the chief thing. Take it away, and the church cannot survive. Corrupt it, and the church will soon become corrupt and decadent. Remove its sharp edges and dull its ringing tones, and a congregation will become spiritually lethargic and somnolent. Understand, I am not thinking of preaching in general, of much that passes for preaching today. I mean *proper* preaching, that is, the authoritative proclamation of the Word of God according to the Scriptures and in the service of the Word of Christ.

[See page 317

MEDITATION

Triumph Over Death

Rev. M. Schipper

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I Corinthians 15:55-57

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory!

And the saying to which the apostle refers must be found in two prophetic utterances. The first, that which Isaiah declared in Isaiah 25:7, 8: "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces . . ." The second, that which Hosea declared in Hosea 13:14: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues (or, where are thy plagues?); O grave, I will be thy destruction (or, where is thy destruction?): repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."

Summing it all up, the apostle declares:

Death is swallowed up in victory!

Not only does the apostle exuberantly rejoice in the victory, but also in the truth that this victory is the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose as indicated in the prophecy.

But at the same time, a victor's song of triumph!

What a fitting conclusion to that great chapter on the subject of the resurrection!

Triumph, a complete victory, we have in the resurrection through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Victory over death!

A mighty enemy!

The apostle mentions death and the grave. But we know that for those who are not in Christ, another must be added; namely, hell.

A great triad of destruction!

A sequence that ends in eternal desolation for all those who are apart from Christ!

That the apostle does not mention hell, is undoubtedly due to the fact that he is speaking to the children of God. For them the conclusion is not hell, but everlasting glory.

But death and the grave are still a serious reality!

The last enemy that must be destroyed is death. And with it the power of the grave that silently, but efficaciously works, disintegrating our flesh until it returns to the dust from whence it came.

A power not to be sneered at!

Taking hold upon every man that is born of a woman. Rich and poor, young and old, strong and weak, righteous and wicked, — all are required to face this enemy.

An enemy whose power can also be understood. For the apostle explains.

The sting of death is sin! Sin, like a deadly scorpion in whose tail is a stinger, which if it strikes you, will give you a fatal blow. Sin gives to death its power. Take sin away, and death has no power. Take sin away, and death is only a servant.

And the strength of sin is the law! The law here must be understood in its principal sense. Not particularly the ten words, "Thou shalt not!" but the one word: "Thou shalt!" Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and strength. The law which demands positive and strict obedience. The law which blesses you when you keep it, and curses you when you disobey. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. 3:10)

And so there is an unbreakable chain — the law, sin, guilt, corruption, death, and the grave.

Sum it all up: Death and Grave!

Indeed, a mighty, invincible enemy!

Against whom you cannot stand alone!

But against whom you do not stand alone, when you are in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Our Lord Jesus Christ!

He is the Victor, Who gives us a glorious victory!

And be sure to notice His Names. In them you have the indication of a complete Mediator. He is Jesus, Jehovah, Who saves His people from their sins. He is Christ, Anointed One, that is, appointed and qualified to restore us again into the favor of God; as God's Prophet, revealing unto us all the counsel of

God; as God's Priest, bringing in His own body the sacrifice that atones for our sins, with the satisfaction of which He can intercede for us with the Father; as our Lord, claiming us as His precious possession, and ruling over us in such a way that His law is written in our hearts, and bringing us victoriously into His heavenly kingdom.

He it was Who was sent of the Father into the world to assume our nature, to take upon Him our sin and guilt, and to walk the way of the cross in our stead. He it was Who gave Himself willingly unto the death of the cross, the accursed death, in order to satisfy there for our sin and guilt before the tribunal of God. He it was Who was forsaken of God, in order that we might never be forsaken of Him. He it was Who died our death, in order that He might forever break its power, which could destroy us. He it was Who entered the grave, not only to destroy its power, but to make it a passageway to eternal glory for all His own.

The risen and living Redeemer!

He is Victor!

He fulfilled all the demands of the law of God for us, so perfectly that we stand in the judgment of God as those who had never sinned.

Wherefore God also raised Him from the dead, unto which He was delivered because of our offenses, but Who was raised because of our justification. Not only did He remove sin, the sting of death; but He also destroyed sin's power, by fulfilling all the law, walking in perfect obedience. "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me, to do Thy will, O God." This is what He said, and this is what He did.

So death and the grave, though they are still realities for the children of God, are nevertheless our passage way to glory. Hence, we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (II Cor. 5:1)

Glorious victory!

As a mighty hunter standing with his foot upon the prey and exclaiming in loud and audible tones his triumph in the hunt, so the Lord stands as it were with His foot upon the enemy of death, grave, and hell, exclaiming in triumphant tones His victory over our enemy.

And the apostle takes up the refrain, and wants us to sin it with him.

O death, where is thy sting?

O grave, where is thy victory?

You have none, for you have been completely overcome. The law is fulfilled. Sin and death have been overcome. Death and the grave are now become only servants that must rid us of the last vestige of carnal nature, and become the lighted pathway that must lead to everlasting glory.

Thanks be unto God!

For it is He that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

O, indeed, it is through our Lord Jesus Christ!

But our Lord Jesus Christ is also from Him!

So our victory is from God, Who gave His only begotten Son, Who became our Lord Jesus Christ!

Indeed, God was in Christ reconciling us unto Himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us; but instead imputing His righteousness unto us, after He had imputed our guilt unto Him.

In His eternal love and mercy, in His sovereign grace, He gave Christ to and for us, and incorporated us into Christ. So He makes us to become partakers of all Christ's benefits. By grace through faith, which is His gift to us, we are united to Christ, and enter into Christ's victory.

According to this faith, we also now stand, when the time comes to enter into the sphere of death and stand before the open grave, not with tears of sorrow, but with tears of joy and gladness — exclaiming over against death and the grave, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory!"

When we stand in the midst of death and witness the departure of our dear ones, who die in the Lord, we do not weep and howl as those who have no hope; yea, rather, we make confession of our faith, and sing from the heart praise and thanksgiving unto God.

Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

It is this faith that overcomes the world. It is this faith that triumphs over death and the grave. It is this faith that causes our thanks to rise unto God. It is this faith whereby we remain steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

And that faith is rooted and founded in the everlasting gospel.

In Christ Jesus, our Lord, we are more than conquerors!

Thanks be unto God!

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

EDITORIALS

Editor's Notes

GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS, the commemorative volume being published in connection with the Golden Anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be ready, hopefully, on or about the 1st of May, according to the latest information we received. Past experience has taught me not to get my hopes too high about these publishing dates; but we shall see. At any rate, the Reformed Free Publishing Association is ready to accept your orders; and if you want to be among the first to get a copy, mail your order in now. The price is \$5.95 per copy. How many copies will your family want? Send your order, with payment, to: Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

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Speaking of books, a new catalog of our RFPA and other Protestant Reformed publications has been prepared, and it should be ready for distribution in a couple of weeks. All of our latest publications, as well as our older publications, will be listed in that catalog.

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We take this means of expressing our Christian sympathy to a colleague and associate editor, Prof. Robert Decker, in the recent death of his father, Mr. Peter Decker. May the Lord comfort the bereaved and cheer them with His unfailing promises.

Thoughts On Our Golden Anniversary (3)

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

If someone asked you what is the single, most important factor in the life of our Protestant Reformed Churches which has served to keep us what we were from our beginning and which still distinguishes us as a denomination today, what would you answer?

Some would undoubtedly answer: our insistence upon doctrine, the doctrine of our Reformed confessions. And undoubtedly this doctrinal emphasis has played and still does play a significant part in the stance of our churches — especially in an age which is averse to sound doctrine, and, in fact, averse to any doctrinal emphasis whatsoever. For doctrine, after all, is nothing other than the teachings of the Word of God; and what the Word of God teaches constitutes the *content* of saving faith. Faith has as its content all things promised us in the gospel and briefly comprehended in the articles of the Apostles' Creed. Moreover, Christian life without doctrine, practice without principle, is like a ship without a rudder, or like a skyscraper without a foundation. Reformed doctrine is without doubt of great importance, and has undoubtedly been of great importance during the fifty years of our history which we thankfully commemorate this year. Well may we thank our faithful covenant God that He has given us pastors and teachers who instructed us and our children diligently in the truths of our Reformed creeds. The thousands of sermons in which we were

systematically instructed in the truth according to our Heidelberg Catechism and the thousands of hours of catechism classes are so many thousands of reasons for thanksgiving — not to men, but to our God!

Some might probably answer: the most important factor is the readiness of our churches to rise to the defense of the faith and to oppose militantly every departure from and attack upon the Reformed faith. In other words, they would say that our readiness to engage in apologetics and polemics was the key factor throughout these fifty years. Now no Reformed man in his right mind would ever minimize the importance of defending the faith and of warding off every error repugnant thereto. It is simply a matter of record that a Reformed church which refuses to stand fast in the defense of the faith of the gospel and which refuses to warn against and to ward off heresies is not worthy of the name *Reformed*. Just read our Church Order and our Formula of Subscription, and you will soon discover this. Besides, the whole record of church history supports this claim. And above all, how often the Scriptures emphasize this! True, there have been those who have pointed to this militant stance of our churches and who have then claimed that our Protestant Reformed Churches live by reaction, live by negatives. But those who make this claim either do not know what they are talking about, or they are deliberately lying; and neither of these is a happy state in which to be. The fact of the matter is that no

church can live by negatives; and the very fact of our fifty years' existence obviously gives the lie to this suggestion of our detractors.

Nevertheless, however important the above factors may have been in our history and still are today, I would not point to either one of them as the *chief* factor.

What, then, is, by God's grace, the strength of our churches in my opinion?

The preaching of the Word!

Understand, there is no disjunction between doctrinal emphasis and the preaching of the Word. Nor is there a disjunction between the preaching of the Word and the defense of the faith. Properly conceived, there is perfect harmony between these three; in fact, they may never be disjointed. Moreover, sound and pure preaching of the Word will undoubtedly bear fruit in that the people of God become well-founded in doctrine. And it will bear fruit, too, in that we and our children become equipped not only to discern and to guard against false doctrine, but also to eschew error and to love with all our heart the truth.

And yet it is the *preaching* that constitutes the spiritual strength of our churches. And if ever we lose that preaching, it will be the end of our churches and the end of our right of existence as a communion of Protestant Reformed Churches.

This is, of course, a patent truth according to our confessions. Our Belgic Confession singles out the preaching of the Word as the first mark by which the true church may be discerned. Our Heidelberg Catechism, while it does not elaborate on the subject of preaching, nevertheless speaks of it as the means whereby the Holy Spirit works and strengthens faith. And even our Canons of Dordrecht more than once emphasize the importance of the preaching of the Word.

But this is also a matter of experience.

I remember well that in the days of my youth this was always a source of wonderment to me. I never quite believed it. I thought that if you could go out and convince people by stringent argument and clear proof from Scripture of the rightness of our doctrinal position, you would win them and they would be compelled to join our Protestant Reformed communion. If you could only go out and show people, say, that the Three Points were all wrong and that the doctrine of the well-meant offer is essentially Arminian, they would have to be convinced and would have to join the fray against these false doctrines. And indeed, such instruction is necessary and is part of the calling of the church. But I was always a little surprised when my father would return from a home missions tour in the earlier years

of our history and say, "After all, it's not the lectures, not the exposition of doctrine, not the exposing of the errors of common grace — however important these may be — which attracts people to our churches. But it is the preaching! When God's people hear the preaching of the Word in which the God of our salvation is central, in which there are sounded the clear notes of sovereign grace and of God's everlasting and faithful covenant, then their hearts are warmed and they realize that they have been missing something which they sorely need and desire; and then they are attracted to our churches." And in later years I learned to know this by experience in my own ministry.

Let us remember, too, that this is true not only on the mission field, but in the established congregation as well. The preaching of the Word is central! It is all-important. It is the chief thing. Take it away, and the church cannot survive. Corrupt it, and the church will soon become corrupt and decadent. Remove its sharp edges and dull its ringing tones, and a congregation will become spiritually lethargic and somnolent.

Understand, I am not thinking of preaching in general, of much that passes for preaching today. I mean *proper* preaching, that is, the authoritative proclamation of the Word of God according to the Scriptures and in the service of the Word of Christ.

Such preaching is, in the first place, emphatically preaching of the WORD, and that, too, according to the Scriptures. This is really the crux of the matter. Any preaching that is worth its salt must be preaching of *the Word of God*. Preaching that departs from this key characteristic has been bastardized.

This means, secondly, that proper preaching is *exegetical*. It expounds and proclaims the Word of God *according to the Scriptures*. The preacher must say, "Thus saith the Lord!" But woe unto him if he says, "Thus saith the Lord," when the Lord has not spoken! Woe unto him if he, so to speak, puts words in the Lord's mouth! And therefore, the preacher is bound to the Scriptures throughout. He must unfold those Scriptures to God's people. He must proclaim to them the gospel of grace, the gospel of the promise, the riches of salvation, sin and grace, faith and repentance, atonement and justification, regeneration and calling, sanctification and perseverance, eternal life and glory, woe and weal, heaven and hell, blessing and cursing — all according to the Scriptures, and that, too, the Scriptures as conveyed on the wings of a particular text.

In the third place, this implies that preaching must be *specific*. It must be sharp! It must never engage in generalities. And let me add: if the preacher sticks to his text and makes it his purpose to set forth all the riches, all the meaning and significance of his text, his

preaching *will be* specific. But I mean, too, that the preaching itself, the *proclaiming* of the Word, must be *sharp*! In this respect there must be a certain amount of “over-kill” in the preaching. Preaching must not suffer from the “blahs.” It must be calculated to jolt people, to make them listen, to pay attention, to make them hang on every word!

Why is this?

Is it because the keen exegesis, the clear organization, the compelling logic, the ringing oratory of the preacher, or his persuasive conversational approach — is it because these must do the work of saving God’s people and building His church?

We know better.

No, it is because the preaching of the Word is the cutting-edge of the Spirit of Christ, because it pleases God to call His people and to gather His church through preaching that is exclusively and emphatically preaching of HIS WORD. And all the exegesis, the logic, the clarity of organization, the simplicity of explaining deep and rich truths, the talents of speech — all these must be subservient to this purpose of God through the Spirit of Christ.

Hence, in the first place, **PREACH**, preacher! Preach!

And that means: **WORK**, preacher, work! Work with the Scriptures. Work incessantly. Let nothing deter you from this aspect of your ministry. If you fail to devote your energies to this, if your exegetical labors and your sermon preparation begin to get second or third place in your pastoral life, if you “pull one out of the file” or “turn the pile over” when you move to a new congregation, you are doing despite to the Word of God which you are called to preach. You could better resign from the ministry. God hates a lazy preacher!

And it means, too, that you must constantly examine your own preaching critically. A preacher ought to be his own severest critic. It is a very easy and natural course for preaching to become dull, to become humdrum. To prevent this requires constant vigilance and conscious effort on the part of the preacher. And it requires consecration and prayer and listening to the Word of God.

And consistories and congregations: expect and demand and insist upon this kind of preaching! If there is anything in the church that you must guard zealously, anything that is indispensable in the life of the church, anything that has been for fifty years and will be in the future of the utmost importance for the spiritual health of our churches, it is the preaching of the Word!

ALL AROUND US

Prof. H. Hanko

A New Middle East Council of Churches

Pastor Beshai Saeed Beshai, Pastor of the Suez Evangelical Presbyterian Church throughout Egypt, sent an article to the editor of our paper asking that it be published. Prof. Hoeksema and I decided to publish it under this rubric. It carries the title which appears at the head of this article and is slightly edited. It reads as follows:

“As I stated and foresaw in 1963, three church families: The Protestant (113), the Greek Orthodox, Chalcedonian (113), and the Oriental Orthodox, non-Chalcedonian (113), Copts, Gregorians and Syrians, have agreed to form jointly the new Middle East Council of Churches (M.E.C.C.), each church family representing the bodies of churches belonging to its fellowship. I am sad that our Coptic Presbyterian Evangelical Church of Egypt is a member of the M.E.C.C. which in turn is a member of the W.C.C. in spite of many repeated disavowals of such membership in the W.C.C.

“Such a Council has become a strange mixture! a hybrid! a monstrosity! The blood of our great grand-parents, Protestant martyrs of Egypt, forgotten and neglected, is trampled under false ecumenical feet. Nay, the most precious blood of Christ’s sufficient sacrifice is despised in this premeditated crime of involvement in such a sacrilege of the mass and its worship of the host and its mariolatry. Such is the M.E.C.C.! the synagogue of Satan! This new M.E.C.C. has three presidents: Bishop Samuel, Coptic; Bishop Hakim, Greek Orthodox; and Rev. Aharonian (Armenian) Protestant. It has a majority of two-thirds Orthodox churches, and one-third Protestant Churches. This Council will try to shape the future of the religious outlook in the new Near East.

“A dialogue is going on between this M.E.C.C. and the Roman Catholic Church to find a common ground on which the R.C. Church will agree to join this council. They are eager to prepare the way for its entry into

the same religious set-up. Such dialogue will extend to other religious majorities of the Orient, until eventually, and after it is too late to separate, it will prove to have been dialogue with the Devil! It will be Antichristian! the religion of Antichrist! Syncretism, which means agreement of liars! At the supreme Council of the Evangelical Churches of Lebanon and Syria, a proposition was made to the floor that all small Evangelical Churches be suppressed.

From "Playboy" To "The Banner"

We were not a little surprised to see in the March 21 issue of *The Banner* a guest editorial by Dr. Martin E. Marty, professor of the History of Modern Christianity at the University of Chicago and Associate Editor of *The Christian Century*.

Our surprise was due to the fact that Dr. Marty has often been under attack in the Missouri-Synod Lutheran Church as one who has consistently stood with the liberals in their controversies with the conservatives within the Missouri Church. He has, over the years, denied many of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. A number of years ago, he was part of a panel which discussed "Religion and the New Morality". The discussion of this panel appeared in *Playboy* magazine in June, 1967. In the course of the discussion Dr. Marty openly advocated fornication as a way of life under certain circumstances. The July, 1967 *Playboy* quoted Marty as saying: "... I could conceive, from the pastoral

"Bible-believing churches, look out! Pressure and oppression may soon come upon you as is the case in many lands of Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe, where the churches belonging to the W.C.C. are seeking to be the only ones officially recognized by the local governments.

"We need in our regions a 'Continuing Presbyterian Church'.

"Brethren and sisters, pray for us."

point of view, the legitimacy of something like adultery in extreme situations." (Quoted from *A Christian Handbook On Vital Issues*, p. 747). This same book quotes Marty as saying: "Such doctrines as the Trinity, divinity of Jesus and the authority of the Bible are meaningless symbols because such beliefs have not resulted in any different type of action or reaction to the world." (This quote originally appeared in the November, 1966 *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.)

Although the Editorial in *The Banner* was relatively innocuous, (it was a rather brief and general criticism of conservative theology), it strikes us as being very strange that *The Banner* could give editorial space to such an enemy of the Christian faith. To jump from the columns of *Playboy* to *The Banner* is a prodigious leap. One is astounded that *The Banner* should assist in this.

Grade School Ecumenism

A reader gave us a clipping from the Byron Center, Michigan paper which contained a picture and an article dealing with a joint mass held by students of a Roman Catholic School and the local Byron Center Christian School. The article is entitled: "Two Schools Participate in Ecumenical Mass" and reads as follows:

Holy Family School in New Salem extended an invitation to the sixth grade students of Byron Center Christian School, through their principal, Mr. Bonama, to join their sixth grade students in attending a Unity Mass at St. Mary's Church on January 23. The invitation was accepted and forty-four students from the Byron Center School came. Mr. DeArment, a student teacher, accompanied them, as Mr. Babeldyke, the assistant principal was unable to come. Twenty-seven students from Holy Family school participated. Mrs. Genevieve Fein is their teacher, as well as the school principal. Rev. Ephraim Davanzo officiated at the mass.

Following the mass, refreshments were served in the lunch room and a film, "Africa, Land of

Tomorrow" was shown. It is a missionary film by the Consolata Fathers.

This constitutes a dreadful sin on the part of those in Byron Center School who agreed to this. It is the responsibility of Christian School teachers to give covenant children instruction which is rooted in the Reformed faith — a faith for which their fathers died, often at the hands of Roman Catholics. How can these teachers do this in any conscientious way when, by such a mass, the teachers tell their children that the mass is a legitimate ceremony in which to participate. Without saying anything about how the school can busy itself with matters that are ecclesiastical and belong to the institute of the church, and without saying anything about how young children can unofficially have a part in the celebration of the sacrament of the death of our Lord, it is impossible for these teachers ever to point their children to our own precious Heidelberg Catechism which calls the mass "an accursed idolatry". What will these children think when they

hear a sermon on that Lord's Day in their church? What will go through their minds when they remember that they had a part in such a celebration? and that God forbids idolatry upon penalty of death? What will happen when these same children grow up and take their place in the Church? when upon them falls the responsibility to defend the historic Reformed faith overagainst the corruptions of the

truth by the Romish Church? They will be unable to defend their position, and will stand in the vanguard of a false ecumenism which brings Roman Catholics and "Reformed" together. And the responsibility for all this falls upon the heads of muddle-headed teachers who have abrogated their Christian and covenantal responsibilities to play games with the truth.

Destination Anaheim

The Missouri-Synod Lutheran Church is torn by trouble. Internal dissension is leading rapidly to a schism which will split the Missouri Church down the middle. Anaheim, California is the place where the next convention will be held; and most members of the Church believe that the convention in Anaheim will determine, once for all, the future of the Church.

In the March 10, 1975 issue of *Affirm*, the editor lists the major issues which will be on the top of the Convention's Agenda and which will have to be resolved. We quote briefly from the article.

The growing feeling is that *three or four major matters must be finally resolved at Anaheim*. By grace they will be.

In whatever form the District publications and the resolutions state it, they essentially agree that *Seminex must be abolished*. (Seminex is the rival Seminary set up by those who taught false doctrine in Concordia Seminary and were put out of their teaching posts. H.H.) Of course, Missouri can't prevent the Seminex group from continuing to function, if it chooses to do so, but it can determine to break off all relations with it, continue to refuse recognition to its graduates as candidates for Missouri's ministry, and generally shut a firm door on this unhappy episode in Missouri's history. . . .

There is further concern over *the placement of Seminex graduates*. Some of them have been installed as pastors in a disorderly manner, . . .

A growing consensus exists that *Synod must deal with the question of District Presidents*, their role,

and the disobedience of some to her by-laws. Missouri can't afford an array of these men proceeding to act officially as they choose. Anaheim, at a minimum, if Synod is to be restored to that decency and order the Scriptures call for, must ask erring presidents to apologize to the church, to undo their mistakes, to promise to end their practice of by-passing the regulations all Missourians have commonly agreed to; and it must create a means whereby those who refuse to act in this way can be removed from office by Synod's president. . . .

Last July *Affirm* carried an analysis of what had happened at District conventions around the country. It reported that the large Michigan District had memorialized the Anaheim convention to make it a synodical policy that "all who continue their active support for ELIM be declared ineligible for synodical office or divine call into the preaching and teaching ministries of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod."

This request to *act decisively on ELIM adherents* will come before the convention as will similar requests. That ELIM has become a church within a church is commonplace among Missourians today. And as long as ELIM exists, it will present Missouri a serious problem. . . . (ELIM stands for "Evangelical Lutherans In Mission", and constitutes an organization within the denomination which has sought to promote the causes of the liberals. H.H.)

These immediate issues arise out of the deep doctrinal differences between liberals and conservatives. What the Convention decides on these issues will determine the doctrinal direction of Missouri for many years.

You would have us to rest content with the permission of God only. But God, by His prophet, asserts that His will and His hand are in the whole matter as the moving cause. Now just consider, then, which of the two is the more worthy to be believed, God, Who by His Spirit, the only fountain of truth, thus speaks concerning Himself; or you, prating about His hidden and unsearchable mysteries out of the worthless knowledge of your own carnal brain? What! when God calls in Satan for His purposes, as the instrument of His vengeance, and openly gives him commandment to go and deceive the prophets of Ahab, does this positive command differ nothing from a mere permission? The voice of God contains in it no ambiguity whatever. "Who (saith God) will go and deceive Ahab for me?" Nor does God command Satan in any obscure manner: "Go thou and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets" (1 Kings 22). Now I wish to know from you whether the doing of things is the same as the permitting it to be done? When David had secretly abused the wife of another man, God declares that He will cause all David's wives to be dragged forth, to make an example of the same disgraceful sin openly in the sight of the sun. God does not say, "I will permit it to be done," but "I will do it." But you, in your wonderous defence of God (as you think), would aid Him by your fallacious help in thrusting forward your imaginary permission! How very differently does David think and act! He, while revolving in his mind the fearful judgment of God, exclaimed, "I was dumb because Thou didst it!" — John Calvin, *The Secret Providence of God*, p. 288

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Give Me...Your Children

Rev. G. Van Baren

I recall studying in the history of our country the account of peoples of many lands emigrating to this land "of freedom". It seemed to me a moving event when these individuals entered the harbor at New York and beheld the Statue of Liberty welcoming them to their new homeland. The poem affixed to that Statue contains the stirring lines, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. . . ." Today, however, one might suggest that these lines could be modified to suit the situation of our own day. This Statue, standing as representative of this mighty land, could well proclaim our present philosophy, "Give me your children to train and educate to make them fit citizens of this land of increasing socialism and government control." Perhaps far more than we are ready to acknowledge, the government of our land has sought to gain control of the children of the land — and of our children, too.

Of course, there is wisdom in the attempt to train children from their early youth. Scripture itself reminds children of God of the importance of teaching children when they are young. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6. On this basis, covenant parents instruct their children not only in the homes, but also in our own Christian schools.

There is an awareness in our land, among the "progressive" and "liberal" elements, that only if *all* children in this country receive the kind of training they deem necessary, will we develop the sort of country they envision — a country of peace and prosperity where all are equal. These leaders know that there is little hope of re-training those who are older. Older people are too fixed in their ways. But the young can be trained. Such training must not be left to individual parents or to private schools. There must be a master plan which will provide for the instruction of *all* children without exception.

Step-by-step, in recent years, the groundwork is being laid for the eventual closing of private and Christian schools. Laws have been passed, and are being considered, which would allow for the full control of the schools by federal government. Perhaps sooner than we now imagine, private and Christian education will be ended. That must happen if the universal kingdom of the antichrist is to be established.

The federal government has made long strides towards control over the education of the children.

Together with local government, it has passed laws to regulate the public school system. The government determines who may or must teach; it determines where one is required to send children; it determines, to a large extent, the subjects which must be taught. The federal government has exercised such control usually under the "civil rights laws" of the land.

The federal government has done much to control schooling through the federal funds contributed to schools. By the threat of withholding such funds, local school systems have been compelled to follow certain government guidelines for the operation of these schools. It is also for this reason that the Christian schools ought by all means to refuse governmental assistance. Federal funding ultimately would mean federal control.

Increasingly, government on various levels seeks to control education. Without doubt, the days ahead will mark more and more of such control also over our own schools. Nor is government content to control children while they are in school. There is agitation for instruction and control over the children from birth through at least the age of 14. The argument is that there are many children who, because of economic privation or parental unconcern, are not receiving the early instruction which they need in order to develop into worthy U.S. citizens. The federal government must, therefore, see to it that such provision is made that these may be properly trained in their youth. So, members in Congress submit bills which, hopefully, will remedy this situation. Yet when one considers the bills which have been submitted, one is struck by the fact that these will surely open the door toward total government control over not only underprivileged children, but over *all* children.

One of these bills came to my attention recently. This bill is numbered: H.R. 155, submitted to the House of Representatives, 94th Congress, 1st session. The bill itself contains many things which seem, at least in superficial study, to be harmless. It would appear to be an enlargement of what has been called the "Head Start" program for the underprivileged. This bill is called, "The Comprehensive Child Development Act."

Many have objected to the bill because of the unbelievably large sums of money required to initiate and maintain its proposals. According to the bill itself, "There is hereby authorized to be appropriated the sum of \$2,000,000,000 for the fiscal year ending

June 30, 1976; the sum of \$3,000,000,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1977; and the sum of \$4,000,000,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1978." There are those who claim that this is but the "tip of the iceberg". Expenditures are expected to soar far beyond these suggestions in the bill.

But our concern is not first of all the matter of the cost. What ought to trouble us is the repeated emphasis upon the "rights" of children. This bill also, throughout, assumes that children have certain "rights". The assumption is that children have the "right" to good medical care; they have the "right" to education from infancy on; they have the "right" to good nutrition. The difficulty which arises with this idea of one's "rights", is that *responsibility* and *duty* are ignored or distorted. The *responsibility* of fulfilling these "rights" inevitably is placed upon some governmental agency. Rather than emphasizing the *duty* of parents, governmental agencies assume that they ought to be responsible for taking over these parental tasks. Certainly, that sort of action can only inevitably lead not merely to "communism" which so many seem to fear, but rather toward the anti-christian kingdom (which will likely be very socialistic).

One finds various disturbing elements in a bill such as H.R. 155. First, there are presented assumptions which are unproven. As a reason for this "child development program," it is stated that "millions of American children are suffering unnecessary harm from the present lack of adequate child development services, particularly during their early childhood years." It is simply an unproven statement that there are "millions" of such children. Another real question could be asked: "What are *adequate* child development services?"

The bill further suggests that "comprehensive child development programs, including a full range of health, education, and social services, are essential to the achievement of the full potential of America's children and should be available to all children regardless of economic, social, and family background." The question arises, "Who is to determine what is *essential* for the development of full potential?" Certainly with a bill of this nature, it will be governmental authorities which ultimately determine what is *essential* for the development of the potential in *all* children (not only for the poor and deprived, but for *all* children). If the government determines that it is *essential* for the development of the full potential of my children that they receive no Biblical instruction but rather training in the theories of evolution, it seems to me that this bill would allow for such determination.

The proposed bill desires to place special emphasis

upon the preschool children: "It is the purpose of this Act to . . . make child development services available to all children who need them, with special emphasis on preschool programs for economically disadvantaged children and for children of working mothers and single parent families. . . ." Surely there is a recognition of the necessity to provide training from infancy on ("preschool programs"). Thus children can reach their "full potential" presumably.

The Act makes plain, too, that it is not merely designed for the underprivileged. The purpose of the Act is also to "establish the legislative framework for the future expansion of such programs to provide universally available child development services." It might indeed be argued that "universally available" services are not compulsory. Fact is, however, that what is "universally available" and what is deemed to be essential for the "achievement of the full potential of America's children" would also shortly be made compulsory. Presumably, children have the "right" to use that which is available for the development of their potential. And government can well insist that each must make full use of their "right".

The bill before Congress suggests, too, that this proposal will give "thousands of American women the opportunity to achieve their full employment potential." In other words, women are encouraged to leave their children from shortly after birth in order to work — and others will take over the task of training their children. Instruction will no longer be given at home, but government agencies will see to that. All this is, of course, voluntary. But the way is being opened so that none will feel obliged to carry out their parental responsibilities. "Big Brother" will take care of the children. The implications of all this are ominous. What is now suggested as a voluntary act in freeing one's self from the restrictions of raising children, can and will soon become compulsory (in order to develop the full potential of America's children).

One writer, in opposing a similar bill, stated, "I can not escape the haunting fear that if this measure is enacted we shall be taking a final, fatal step down the road which leads to a completely controlled existence of the kind portrayed by Orwell's "1984" and Huxley's "Brave New World" and, most recently, by the work of B.F. Skinner. Rather than breeding that race of wise and just philosopher-kings dreamed of by Plato, however, we are more likely to end up producing a race of docile automatons. The proposal as it is now designed cannot possibly rise to the level of its utopian expectations; and that failure will, in time, produce widespread frustration and, in all likelihood, a yet more stringent program to remedy the deficiencies of this one. And that, in turn, will be a good deal less voluntary."

In all of this, one is reminded of that end-time when anti-christ shall attempt to control all things. To gain such control, he must begin with the youth. Communist countries are well aware of this — and proceed from that principle. He who controls the youth will possess and direct them also when they grow older.

Children of God ought to resist steadfastly every

attempt of this world or of our government to control or to teach our children. On the other hand, we ought to be very faithful in instructing and seeing to the instruction of the covenant seed. The time is short. What our children learn well now, can not be taken from them. Soon this privilege of training our own children could indeed be taken from us. Watch, therefore, and be diligent in this important calling given to us!

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Confessing Faith

Rev. J. Kortering

Most churches have a door marked, "Consistory". Outside that door many a child has stood and peeked inside wondering with child-like curiosity as to what was going on inside. The clink of money, the clearing of throats, the quiet conversation, the smell of stale smoke — all made up a rather strange combination. Before that door many a young elder or deacon paused with second thoughts, weighing his future with some degree of trepidation. Before that door many a sinner bowed with humble submission, burning with shame, but more so longing for the forgiveness of Christ and His church. Before that door an occasional member stands with wrath and fury, waiting to vent his wrath upon those who are entrusted with the rule of Zion. Before that door appear the troubled who seek peace, the weary who long for rest, and sorrowing who come to find comfort.

Young people also find it necessary to stand before that door. That moment is filled with its own kind of emotions, a mixture of anticipation, of fear, of somber reflection, of relief. It is all involved in what we call making confession of our faith.

Some of you youthful readers may be planning on appearing at your consistory's door soon. Others of you may be giving this some "thought". This is written particularly for you.

THE EXAMINATION

Those words are frightening; they arouse all sorts of horrendous memories from past experiences. Examination!

This examination is of a different kind. You have never had such an exam before in your life. You will not appear before the consistory for an interview for a job. This is not an interview to see whether you qualify for a promotion. Neither is it an oral exam to determine whether you will graduate and get some

diploma. This is different. This exam has to do with *faith!*

You can be sure, then, that the emphasis and purpose is not first of all academic; it is not first of all a personality profile; it is not first of all to determine emotional stability. Rather it is spiritual. You have come to express your faith and what that means to you and how you will gladly speak of it to others.

The questions will be directed to achieve this end. You can be sure that your minister or elder is not asking questions to try to trick you, try to give you a hard time, try to make you look bad in the eyes of others. They desire to know what you believe as well as how you live. Your presence in the consistory places you in the midst of officebearers of the church who function in the love of Christ. There is joy in their hearts simply by having you in their midst and telling them you desire to make confession of your faith.

Faith involves believing. Your presence before the consistory must indicate that you do believe. The questions asked will be formulated to show to the consistory that you know what you believe and believe what you know. In addition to this, they will be interested in discerning that your faith is sincere and that it is confirmed also by a godly walk in the midst of this world. You must expect to be asked questions that have to do with your knowledge of the Bible, of Reformed truth as taught in our churches, of your personal understanding of these truths and whether they are for your own salvation and eternal hope in Christ.

Let me emphasize something that we consistory members look for at such a time. True, we rejoice when young people are able to answer questions about doctrine and prove these from the Bible. True, we are thankful when our young people can express their belief in the historic Reformed faith and are

willing to reject the errors so prevalent in our day. We are also thrilled to hear them say they have to struggle against sin and that they intend by God's grace to walk uprightly in the world. All this we seek and believe is necessary. But the attitude of young people makes such a difference. *Sincerity* is the key word. Knowledge without conviction is a farce, piety without godliness is a sham. Give this some thought before you stand before the consistory door.

PREPARATION

It's sad but true that some young people become very cynical when they talk about making confession of faith. This is particularly true of older young people, of whom it might have been considered normal to have made confession of faith, but they haven't. Rightly or wrongly, such young people usually have an arsenal of reasons why they haven't seriously considered appearing before the consistory. Sometimes with a degree of maliciousness, they castigate other young people who have made confession of faith and tauntingly point out, "O sure, they make confession of faith, but do you know why? It's just expected of them; like so many robots who have completed the catechism course, they parade to the consistory without even giving it thought as to why. Why, so and so just wants to get out of going to catechism, that's all. You know how it is with so and so, his folks put such pressure on him that the poor fellow isn't even able to think for himself."

Is there any truth to all of this?

Ask yourself and be honest.

If there is, then standing before that door would be less than honest and one can better wait until the proper motive comes to the fore.

And what is the proper motive?

Jesus expressed it this way, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father in heaven," Matt. 10:32. We must distinguish between possessing faith and confessing faith. Surely, covenant young people possess faith early in life. Within the sphere of a Christian home, church, and school, young people are surrounded with God's Word. You know this from your own experience, more than likely. You were taught to read the Bible, to think of your sins, to believe that Jesus died for your sins and that your heavenly Father forgives you when you come to Him in true repentance. You studied the truth of God's Word and learned in greater detail Who God is, our natural depravity, our only Mediator, Jesus Christ. By your own spiritual growth you learned the need of prayer, the joy of singing, the blessedness of quiet meditation. You sat in church and in different ways

and in various degrees began to understand the Word preached and your need for that instruction, admonition, warning, and comfort. You began to realize that this is what faith is all about. From a child you repented and believed in response to the call of the gospel.

Now you desire to make confession of faith before the church. This is something special. Making confession of faith is an opportunity for you to express before the church that the promises of the gospel are real as far as you are concerned. Your parents and the church believe that the promise is unto believers and their children. They had placed the sign of the covenant, baptism, upon you as an infant in obedience to that glorious truth. Now you have come to an age in your life when you want all to know that that sign of the covenant was not placed on you for your destruction, but as a sign of your salvation. You are old enough to announce to the church that you possess that faith in common with all the members of the body of Christ. You desire to receive all the benefits of being a member of Christ's church, not only the preaching of the Word, but also the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. You are willing to accept the responsibility of membership in Christ's Church and want all to know that you willingly do that. Therefore you go to the consistory to confess (speak together with the church) and stand before the church to profess (speak before the church) your faith. It is a blessed experience that must not be postponed if it can be done honestly and sincerely now.

But, how can you know whether you are ready for such a step?

Here is a time in your life when you have to determine your spiritual maturity. It is important that you do not confuse this with spiritual perfection. None of us ever become so mature that we do not have to continue to grow. We can always learn more of the truth, the Bible, and how this must be applied to our daily life. Making confession of faith does not mean that you have to conclude that you know everything and that you are walking in victory over all sin. Take courage, this will never happen until we leave this life for glory. Don't wait with making confession of faith for this.

Rather, evaluate whether you are mature enough to answer the three questions presented to you (see page 59 of our Psalter). Maturity involves three things, that you are knowledgeable of the truth, that you understand what faith is and why you make confession of faith in a Protestant Reformed Church. Secondly, you have come to that conviction that this truth is right and that you are thankful to God that you may be known as a believer. You hold the truth of the Scripture to be precious and are not ashamed

to be known as a Reformed Christian. Conviction saves one from being cast to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Thirdly, you must also be filled with the love of God in Jesus Christ, so that you are assured that you are one of God's elect and that you are thankful for your salvation and will gladly, in loving obedience, serve the Lord with all your life.

You may ask: well, how can I determine whether or not this is true of me? What guidelines are there for such personal evaluation?

Test your intellectual understanding of the truth by reviewing the booklet, "Doctrinal Review", by Rev. H. Hoeksema. Read those questions over, think about the answers; and if you can answer those questions, you have the knowledge of the truth in a brief form.

Concerning your convictions, think along these lines. Do you have any doubts about the Bible, the Reformed Confessions, or what is preached in church. If you do, you must honestly work these out before making confession of faith. You can study more; there is plenty of material available. You should go privately and discuss these with your parents or your minister; they will do all they can to open for you the Scripture. By all means, pray about it and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. How do you evaluate your relationship with the church? Are you serious about membership? Do you sincerely pray to God that He may keep you as a faithful member and that you

intend to contribute everything that you have for the good of the church and the advancement of Christ's kingdom? Or do you have reservations, maybe intentions of leaving the church? There may be different reasons for this, a job far removed, an impending marriage, a career in the armed services, etc. If you know that you will not be remaining with the church, you should not make confession of faith in the church; this is hypocrisy. You should be sincere in answering the questions.

Finally, ask yourself what Christ means to you personally. Do you doubt your salvation? This, too, must be resolved if it exists. You must come to a point when you can say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I committed unto him against that day," II Tim. 1:12. You must be sincere in your desire to walk as a Christian, not to be seen of men, but to express gratitude to your Father for His salvation. This is a difficult way, marked by tears, burdened by jeers, and weighed with self-denial. Yet it is most blessed.

When you stand before the consistory door and it is opened to you, enter with believing heart, and trust that God will put words upon your lips that will express the desire of your heart. You may be sure that God will supply all your needs in Christ Jesus.

As you leave, may the Lord seal that profession with His blessing.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Hebrews 12: 18-24 (cont.)

Rev. G. Lubbers

THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT — JESUS (vs. 24)

The greatest and climactic detail concerning the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem is that we have now "come to" the Mediator of the new covenant. We have not come to the law-giver, Moses, who was faithful in all of God's house as a servant (Hebrews 3:3); but we have come to Jesus, the High Priest of our profession, Who is the Son, and Who is the builder of the house. He is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, by virtue of God's Word of promise and of oath which cannot be broken.

In Hebrews 8:6 the writer says that Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry than that of the priest of the Old Testament tabernacle. The reason is that He is the Mediator of a better covenant. It is the covenant in which the law is written upon the hearts,

and the sins are removed forever and are remembered no more, and which covenant cannot be broken. (Heb. 8:7-13) The viewpoint here is of a "better" covenant, comparing the Old Testament Covenant with the New Testament in Christ's blood. Here the covenant is called "new." The term for "new" here in the Greek is not *kainos*, that which is unworn, newly made, but here it is *neos*, which is new and does not belong to the old order of the shadows and types of the Sinaitic tabernacle. It is the covenant which is new because it is the complete removal of our sins and guilt and is the covenant life of the heavenly Jerusalem and the temple of the living God dwelling with His people. It is the new covenant based upon the better promises of God which assure us the eternal, spiritual verities, which cannot be lost or be taken from us. They are eternal, secure, and belong to the things which the Judge of all men approves.

For this covenant is such that it is the application of "blood of sprinkling." This blood is the blood of the Son of God in our human nature. It was shed on the cross, and now the King-Priest has also "sprinkled" this blood on the mercy-seat of the Ark of God's covenant, so that the throne of God is a throne of pure grace for us and is the mercy-seat. We have access to God forever by this blood of sprinkling of the Mediator, Jesus. For this Jesus' blood is not common blood; it is the blood of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) It has eternal value, we must remember; it is blood which cries for forgiveness and atonement. It "speaks" of the mercy and forgiveness of God. Peace with God has been made for us by this blood. (Col. 1:20) and we have redemption from sin through this blood. (Eph. 1:7; 2:13) And we have free access into the holiest place of God by means of this blood. This "blood of the Lamb," which the Mediator brought, is the means of mediation. It is the atonement price which was paid! All other blood which is shed is like the blood of Abel in the church. Many saints have died by the sinful hands of cruel men, even all the prophets; and their blood cries for vengeance. But this blood "speaks" another language. It speaks of peace, reconciliation, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

And now we need not tremble when God speaks from Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. We can look away to this Jesus, Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross and despised the shame and is set down on the right hand of God. To this new *status quo* we must cling with all our hearts, and not be moved from the hope of our calling. And, therefore, we must not have feeble hands and weak knees, but be strong and vigilant in the battle of faith. We must not allow a root of bitterness and unbelief to take over in the church, and that many be troubled and depart from the faith.

THE FINAL, GREAT WARNING AND EXHORTATION (Heb. 12:25-28)

We call attention to the fact that in Hebrews the writer has much exhortation to the readers. It might seem that the letter to the Hebrews is predominantly instructive. There is much instruction, indeed; however, all the instructive passages are given and elicited from the Old Testament Scriptures in view of exhortation to the saints not to apostatize from the living God, as He speaks to us in these latter days in His Son. (Heb. 1:1-4) So much so is this a letter of exhortation, that he calls the entire letter "a word of exhortation." (Heb. 13:22) We do well to keep this over-all hortatory character of the Epistle in mind when we set ourselves to understand this final word of exhortation to these Hebrew saints.

This word of warning here deals not simply with the danger of falling into transgression of some of God's commandments because of the weakness of the flesh, but it deals with the sin of apostasy from faith in Christ to unbelief in rejecting Christ, accounting the blood of Christ as being "common," not having redeeming power. Such is the sin of *unbelief*. This was the sin of unbelief of Israel of old when they refused to obey the Lord and enter into the land of promise. They could not enter because of their unbelief. (Heb. 3:19)

A little survey of Hebrews will demonstrate that such is the repeated refrain and warning of this letter. Already in Hebrews 2:1-3 there was such a warning uttered by the writer. It warns against neglecting so great salvation, and points out what happened to Israel of old when they did not give heed to the word which was spoken by angels to Moses at Horeb. And then the writer makes the comparison with what will happen if we neglect what was spoken by Christ Himself as the Lord of His church while on earth, and which was later confirmed by the preaching of the apostles who heard Christ personally in all of His preaching. God is a jealous God in both dispensations; however, He is more severely so in the New Testament dispensation. Or, again, notice how the writer warns against an evil heart of unbelief to turn away from the living God (Heb. 3:12), and shows what happened to Israel as they died during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness. This is a warning finger, the warning against apostasy, basic apostasy from the faith in Christ, to mere worship in ceremonial ordinances which are of no profit. In Hebrews 6:6 we have that awesome word of God concerning those who have once been enlightened, tasted of the heavenly gift, and fall away. These cannot again return to faith, but are like the earth which brings up thorns and thistles. It can only be destroyed. And in Hebrews 10:26-30 we have a description of those who trample the Son of God underfoot, count the blood of Christ a common thing, and who do despite to the Spirit of grace. These will fall into the hands of the living God. God is a God of vengeance; He will judge His people. That is the "word of exhortation" to those concerning whom the writer is "persuaded better things." (Heb. 6:9; 10:39)

And now the writer pens his final great warning. He takes his warning from the keynote of Hebrews 1:1. This "note" is "God — spake in times past, and He speaks (hath spoken) now in these last days in His Son." For unbelief is rejecting God, Who speaks to us either in the prophets or in His Son. He that rejects Moses rejects Christ; for "he spoke of me." (John 5:46, 47) Christ is the great subject in all of the Old Testament Scriptures. Hence, let us never fail to see this fact blazoned upon the sacred page. He that

rejects Christ rejects the One Who "speaketh" in the Scriptures; he rejects the testimony which God gave concerning His Son and concerning all things in Him. (I John 5:9-12)

THE GREATER REJECTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THAN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (Heb. 12:25-27)

It is a dreadful thing to refuse to listen to God, Who cannot lie. It is not simply a refusing of God's Word, but it is really a refusing of God Himself. The verb for refuse in the Greek is *paraiteeseesthe*. It means: to entreat, to beg off, to reject, to decline receiving. It is according to the tense used a final, once for all rejecting of God Who speaks, Who reveals Himself in His prophets and in His Son. Unbelief is a dreadful thing. It is an attempt to decide for oneself what is good and evil, right and wrong. It is the sin of the apostate from God, the hater of God. Against this basic sin of unbelief to which the Judaizers would tempt them, force them even to succumb by persecution and affliction, the believers are warned and also strengthened by means of this exhortation. The church militant must be on their guard. We must stand our spiritual sentinel watch, be sober and vigilant, and not fall asleep. Hence, the "beware" in our text to the Hebrews. They must be watchful unto prayer.

The writer emphasized that the word spoken by the "one speaking" is a divine word. The term used is *chreematizonta*, that is, "the one giving divine communications." (Heb. 2:3) It was no mere human word that was spoken at Sinai, nor by Christ on earth. No prophecy is of private interpretation, but holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (II Peter 1:21) So that rejecting of the gospel,

whether in the Old Testament at the foot of Mt. Sinai, or promulgated from the heavenly Mt. Sion, is ever a rejecting of the divine Speaker, God. That shows us the heartbeat of unbelief; it is against this that we are warned in every age.

The writer reasons from the lesser to the greater, from the fearfulness of rejecting "him that spoke on earth" to what would happen if "we turned away from him who speaketh to us from heaven." The latter is far worse in its breadth and implication. Why? The former who spoke on earth were but earthly messengers. They were truly messengers of the Most High, but they were still but men and nothing more. Human prophets, who said, "Thus saith the LORD." But he who speaketh from heaven is God in the flesh. He says, "But I say unto you." He is Immanuel, God-with-us. He is the chief Prophet, Who revealed to us the entire, secret counsel of God concerning our redemption. God spoke in these last days to us in His Son. (Heb. 1:1) And this Son is He Who "upholds all things by the word of his power." By Him were the ages made in their beginning and in their providential control according to the counsel of God. That was speaking "from heaven." This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father.

So we see the greater rejection of the speaking God in the New Testament. Where there is more light and more revelation there is a greater rejection of the majesty of God in His Son. If those who rejected in the Old Testament in the wilderness and in Israel's prophetic history did not escape the judgment of God, who will escape the jealous and holy wrath of God who rejects His Son? Upon such the wrath of God abides forever.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Covenant Certainty

Rev. John A. Heys

It would be expected of a man who had such rich promises as Abram that he would do a great deal of thinking about them. And Abram did do exactly that. He lived in the hope of their fulfillment, and these promises were with him every day. The evidence of this is found in Genesis 15 when God appears to him and tells him that He is his shield and great reward.

Abram had just returned from rescuing Lot from the four kings of the north and east. He had refused any reward from the king of Sodom. And he had given tithes to Melchizedek and had been blessed by

this priest of the most high God. Then it is that God appears to him in a vision and tells him that He is his shield and great reward.

In answer to these comforting words Abram asks, "Lord Jehovah, what canst thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward (heir) of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" This shows that Abram had been thinking very seriously and very much about that covenant promise of being a great nation. More and more he came to the painful awareness that all this could not be realized as long as he did not have a

son. Implied, of course, in God's promise of making him a great nation was the promise of seed. But God had never said in so many words what he now declares to Abram, that "he that shall come out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." He had merely promised to make of him a great nation and to give him this land. And Abram had believed God. But as the years went by and he became older and Sarai remained just as sterile, it caused much thought in Abram's mind and life as to the fulfillment of this promise. And now when God tells him that He is his shield and great reward Abram reveals how close to the surface, how frequently before his consciousness was this promise and the need of a son for its fulfillment. Apparently entirely out of context Abram speaks of the need of a son to be his heir. And yet it is not so out of context at all. For God being his shield and God being his exceeding great reward mean nothing if the covenant promise is not fulfilled. Abram must be shielded from shame and disappointment as far as the covenant promises are concerned as surely as he must be from all the Canaanites who resented having him in their land. And what reward is there and how is God Abram's exceeding great reward if all these covenant promises are not fulfilled?

God is Abram's and our exceeding great reward only in Christ. He is our exceeding great reward, and Abram's as well, only when He comes into our flesh, dwells with us, saves us by His blood and takes us up into that covenant life which He has promised in the new Jerusalem, the holy city. But all this requires seed. A son must be born to Abram that will in time bring forth this Christ, this Seed of the woman that will give us the victory and shield us forever from our sin and guilt.

And realizing that he must have a son, Abram had been thinking not only about these covenant promises; he had been looking to see how God was going to fulfill them. He had looked to Lot, but God took Lot away and removed him far from Abram's side. Now he is looking at his servant Eliezer of Damascus. If nothing happens, if God does not give him a son before he dies, Eliezer will inherit all his goods, and it will have to be through him that God fulfills His promise.

Understand well that Abram does not doubt God's promise. We read that he believed God and that it was accounted unto him for righteousness. He believed. And his cry, "What canst thou give me (as long as thou givest me no child)?" is not at all a complaint. It is no accusation of unfaithfulness on God's part. It is a question that had been turning around in Abram's mind for a long time. How can God do this when He gives me no child? It was puzzlement, bewilderment

perhaps, but it was not doubt and certainly not unbelief.

And God — who knows the exact moment for every point of revelation — speaks to Abram a new detail in the promise: "he that shall come forth out of thy bowels shall be thine heir." At a time when Abram needed encouragement and stood in need of a fuller revelation of the details of the covenant promise God is there to tell him that he will have a son of his own.

And a former detail is enhanced by a reference to the stars of the heavens. God had said that He would make of him a great nation. Now He points out that it will indeed be an innumerable host, so that if Abram can count the stars in the heavens, he can count all the multitude of seed that God will give him. Now Abram can see that God is indeed his shield and great reward. In this way he can see that all the covenant promises can be and will be fulfilled by God. And what a wonderful vision this turned out to be!

Abram's further request, "Lord Jehovah whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (this whole land) is likewise not gendered out of doubt and unbelief, but out of faith and its eagerness for that which is promised. Abram was not questioning God's ability, nor His faithfulness to His promises. He was asking for a sign because he wanted so badly to rejoice in this which God promised. He did not doubt. He was not guilty of unbelief. But he did not want to doubt or disbelieve in the future either. He wanted to believe and to be strong in his faith; and therefore he asks for a sign, for a word from God that will keep him from falling into unbelief and doubt.

God gives him a most wonderful and significant sign. Abram is called to gather and arrange an heifer, a ram, a she goat, a turtledove and a young pigeon. For such was the custom in that day in that part of the world from whence Abram came when one made a covenant with another. The animals were to be cut in two, and the two halves were to be separated from each other at such a distance that a man could walk between the two parts. The same was true of the two birds which were placed one on each side but were not divided. And then the two parties drawing up the covenant would pass between the parts with the understanding that if the one or the other would be unfaithful in the covenant, all his cattle would be slain and divided. It was a method of swearing by a ritual. It was expressing their seriousness and intent to be faithful to the covenant drawn up between them.

But Abram does not pass between the parts! He sees — after he had all day driven off the wild birds that came to devour the flesh — God, in the form of a

smoking furnace and a burning lamp (the only form of fire known in Abram's day) passing between the parts. God swore to His faithfulness. He did not demand or allow Abram to swear his faithfulness to the covenant.

This is not simply due to the fact that Abram had requested a sign and God had not requested one from Abram. It is due to the fact that there is only one party in God's covenant, and that party is God Himself. We are of the party of God and are not a little party next to the big Party. As our Baptism Form has it, there are contained in all covenants two parts. But there is in God's covenant only one party, and that is God Himself.

For this reason God's covenant is certain. Lord Jehovah has sworn, and He has passed between the parts, giving His word that He will keep every detail of that promise. A covenant that rests on our faithfulness is bound to fail. And the next chapter indicates how miserably Abram failed in that covenant when he took Hagar to be his wife in order to raise up this seed that would come out of his bowels. The covenant would have failed before this son out of Abram's bowels, namely, Isaac, could be born!

Yes, Abram drives off the fowls, the unclean birds that came to eat up the flesh. But he did this with strength that God gave him; and even then a deep sleep fell upon him and an horror of great darkness. So frail is man that he will fall asleep on the job. And any covenant founded on his faithfulness and dependent upon it falls before it can be begun.

It is well for us to remember this and to hold on to it in the Arminian age in which we live. On every side we are bombarded with philosophies and theories of men that present God's promises as conditional. There is that which man must first do. There is the indispensable requirement which he must fulfill before God will act and send His blessing. A pleading and eager God is presented Who cannot save until man has expressed his desire for salvation. A willing God is preached Who has stipulated the condition of faith so that if man will only meet this simple requirement of God, He on His part will be only too glad to save and bless everlastingly.

But all this insults the living God and distorts the whole truth of Scripture. And it all makes salvation so utterly hopeless for us. It never tries to explain how a spiritually dead man can even hear the call to fulfill the condition or want the salvation. And it never tries to do this because it simply and boldly denies that man is spiritually dead. It wants to believe in a man who is spiritually sick and desperately weak, but left with enough power to desire the "offered" salvation. It ignores completely the fact that there is absolutely no suggestion of any conditions to God's covenant in this entire chapter.

God does not tell Abram that He will be his shield and great reward if . . . Unequivocally God declares that He *is* his shield and *is* his great reward without any bargaining with Abram. The same is true as far as giving him a son that comes out of his own bowels. It is not promised conditionally. God declares what HE is going to do and what HE is going to give to Abram. And exactly to teach Abram – and us – that all His promises stand because of His great faithfulness, He gives Abram a part to fulfill together with the ability to do so. And this He does in answer to Abram's request for a sign. The sign God gives is one that declares to Abram and to us that God – while we only look on and watch – fulfills all the requirements of His covenant and swears by Himself that He will keep His word.

And lest we and Abram's seed begin to doubt His faithfulness, God also reveals the future history of Abram's seed predicting the long bondage in Egypt. This was not a case of God being unfaithful to His promise but biding His time because the measure of iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. And carried over into our age it means that even though the Antichrist comes with his dreadful persecutions and temporary victories, we must not immediately cry out of God's unfaithfulness but realize that the hour of His Son's return is not yet come according to an eternal and unchangeable counsel. God will fulfill His promise in its minutest detail. He will keep His word and is both our shield and great reward. He will not become such. He is such right now, and in flawless covenant faithfulness He is working all things together for good to those that love Him.

TEACHER NEEDED

South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School will be in need of a teacher for grades 4, 5 and 6 for the 1975-1976 term. Those interested please contact G. F. Van Baren, 15921 Parkside Ave., South Holland, Illinois 60473, or call (312) 331-3818.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Eschatology—The First Period

Rev. H. Veldman

We concluded our preceding article with the statement that we would again quote Justin Martyr in which he even stigmatizes as heretical the doctrine that souls are received into heaven immediately after death. Chapter 80 of his dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, reads as follows (in this quotation he also reveals his millennial tendencies):

And Trypho to this replied, "I remarked to you, sir, that you are very anxious to be safe in all respects, since you cling to the Scriptures. But tell me, do you really admit that this place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the patriarchs, and the prophets, both the men of our nation, and other proselytes who joined them before your Christ came? or have you given away, and admitted this in order to have the appearance of worsting us in the controversy?"

Then I answered, "I am not so miserable a fellow, Trypho, as to say one thing and think another. I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and believe that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise. Moreover, I pointed out to you that some who are called Christians, but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, atheistical, and foolish. But that you may know that I do not say this before you alone, I shall draw up a statement, so far as I can, of all the arguments which have passed between us; in which I shall record myself as admitting the very same things which I admit to you. For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines delivered by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this truth, and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians, even as one, if he would rightly consider it, would not admit that the Sadducees, or similar sects of Genistae, Meristae, Galilaeans, Hellenists, Pharisees, Baptists, are Jews (do not hear me impatiently when I tell you what I think), but are only called Jews and children of Abraham, worshipping God with the lips, as God Himself declared, but the heart was far from Him. But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on

all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.

In this quotation Justin Martyr declares very plainly that he believes in a thousand years in Jerusalem. However, he also declares that many others, true Christians, think differently. But he is very severe in his condemnation of those who teach that the souls of the departed go immediately to heaven upon death, declares concerning them that they are not Christians.

Of interest in this connection is also what we read in Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. II. On page 602 we read:

5. Impenitent Christians and unbelievers go down to the lower regions of Hades (Gehenna, Tartarus, Hell) into a preparatory state of misery and dreadful expectation of the final judgment. From the fourth century Hades came to be identified with Hell, and this confusion passed into many versions of the Bible, including that of King James.

Our readers may also be interested in this quotation from Philip Schaff, Vol. II, page 602:

6. The future fate of the heathen and of unbaptized children was left in hopeless darkness, except by Justin and the Alexandrian fathers, who extended the operations of divine grace beyond the limits of the visible church. Justin Martyr must have believed, from his premises, in the salvation of all those heathen who had in this life followed the light of the Divine Logos and died in a state of unconscious Christianity, or preparedness for Christianity. For, he says, "those who lived with the Logos were Christians, although they were esteemed atheists, as Socrates and Heraclitus, and others like them."

Did Justin Martyr believe that also Socrates was a Christian? To believe that this Greek philosopher was a Christian is rather difficult. One might conclude this, however, from this quotation. And on page 768 of the same volume Philip Schaff writes this:

The book *On the Universe* was directed against Platonism. It made all things consist of the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water. Man is formed of all four elements, his soul, of air. But the most important part of this book is a description of Hades,

as an abode under ground where the souls of the departed are detained until the day of judgment: the righteous in a place of light and happiness called Abraham's Bosom; the wicked in a place of darkness and misery; the two regions being separated by a great gulf. The entrance is guarded by an archangel. On the judgment day the bodies of the righteous will rise renewed and glorified, the bodies of the wicked with all the diseases of their earthly life of everlasting punishment. This description agrees substantially with the eschatology of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian.

In chapter XXXI of his treatise against heresies, Vol. I of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, page 560, Irenaeus' writing on the preservation of our bodies as confirmed by the resurrection and ascension of Christ and of the souls of the saints during the intermediate period as being in a state of expectation, writes the following:

Since, again, some who are reckoned among the orthodox go beyond the pre-arranged plan for the exaltation of the just, and are ignorant of the methods by which they are disciplined before hand for incorruption, they thus entertain heretical opinions. For the heretics, despising the handiwork of God, and not admitting the salvation of their flesh, while they also treat the promise of God contemptuously, and pass beyond God altogether in the sentiments they form, affirm that immediately upon their death they shall pass above the heavens and the Demiurge, and go to the Mother (Achamoth) or to that Father whom they have feigned. Those persons, therefore, who disallow a resurrection affecting the whole man, as far as in them lies remove it from the midst of the Christian scheme, how can they be wondered at, if again they know nothing as to the plan of the resurrection? For they do not choose to understand, that if these things are as they say, the Lord Himself, in whom they profess to believe, did not rise again upon the third day; but immediately upon His expiring on the cross, undoubtedly departed on high, leaving His body to the earth. But the case was, that for three days He dwelt in the place where the dead were, as the prophet says concerning Him: "And the Lord remembered His dead saints, who slept formerly in the land of sepulture; and He descended to them, to rescue and save them."

Hereupon Irenaeus quotes several passages of the Scriptures to show that Jesus, before ascending to His Father in heaven, was first in the heart of the earth, quoting, among other passages, that Scripture which draws a comparison between Jonah and the Son of Man. And then Irenaeus continues as follows:

2. If, then, the Lord observed the law of the dead, that He might become the first-begotten from the dead, and tarried until the third day "in the lower parts of the earth"; then afterwards rising in the flesh, so that He even showed the print of the nails to His

disciples, He thus ascended to the Father; — (if all these things occurred, I say), how must these men not be put to confusion, who allege that "the lower parts" refer to this world of ours, but that their inner man, leaving the body here, ascends into the super-celestial place? For as the Lord "went away in the midst of the shadow of death," where the souls of the dead were, yet afterwards arose in the body, and after the resurrection was taken up into heaven, it is manifest that the souls of His disciples also, upon whose account the Lord underwent these things, shall go away into the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection, awaiting that event; then receiving their bodies, and rising in their entirety, that is bodily, just as the Lord arose, they shall come thus into the presence of God. "For no disciple is above the Master, but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master." As our Master, therefore, did not at once depart, taking flight to heaven, but awaited the time of His resurrection prescribed by the Father, which had been also shown forth through Jonas, and rising again after three days was taken up to heaven; so ought we also to await the time of our resurrection prescribed by God and foretold by the prophets, and so, rising, be taken up, as many as the Lord shall account worthy of this privilege.

So, according to this church father, there were heretics who, despising the handiwork of God, affirm that, immediately upon their death, they shall pass above the heavens and the Demiurge and go to that Father whom they had feigned. These heretics did not admit the salvation of their flesh and treated the promise of God contemptuously. Over against them the church father places the example of the Christ, in Whom, according to him, these heretics professed to believe. Christ dwelt for three days in the bosom of the earth, as foretold in the Scriptures, particularly by the example of Jonah who was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. And this, of course, will also be the experience of all His people, inasmuch as a servant is no greater than his master.

In our following article we will continue with our discussion on this doctrine of Hades as set forth by the church fathers during this early period of the church in the New Dispensation. Then we expect to quote from Tertullian. He has an interesting chapter on: Whither does the soul retire when it quits the body? He also cites opinions of philosophers which are all more or less absurd. He also sets forth the Christian idea of the position of Hades and the blessedness of Paradise immediately after death. And he then sets forth the privilege of the martyrs. It was Tertullian's belief that the martyrs were accorded special privileges in distinction from other people of God. But this must wait until our following article.

Mission Committee News

In this article we shall try to answer some of the questions that you raise concerning the mission endeavors of our churches as they are implemented by the Mission Committee.

What's doing in Houston? Very much, indeed. Rev. Harbach is conducting worship services each Sunday at 10:30 A.M. and 3:30 P.M. Sunday School is being taught, beginning at 9:30 A.M. Miss Cari Sugg teaches the small children, and Rev. Harbach leads the older children and adults in the lessons as they are found in our own Sunday School Guide. A mid-week meeting is held in which Rev. Harbach has already completed a study of the Thirty-Seven Articles of the Belgic Confession. This group is now studying the Book of Revelation. This meeting is held in one of the homes of the members. Three catechism classes are conducted by the missionary-pastor each Saturday morning. When one includes the pastoral visits he makes, it makes for quite a full calendar for our Missionary. The membership includes many professional men, and some of the wives and mothers have teaching experience. One family lives 40 miles westward and another ten miles farther than that. Their meeting place is the Memorial West Community Club; but when the swimming season is on, they will meet in a Methodist church building a little distance away. In a letter to us Rev. Harbach sounds like he might be on the Texas Promotional Committee. Like this: "Texas is a State which has everything that other states have, and more: prairie, desert, canyons, mountains, forests, thickets, marshes, seashore, lakes, ponds, bays, bayous, rivers, oil fields, cane fields, citrus country, farmlands and ranches." Sort of makes one feel he should phone his realtor and list his home for sale. In the animal kingdom he lists, deer, alligators, armadillos, snakes, nutrea (which has a beaver-like fur), and myriads of birds of all sorts, even the whooping crane which is on the danger list. He assures us that there is more in Texas than the youngest of us could possibly enjoy in a life time.

Our missionary-pastor also enjoys his work among that group of believers in Houston. He is working with a core group who are sincerely interested in working toward a formal organization of a Protestant Reformed church. Some good solid steps have been taken in that direction. In the year that he has labored there he has preached once through the material of the Heidelberg Catechism; and the first catechism season is now over. They can hear the Reformed Witness Hour Sunday afternoon at 2:30, and all their activities are also advertised on the religious page of the Chronicle. Did you know that Mrs. Harbach also has a role to play in that mission field? Where her husband works, she plays — plays

the piano, that is, for the congregational singing. Let me quote another part of his letter: "We experience the usual southern hospitality, which in itself is not only proverbial but remarkable, to say the least. There is a spirit of Christian love. An atmosphere of true spiritual peace seems to prevail, with countenance shining in happy expressions. This we believe is due to the fact that we are basically joyfully thankful that we belong to the sovereign triune God, whose covenant love embraces us from all eternity in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and who controls all circumstances for His glory and our profit. Our intention is to keep on keeping on. The question, "How does Rev. Harbach like it in Houston?" is now answered.

Now let us attend to the questions regarding the Maine mission station, like, "How many people are we working with?" and, "what are the prospects of organizing a congregation in Skowhegan?" Lets try to sift through these questions a bit.

Rev. Kuiper and his family are settled in their new place of labor and are happy in their work. The children are enrolled in a Christian school some miles out of town. We paid a short-drop-in-visit while on a color tour last Fall when they had barely moved in and were far from settled in a fairly large house on the edge of a huge city park, through which flows the Kennebec River; in fact, the road down from Quebec runs parallel to that river for miles. In the Fall it is rather full with free-floating logs on their way to the sawmills. But to get Rev. Kuiper's viewpoint of it all, let us peek over his shoulder as he writes to his consistory, (Hudsonville) and to the mission committee. "The work with the three families that asked our churches to come and help them is very encouraging and enjoyable. They are faithful in church attendance and in mid-week meetings. Their view of the Christian's life in the midst of the world is the same as ours. Consequently, they receive the preaching and instruction gladly, and we have good communion together. So thoroughly are they convinced of the Reformed truth that, on their own, they have begun investigating the possibility of starting a small Christian school where their children might at least receive a few years of good covenant instruction. But the work involves more than meeting with those already Reformed. And this is where the work becomes difficult. Over the past months many calls have been made in homes of those of other religious persuasions. One finds a startling laxity in respect to church attendance, a frightening lack of knowledge, an almost complete lack of appreciation for the church institute. Numerous people we have spoken with claim to be good Christians but have not

been in church for years, and reveal that they believe only those parts of the Bible that they choose to believe. There have been a few visitors in the worship services from time to time, but for the most part we have not been able to spur people into coming. This is New England, through which the truth has passed long ago, and which is now largely given over to modernism (universalism and unitarianism). And if not that, then wholehearted acceptance of free-will Arminianism in its worst form. During the past few weeks we have had some homes closed to us because people have found the Scriptural Reformed truth to be a stumbling block. They are scandalized, outraged, by what I point out to them from the Bible. How long God will have work for us here we do not know. We are naturally disappointed by this turn of events, but overall we are not discouraged." And then we get a build-up to pay them a visit: "Maine is still ninety-five percent forest covered. Lakes and streams are everywhere. Small mountains can usually be seen to the north and to the west. English, French, and Indian influences are to be seen everywhere, reminders of the historic battles of the Revolutionary times. We look forward to taking several short trips this summer, when the land is released from her heavy burden of ice and snow. Perhaps some of you will decide to come this way this summer. If so, we promise you a warm welcome and good Christian fellowship!" Rev. Kuiper closed the letter with the plea to remember him and his family in our prayers.

There still remains the question regarding the Jamaican field. Well there's nothing exciting, or even new. The four young ministers are doing very well, and the people of their congregations are all appreciative of having "their own minister". The Mission Committee still has contact with nine churches. Remember that there were originally twenty? The nine faithful are where Rev. Elliott lives, *Mahoe*, which is some thirty miles from Islington, which is also being served by Rev. Elliott; *Fort Williams*, which is enjoying the services of Rev. Brown; *Lacovia* is being instructed in the faith by Rev. Nish; *Belmont* has Rev. Williams for their pastor; *Dias*, which was Rev. Frame's church until his sudden death lately is being served by one of the ministers; *Fellowship Hall* is being served by an Elder; *Cave Mountain* has Rev. Beckford to lead them in the Scriptures; *Waterworks* and *Mt. Lebanon* are vacant, but the latter has a very capable Elder to serve them. We know that the Jamaican brothers and sisters are not yet a group of strong Protestant Reformed churches; but that cannot be expected after only a couple of years indoctrination. Many evils still exist to one degree or another, such as the Holiness influence and the Arminian lie. There is still some opposition to infant baptism because they do not understand God's Covenant, which is not strange, for

few can read the Bible, and those have only a few dis-connected stories in their knowledge. They have not been catechized in O.T. History as our people are; and until now circumstances have prevented personal contact with old and young. You understand that we have worked with them intensively for only three years; and that is a very short time to expect to establish churches in the faith, especially those which are far removed from the stream of Reformed faith. The ministers and churches have always appreciated our help — financially, but also in regard to instruction in doctrine and Christian living. We believe that there is no valid reason to abandon the field, but to work more strenuously if possible. The four young ministers are very dedicated to the truth that has been taught them. The letters reveal the zeal with which they labor, the love for the Scriptures and the ministry of the Word, which must also be evident in their preaching. God has certainly given fruit upon the labors performed during the short time a missionary has worked the island. More will be said about this project after the emissaries come back from their April visit. The two emissaries who are visiting the field in April will take care of many details which need personal attention. They will listen to the sermons of the four young ministers, and determine the growth in their abilities, as well as the fruit of their ministry in the congregations. Their three-week stay will be filled with the concern for the physical and spiritual welfare of these saints. Meanwhile, the Mission Committee asks you to remember these wandering sheep in prayer as you bring the needs of our other fields to the Throne of Grace.

J. M. Faber, Sec'y.

Book Review

MY HEART'S DESIRE FOR ISRAEL, by Richard R. De Ridder; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974; 126 pp., \$1.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko]

This book written by the Guest Professor in Missions at Calvin Seminary, and is part of a series of books called "World Focus Books" edited by Harvie M. Conn. The sub-title reads: "Reflections on Jewish-Christian Relationships and Evangelism Today." The book deals with the perennial question of mission work among the Jews and has as its theme that we live in a time of ideal conditions for Jewish evangelism. The disappointment of the book was that it fails to deal with the exegetical questions involved in Romans 11, e.g., and the various other problems which have consistently come up in connection with evangelism among the Jews from the viewpoint of their place and purpose in God's work of salvation.

Book Review

EXPOSITION OF THE PARABLES, by Benjamin Keach; Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich.; 904 pp., \$12.95 (cloth). [Revised by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema]

This is a large volume containing a mass of material in rather fine print, and it is another volume in the Kregel Reprint Library. Considering the size of the volume and the mass of material contained in it, as well as the quality of this book and its attractive format, this book is well worth the price of \$12.95.

I am sure that to most of our readers the name of the author will be unknown. Hence, let me introduce him by quoting the biographical note from the dust jacket: "Benjamin Keach was born in February of 1640 in Buckinghamshire, England and died in London, 1704. He was a self-taught man and suffered much persecution for his faith. Among those struggles was the infamous trial for views which he had expressed regarding The Second Advent in a catechism he had published. He was given two weeks' imprisonment including exposure in the pillory, and fined twenty pounds. This sentence was rigorously executed and Keach's little book was burned by the public hangman.

"Keach gained fame as a powerful preacher and defender of Baptist doctrine, being one of the main contributors to the Baptist revision of the Westminster Confession made in 1689. He began to preach at 18 years of age and during a long, profitable ministry, over forty works came from his pen. The church owes its hymn singing to this warrior for he it was who first introduced the practice of singing hymns in worship."

As to the contents of the book, it contains expositions of more than the parables. Included among the parables are some which I would not

classify as parables; and besides, there are expositions of what the author calls "similitudes." As an example of such "similitudes," we may mention the "Similitude of the Fan in His Hand," Matthew 3:12. As far as the quality of the expositions is concerned, I have two comments. In the first place, the author frequently makes the mistake of attaching significance to details in the parables which do not really have significance, but may be called embellishments. In the second place, even in connection with his legitimate and correct explanations of various parts of the parables the author has a tendency to go off on tangents and to engage in rather lengthy and tedious explanations of subjects which are but indirectly related to the text. This is not unusual, however, in writings of the period to which this author belongs. Nevertheless, it means that to reap any value from this book one has to have the patience to wade through a considerable amount of material that is really extraneous and that, besides, is written in a rather heavy style and in a format typical of that period. If one has the patience to do this, he may indeed reap considerable benefit from this book.

I must also caution that the doctrinal position of Benjamin Keach is certainly not beyond criticism. For example, he tries to hold to sovereign election, but conditional reprobation. (pp. 536,ff.)

Nevertheless, one could certainly do worse than to add a book such as this to his library. There is much instruction to be gained from it. And in a day when there is much religious trash on the market and many books which evince no respect for the Scriptures as the Word of God, books which are genuinely pious and which aim to be true to the Word of God are worthy of recommendation.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Society of The First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, mourns the loss of a faithful member, MRS. MILDRED VAN EENENAAM, whom the Lord suddenly took from our midst on Sunday, March 23, 1975. We express our sympathy to the bereaved family and assure them with the words of the Psalmist that "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble." (Psalm 37:39)

Mrs. Tom Newhof, Sr., Pres.
Mrs. Otto Vander Woude, Vice Sec'y.

IN MEMORIAM

Our beloved brother, DONALD NEIL SLABBEKOORN, was called to eternal glory on March 22, 1975. We wish to express our deepest sympathy to the bereaved, Mrs. Faye Slabbekoorn and her children.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: For thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)

The Members of the Mission
of The Protestant Reformed
Churches — Houston, Texas

News From Our Churches

Report of Classis West

Classis West met in South Holland on March 5 and 6. Eleven ministers and eleven elders attended as delegates. Rev. B. Woudenberg opened the meeting by speaking on Ephesians 4:7, 8. Rev. W. Bekkering presided over the sessions of Classis.

Classis treated an appeal, an overture, and a discipline matter. An appeal of a consistory's decision was declared illegal on the ground that it had not been finished in the minor assembly according to Article 30 of the Church Order. A brother's overture

to Synod that "the Synod of '75 study, evaluate, and correct the present Constitution of the Mission Committee of Synod" was sent on to Synod. A consistory's request for advice to proceed with the second step of censure was dealt with in executive session.

Classis received reports from several committees. The Reading Sermon Committee (Edgerton consistory) reported that "there are a number of sermons out for which the committee has no record. It is suggested that each church that has sermons send

(continued on back page)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Sr. Mr. & Mrs. Society of the 1st Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its sympathy to fellow members, Dr. and Mrs. Dwight Monsma in the passing of their mother, MRS. TOM VAN EENENAAM and to Prof. and Mrs. Robert Decker in the passing of their father, MR. PETER DECKER JR.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Cor. 5:1.)

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
Mrs. K. G. Vink, Sec'y

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Priscilla Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, wish to express their confidence that God will surely comfort their President, Mrs. Dorothy Decker in the loss of her husband, MR. PETER DECKER.

That she and her family may indeed experience that comfort through the Word and from their fellow saints, is our prayer.

Mrs. Don Knoper, Vice Pres.
Jessie Dykstra, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Congregation of the Doon (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to its minister, Rev. R. Moore and family, in the death of his father, MR. RALPH MOORE.

May they be comforted by trusting in the God of all wisdom Who doeth all things well.

The Consistory of Doon Protestant
Reformed Church
John Van Den Top, Vice Pres.
Edwin Van Ginkel, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of the Doon (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church expresses our deepest sympathy with Rev. and Mrs. Richard Moore and family in the loss of their father and grandfather, MR. RALPH MOORE.

May God comfort them by His Word and Spirit. "And we know that all things working together for good to them that love God: to them who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

The Adult Bible Class
Henry Bleyenbergh, Sec'y.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 19, 1975, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. KENNETH LANNING, will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for parents who have guided and instructed us in the way of the truth, and we pray that He will continue to bestow His blessing upon them in the years to come.

Judith Lanning
Mr. and Mrs. Lester Barnhill and Lisa Marie
Gary Lanning

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 25, 1975, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, MR. & MRS. JACOB KUIPER, SR., will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our Heavenly Father for covenant parents and the instruction we have received from them. It is our prayer that they may continue to experience the Lord's blessings on their earthly pilgrimage as they have in the past.

Mr. Henry Kuiper
Mr. & Mrs. Isaac Kuiper
Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Kuiper, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Kuiper
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Van Dyke
Mr. & Mrs. Clarence Kuiper
Mr. & Mrs. Allen Brummel
Mr. & Mrs. John Hoekstra
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Bleyenbergh
Miss Betty Kuiper
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Kuiper
Miss Linda Kuiper
and 25 Grandchildren

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 1, 1975, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN C. LUBBERS, will commemorate their 40th wedding anniversary. As their children, we give thanks to our God for so graciously sparing them for these many years and seek His blessing on them in their remaining days together.

Ed and Lorraine Miedema
Don and Correne Van Overloop
Gary and Carol Lubbers
John and Joan Bouma
and 18 grandchildren.

the following information to Rev. J. Slopsema: the catalogue number of each sermon, the text, the author, and the person responsible for these sermons on loan." The Church Visitors reported on their visits to all the churches of the West in the past year.

Subsidy requests from seven churches were received, totalling \$32,420. These were sent on to Synod with Classis' approval, except for one request which Classis rejected. Classis also recommended to one church that it raise its pastor's salary.

The spring meeting of Classis always conducts the elections of delegates to Synod and of other functionaries. Elected to the Synod of 1975 in Hull, Iowa as minister delegates were D. Engelsma, J. Kortering, G. Lubbers, and B. Woudenberg. The elder delegates are R. Brunsting (Hull), J. Flikkema (South Holland), L. Huiskens (Redlands), and J. Kalsbeek, Jr. (Doon). Secundi minister delegates are W. Bekkering, G. Lanting, R. Miersma, and R. Moore. Secundi elder delegates are J. Haak (South Holland), A. Hendriks (Edgerton), B. Menninga (Pella), and H. Vander Meulen (Lynden). D. Engelsma was chosen stated Clerk of Classis; J. Kortering, assistant stated clerk; R. Moore and J. Slopsema, to the classical committee; D. Engelsma, primus delegate ad examina; G. Lubbers, secundus delegate ad examina; and J. Kortering and G. Lubbers, church visitors.

Classis adjourned about 2:30 P.M. on Thursday afternoon. Classis will meet next in Isabel, South Dakota on September 3, the Lord willing. The cost of Classis was \$2454.85.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk
Classis West of the Prot. Ref'd. Churches

A committee for conferences scheduled a denominational officebearers conference for the day before Classis in South Holland. A sizeable number, about 100, attended the all-day conference on the diaconate. Rev. G. Lubbers gave a paper on "Ministering to the Saints," and M. Alsum, a former deacon of the Loveland church, gave a paper on "A Layman's Observation of the Office of Mercy." A lively discussion of the deacon and his calling followed. The papers and discussion were profitable, and the fellowship of the saints was enriching. These conferences are a worthwhile aspect of the life of our churches.

D.E.

THE STANDARD BEARER

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CONTENTS:

Triumph Over Death	314
Editor's Notes	316
Thoughts On Our Golden Anniversary (3)	316
A New Middle East Council of Churches	318
From "Playboy" To "The Banner"	319
Grade School Ecumenism	319
Destination Anaheim	320
Give Me . . . Your Children	321
Confessing Faith	323
Exposition of Hebrews 12:18-24 (cont.)	325
Covenant Certainty	327
Eschatology - The First Period	330
Book Reviews	333-334
News From Our Churches	335