

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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And that also implies, in the third place, that the fourth generation is already putting in its appearance. They are the babes in arms and the little children in our congregations.

One generation passes, and another rises to take its place.

And this constitutes food for thought as we contemplate our 50th Anniversary.

[See page 268]

## MEDITATION

# Christ's Remembrance Of The Malefactor

Rev. H. Veldman

*"And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."*

*Luke 23:43*

How wonderful is the power of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! Thus this word of God must surely be understood! It is a fruit of our Lord's first crossword, His plea for forgiveness. True, the immediate fruit of that prayer was that the world was not destroyed! This, however, is surely another fruit of that amazing prayer, a manifestation of the wondrous power of Calvary.

This word is strikingly and beautifully introduced by the word, "Verily." Literally we read: "Amen, I say unto thee." How contrary is this word to all which human eye can see! Imagine: this man will be with Christ in Paradise this day! How apparently impossible this is! How wonderful is the power of the cross!

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What a glorious word! Let us review briefly its background. The other Scriptural references are Matt. 27:33, 44, Luke 23:33, 39 and Mark 15:7, 27. From these passages we may conclude that these malefactors were highway robbers or plunderers, who had committed murder while committing robbery.

A deathbed conversion — is it preferable? Some may think a deathbed conversion preferable. Of course, a conversion is always wonderful. But it surely is not preferable. Of course, "deathbed conversions" are possible. Scripture does record this incident. We add, however, that this is also the only mention of such a conversion in Scripture. Besides, it is certainly not preferable to be saved at the last moment and to have served the devil all of one's life. And, thirdly, no sinner can choose the moment of his conversion. Conversion is strictly a work of God's sovereign grace.

The background for this incident is recorded in the verses 40-41. We read: "We are in the same condemnation, or judgment." It is obvious that the malefactor refers to all three, including the Lord Jesus Christ. This is evident from what we read in verse 41: "for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." All were in the same condemnation; all had been sentenced to die the death of the cross. However, "we indeed justly." The malefactor and his companion deserved their punishment. To this must be added

one more thing: these malefactors were Jews. Romans were not crucified. They knew about God; they also realized that they stood upon the very brink of hell. They knew what confronted them. A more appalling and hopeless situation is hardly conceivable.

The word of Christ to the malefactor is surely far above his expectation. He recognized in the middle Sufferer Israel's King and Messiah. He also realized that his entrance into that kingdom was wholly dependent upon that middle Sufferer. For the rest, his petition is rather indefinite. What was his conception of that kingdom? When would he enter it? I assume that he conceived of this as occurring sometime in the future. And Jesus answers him that today he would be with Him in Paradise.

One cannot fail to notice the difference between the malefactor's plea for mercy and Jesus' answer. The malefactor speaks of Christ's kingdom. And Jesus replies that he would be with Him in Paradise. Jesus was not entering that day into His kingdom. That must wait until His ascension and exaltation at the Father's right hand. That this malefactor would enter into Paradise emphasizes the Old Dispensational aspect of his salvation. He is saved as in the Old Dispensation. Even as Lazarus was taken up into Abraham's bosom, emphasizing that he was saved in hope, together with all the saints of the Old Dispensation, so also this malefactor was saved as in the Old Dispensation, looking forward to the day, not many days hence, when Jesus would enter into His kingdom of glory, and be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Nevertheless, what a glorious salvation would be his. He would enter Paradise *with* Jesus. Heaven is immortal fellowship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. If there be no night there, it is only because the Lamb is the light of that glory. If there be no tears there, it is only because He has washed them away from our eyes. If our sins will be forever a thing of the past, it is only because we can trace it all to the cross of Calvary. Today he will be with Jesus in Paradise. This is Christ's glorious word addressed to the dying and penitent malefactor.

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How amazing!

How amazing, first of all, is the malefactor's recognition of the Christ! Let us visualize the scene.



Jesus is hanging upon a cross between two malefactors. In the midst of them, He is considered the chiefest of sinners. And He hangs there as the object of universal ridicule and contempt. He is universally rejected by the church and by the world, by Jew and Gentile; also His own disciples have forsaken Him. There is none that pities Him; also the malefactors, both of them, joined in this hellish chorus of hatred and contempt.

What a glaring contradiction we have here! Jesus is surely the King of the Jews. This we know. And now He hangs upon a cross. Whoever heard of a king whose followers all flee and forsake him? Are not power and glory always and inseparably associated with a king? Is a king ever without a kingdom? Is shame ever the way to glory? Must one die in order to live?

Hence, how amazing is this petition of this murderer! What singular and amazing light is his, that he should recognize in this Man of Sorrows the King of Israel! In the throes of the death-agony of a cross, suffering excruciating agony, in the midst of all that sea of hatred and ridicule, he recognizes in this Jesus of Nazareth the King of Israel! What an amazing phenomenon!

Secondly, how amazing this is when we view this malefactor in distinction from his companion in crime! Remember, their circumstances are exactly the same. They were both Jews, children of the covenant, acquainted with the fundamental truths of Holy Writ. They were both in the same condemnation, guilty of the same crime, and their condemnation was just. At the beginning they both railed on the Christ. What, then, should distinguish the one from the other? Indeed, the one is surely not more deserving than the other. How must be explained that, while the one increases his railing, this malefactor lapses into silence and then utters his petition for mercy. Perhaps you say that the Spirit worked this in his heart. And this, of course, is true. Yet, what happened that this sinner should be convicted of his sin and attain unto the consciousness of this petition?

Finally, this word becomes all the more startling and amazing when you consider the silence of the Christ. Until the malefactor uttered his petition not a word had been addressed to either of them by the dying Saviour. The only word uttered by Christ until now had been the first cross word. The Lord had not preached to them, had not, shall we say, erroneously, offered grace and salvation to them, had made no attempt to convict them of sin. How long this occurred after their crucifixion we do not know; but there must have been sufficient time to bring this malefactor to the consciousness of sin and to lead the other evil doer to his increased railing and blasphemy.

To recognize in this Jesus of Nazareth the King of Israel as entering His kingdom is amazing in itself. To recognize Him as such in distinction from the other murderer is surely equally wonderful. But that this should occur without one word being addressed to either of them by the Christ is surely above all natural understanding.

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How wonderfully effectual is the power of the cross!

One may well ask: how must we account for this tremendous difference between the two malefactors? To say that the Holy Spirit worked this repentance is true. This lies in the very nature of the case. This condemned evildoer surely did not attain unto this of himself. Still, however, the question remains: but how was this work of God wrought in the consciousness of this sinner? To this question there is but one word: the power of the cross. Jesus had not uttered a word. When we speak of the power of the cross, we mean that the Holy Spirit wrought this in connection with the cross of Calvary; power proceeded from the cross through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Only, however, this power of the cross is antithetic. It is always antithetic — see I Cor. 1:18 and 2 Cor. 2:14-16. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that this two-fold, antithetic power of the cross, always such throughout the ages, should also be revealed at the cross itself. Indeed, it was the power of the cross that wrought in the consciousness of the penitent thief; he was drawn to the Christ of Calvary. He was saved through God's sovereign mercy. But it was also the power of the cross that wrought in the other malefactor.

How must this be understood? Please notice that we read of the other malefactor that he railed on the Christ, that is, he blasphemed Him. Blasphemy, now, is directed against God, is hatred and contempt of God. Why did this murderer blaspheme the Christ, spit out his hatred against Christ because he hated God? Is the man insane? Why does he spend his dying moments railing against and blaspheming God as revealed by Christ? Christ has said nothing; He had certainly done the man no wrong. What was there about this Christ that called forth from this murderer his increased railing and blasphemy?

The answer to this question is obvious. He knew he was condemned justly. All he wanted and desired was to be released from the cross, not from sin but from the result of sin, and then he would have continued in his way of crime. He hated God and he knew about God. Christ, however, had done nothing amiss. Yet, Jesus suffered silently and in all obedience. This murderer hated Christ because he hated God. He



hated Christ because Christ here was the perfect Servant of Jehovah, because Christ suffered obediently for God's sake. The sight of that perfect Servant of Jehovah, Who suffered for the sake of the righteousness of God, incensed this murderer and called forth his increased railing and blasphemy.

And now we also understand the other malefactor. To him, too, this Jesus of Nazareth was the Servant of Jehovah. Hear him say this: "we, indeed, justly, but this man hath done nothing amiss." And as the Christ suffers, in silent obedience, for God's sake, because He loves the living God, against Whom this malefactor had sinned, the Holy Spirit works in his

heart, convicts him of sin, reveals to him his iniquity, lays him prostrate in the dust, opens his eyes and enables him to see in that Jesus of Nazareth the One Who suffers and dies, not for His own sin (He has done nothing amiss), but for the sins of others. And the plea is pressed from his dying lips: "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." This is the wonder of grace. This is the power of the cross, the divine word that calls, through Calvary, out of darkness into His marvellous light. Do we hear this word of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord? In Him and because of Him and through Him is life everlasting, glory without end.

## EDITORIALS

### Thoughts On Our Golden Anniversary (2)

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

The fact that we are celebrating our Golden Anniversary as Protestant Reformed Churches naturally suggests and makes one contemplate the passing of the years. And the thought of the passing of the years brings with it the thought of the passing of generations.

What, in that respect, is our situation one-half century after the beginning of our denomination?

In the first place, the generation which was at its strength in 1924 and which took an active part in the establishing of our denomination has almost disappeared from the scene. I am reminded of that every time I read or hear of the fact that another one of these "old timers" has died. There are not many of them left. And there certainly are few, if any, of them who still have an active role in the life of our churches. Our original leaders, of course, have been gone now for a good many years. Even of our ministers who were among the early graduates of our seminary there are but few; and it is a simple fact that there are not many years of service left to them. There are but five of our ministers who were ordained before I was, and the youngest of them was ordained in 1941. You will find, generally speaking, that the situation is the same among the elders — and also among the membership — in our congregations. The second generation of our Protestant Reformed Churches is on the scene and is in the front lines of battle.

In the second place, the third generation is already at the stage of adulthood and is assuming increasingly an active role in the affairs of our churches. Already

you will find several of that third generation among our ministers. You will find them among the elders and deacons in our churches. You will find them among the delegates to classis and synod. And you will, of course, find a goodly number of them among our membership.

And that also implies, in the third place, that the fourth generation is already putting in its appearance. They are the babes in arms and the little children in our congregations.

One generation passes, and another rises to take its place.

And this constitutes food for thought as we contemplate our 50th Anniversary.

It reminds us of the crucial importance of transmitting our heritage to succeeding generations, of passing on the truth faithfully to our children and our children's children. We must teach them to know their history, and with that history the truth that was preserved and in which we were preserved. We must not assume that this will take place automatically through the preaching and through catechetical instruction in general. We must pointedly instruct them as to why we are Protestant Reformed and why they are Protestant Reformed children. We must not be satisfied to instruct them generally in what is "Calvinism" or what is "Reformed" or what is God's Word (though it be completely true, of course, that "Protestant Reformed" is synonymous with all these), but we must specifically instruct them in *what* is Protestant Reformed and *why* it is Protestant Reformed. Moreover, we must do this very pointedly.



We must sharply impress it upon their minds and hearts. We must "inculcate" it into them; that is, we must tread that ground again and again, must repeat that instruction, until it is deeply and firmly impressed upon them. Do not be afraid of "over-kill" in this regard!

I am reminded in this connection of a negative and rather sad example from Old Testament history. You read of it in Joshua 24:29-33 and in Judges 2:6-13. The Book of Joshua closes with the suggestion that the fear and service of the Lord passed away in Israel with the passing of the generation which had entered the promised land. Joshua died and was buried; Eleazar, the son of Aaron, died and was buried; the bones of Joseph were buried. And it is already suggested in Joshua 24:31 that with the passing of that generation the fear and service of Jehovah also passed away: "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel." And this is corroborated in Judges 2:6-13, of which I will quote only the following: "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth."

If you are a student of history, you will know that what is recorded here is a rather general phenomenon in the history of God's covenant. The history of God's people in the world is characterized by alternating periods of strength and weakness, of faithfulness and apostasy. Certain *generations* of God's people are preeminently God-fearing. There is among them the knowledge of the Lord; the truth of God's Word is maintained; and they walk in the ways of Jehovah. Other generations are characterized by ignorance, indifference, apostasy, and worldly-mindedness. You can note this phenomenon many times in both the old and the new dispensation.

This does not mean that during a certain period all

the individual members of the church are spiritual seed. It does not even mean that the great majority of them are spiritual seed. This is never the case; and it was not the case in the period of Joshua either, as is evident from the history. There were even strange gods among Israel at that time. But it means that the spiritual element at such a time is *dominant*. Partly, this is due to the fact that they are comparatively strong in numbers, as must have been the case with Israel in Joshua's time after the 40 years of purging in the wilderness. Partly, this is due to the fact of historical circumstances. The generation of Joshua's time had been eye witnesses of the work of the Lord. And partly, this is due to the fact that God gives to a certain generation men of influence. He gave to Israel a Joshua, an Eleazar, a Caleb.

But I wanted to point out especially that when that God-fearing generation passed away, the effect was apostasy. The next generation knew not the Lord and His works.

And what is the explanation of that apostasy?

True, at any given point in history there is only a remnant according to the election of grace present in the church in the midst of the world. This was true in Israel even in Joshua's time. And thus it is always in the church. And always there is a large element of carnal seed. At this particular point in history the carnal seed was increasing again and gaining dominion. That was undoubtedly one factor.

But another factor that is suggested is that of the laxity of the remnant. The passing generation knew the Lord and His work for Israel. The next generation knew not the Lord, neither the works which He had done for Israel. This points to a failure in transmitting the knowledge of the Lord and His works to the future generation, as well as to a failure and laxity with respect to rooting out idolatry and the idolater from Israel. Remember that in Israel the false prophet had to be killed, and the idolater rooted out!

And the lesson of warning?

Do not be lax in transmitting the knowledge of the Lord and His works, specifically as we have learned to know these, to the generation to come. "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; THAT YE MAY TELL IT TO THE GENERATION FOLLOWING!"

## NOTICE

Classis East will meet D.V. in regular session on April 2, 1975 in the Southeast Prot. Ref. Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least ten days prior to the convening of this session.

Jon Huiskens  
Stated Clerk

## NOTICE!!!

An Office Bearer's Conference is to be held, the Lord willing, at 8 P.M., April 1, 1975, at our SouthEast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Prof. H. C. Hanko will be our speaker at this meeting. The subject of Prof. Hanko's address will be announced in your Churches' bulletins. Be sure to attend!



## An Open Letter To *The Outlook* And The Reformed Fellowship

Rev. John Vander Ploeg,  
Managing Editor, *The Outlook*

Dear Rev. Vander Ploeg:

It has now been several months since our last public exchange of thoughts concerning a possible Protestant Reformed — Christian Reformed conference about removing obstacles to unity. You last wrote in the September, 1974 issue of *The Outlook*. This editorial I published in our *Standard Bearer* of October 1, 1974. In that same issue I responded to your "A Dream, A Response, And A Request" in the same frank and open manner in which I wrote originally. I also gave you permission to publish my response in *The Outlook* and sent you an advance copy of my article. For some unexplained reason you never published my response, and, in fact, never publicly wrote again about a possible conference. Instead, you and the Board of the Reformed Fellowship chose to make a private response.

It was with some misgivings that I allowed myself to be engaged in private correspondence about this matter since that time. I now realize that this was indeed a mistake on my part. What was begun in public should have been continued in public by both of us; and we should have continued to publish one another's editorials. But that is now "water over the dam." I shall return to the public method.

And then, first of all, let me bring my readers up to date, and at the same time remind you, of what has taken place since last October.

On October 21 you informed me that the next board meeting of The Reformed Fellowship would be held on November 8, and you wrote me: "I believe that my reply, also in this case, should be submitted for approval at that meeting before it appears in print. This will occasion another delay but I trust that you will understand."

However, no reply from you ever did appear in print, for a reason which was never stated. In fact, there never was a reply from you with Board approval. Instead, I received the following letter over your signature "for the Board of Reformed Fellowship," dated Nov. 23.

Dear Professor Hoeksema:

Having read and given careful consideration to your editorial, "Analysis and Response", in the October 1, 1974 issue of *The Standard Bearer*, as a

Board of Reformed Fellowship we have decided to make the following reply:

We are ready to accept the invitation to meet with you and your colleagues if we can be agreed in advance on the following:

1. That it be recognized as a matter of fact that such a meeting was not proposed by us mutually but rather that the initiative for this proceeded from *you* in your editorial of June 1, 1974. *My* proposal was for calling a meeting of conservatives from various churches.

2. That for the duration of our meeting (or meetings) we refrain from publishing anything in *The Standard Bearer* or *The Outlook* about the progress or results except for a statement (or statements) on which we may be agreed in advance.

3. That, as the party taking the initiative in such a meeting (or meetings), *you* will now propose a suitable time and place for our coming together.

Please be assured of our sincere desire for having closer fellowship with you and also for our Lord's richest blessing on any meeting or meetings that may be held.

With all good wishes to you for God's richest blessings, I am

Fraternally,

This was, to be sure, not the simple *Yes* or *No* answer which I requested in my October 1 editorial. It was a *Yes-but*. And it did not even contain any private reply to the pertinent remarks which I had frankly, but courteously made in my editorial. Nevertheless, I wrote you as follows, on December 5, 1974:

Dear Rev. Vander Ploeg:

I am in receipt of your letter of Nov. 23, containing the response of the Board of Reformed Fellowship to my October 1 editorial.

It is not my purpose to carry on a protracted correspondence about this matter, and I do wish, as soon as possible, to inform our readership as to the outcome of our exchange. However, I am in need of some clarification of your letter.

1. When you speak of being "ready to accept the invitation to meet" and in sub-2 and sub-3 of "meeting (or meetings)" are you referring to the preliminary, planning meeting (of 3 of your men and 3 of our men) which I proposed, or are you speaking



of the full conference which I hoped a planning committee could arrange?

2. If the former, will you please inform me who your representatives will be? As I recall, you rejected the two names which I suggested in addition to yourself.

3. If the latter (the full conference), is it the intent of this letter — even as in your previous editorial reply — to leave the planning to us?

4. Do you, or do you not, intend to publish in *The Outlook* anything at all in connection with my "Analysis and Response" and your Board's letter of November 23?

I am not publishing anything at all in our December 15 issue, except for a brief note that I have received a letter on which I need clarification, and that pending receipt of clarification I will not divulge anything of the contents of that letter.

I trust that my questions are clear, and that you can reply to them personally, without the delay which would be entailed in another meeting of your Board. Pending your reply, I will not express myself in reaction to the Board's decision.

Cordially, in Christ,

To the above letter I received the following reply from you, Rev. Vander Ploeg, under date of December 12, 1974:

Dear Professor Hoeksema:

Having received and considered your letter of December 4, I wish to reply to your questions in order as follows:

1. In saying that we are "ready to accept the invitation to meet" and of "meeting (or meetings)" I believe that the Board of Reformed Fellowship understood this to be a meeting of three of your men and three of ours.

2. Since our three men have not yet been selected, I am unable to say who they will be.

3. This too I am unable to answer because the Board gave no consideration to any meeting beyond that of six men.

4. It was decided by the Board that *The Outlook* would not publish your editorial on "Analysis and Response."

It may be added that the Board intends to proceed with the "Congress of Conservatives" to be held, the Lord willing, in 1976.

Fraternally,

After this clarification, in which it was made plain that the reference to any publicity referred *only* to the preliminary planning committee, I sent the following letter, dated January 28, 1975, fully expecting that this would open the way to the long-delayed first meeting:

Dear Rev. Vander Ploeg:

Please excuse my delay in answering your last

letter. An out of town trip and the press of my work prevented an earlier reply. In response to your letters of November 23 and December 12, the following:

1. It is the consensus of my colleagues and me that although you state no reason for the conditions you wish to attach to my simple proposal for a preliminary joint planning session, we should not allow the addition of these stipulations to stand in the way of a meeting.

2. In the light of your reply of December 12 to my questions, I understand:

a. That *after* the planning session, I am at complete liberty to write what I wish about the meeting.

b. That I am also at liberty to report without any restrictions the exchange of correspondence following my last editorial on this subject.

In explanation, I wish to emphasize not only that I do not want the *Standard Bearer's* freedom of press restricted by an outside organization, but also that our people are both interested and vitally concerned in these matters, and therefore have a right to be informed fully.

3. In the light of your disappointing failure to publish and to respond to my "Analysis and Response" and your previously stated reluctance to discuss that which separates us, i.e., the Three Points of Common Grace and related matters, I wish to repeat that the sole purpose of the proposed meeting of six is to plan and to lay down the ground rules for just such a conference. I believe this was made abundantly clear in my two editorials, but I wish to have this clearly understood. Otherwise there is no point in having the proposed meeting.

I propose that the preliminary meeting of six be held, D.V., on February 28, at 2:00 P.M., in our Theological School Building, 4949 Ivanrest, S.W. My seminary colleagues, Prof. Herman Hanko and Prof. Robert Decker, have agreed to join me.

Please respond at your earliest convenience, and also inform me of the names of your representatives.

Cordially, in Christ,

After I had taken the trouble to inquire carefully as to the meaning of your letter of November 23, and after I had agreed to the stipulations of that letter according to your own interpretation of December 12, the Board of Reformed Fellowship begins to "hedge". This is very plain in your letter of Feb. 6, again sent over your signature "for the Board of Reformed Fellowship." The letter is as follows:

Dear Prof. Hoeksema:

Unfortunately your letter of January 28 was not delivered to my home address (to which you addressed it) but rather to the Reformed Fellowship business office. As a result I did not see the letter until the time of the board meeting, which allowed me only a limited opportunity for consideration of it.



However, action was taken at the board and I was asked to relay the decision to you. It was decided that we call your attention once again to what was stated in our November 23 letter to you which read in part as follows:

"We are ready to accept the invitation to meet with you and your colleagues if we can be agreed in advance on the following:

"... That for the duration of our meeting (or meetings) we refrain from publishing anything in *The Standard Bearer* or *The Outlook* about the progress or results except for a statement (or statements) on which we may be agreed in advance".

Obviously, this is a condition on which you are not ready to agree. However, it was decided that we do not proceed with a meeting or meetings unless we can go with the assurance that nothing will be published except "a joint communique" on which we must first be mutually agreed. Precisely how long this condition is expected to be observed I am unable to say because that was not decided in advance. I assume that this also is something on which we would have to be mutually agreed at some given point in our discussion or meetings. Premature publicity in our journals could easily defeat the purpose of our meeting (or meetings) if our aim is to try to resolve our differences and to promote unity between us.

We are looking forward to hearing from you about this. Meanwhile no representatives were appointed and the meeting you propose must be held in abeyance.

Faternally,

That brings things up to date.

And that, to my mind, also marks the end of a possible conference unless you change your mind.

It has become abundantly plain to me that you really are not interested in having the conference which I proposed. This is plain from:

1. Your extreme reluctance as expressed in your article "A Dream, A Response, And A Request."
2. Your conditional reply to my "Analysis and Response" in your letter of November 23. You would not even give a simple *Yes* or *No* answer to my proposal to have a mere planning session for such a conference.
3. Your failure to publish and to reply in public to my "Analysis and Response."
4. Your obvious hedging and change of position in your letter of February 6. I *agreed* to your condition of November 23 *as explained by you in the letter of December 12*. Now you obviously want to extend this condition of silence, except for a mutually agreed upon "joint communique," to all the meetings and indefinitely. Who knows, but what you would never agree to lifting this limitation, according to your

letter? You cannot even say how long this condition is expected to be observed. To this I will never, never agree; and neither will my colleagues agree to this, so they have advised me. Why not? In the first place, the condition is altogether too vague. In the second place, your reason is not valid. How in the world can it harm or defeat the purpose of our meetings if our people are informed of what is taking place? I had, in fact, fully intended to publish my position-paper in the *Standard Bearer*, even as I published my address at your Calvin Seminary. And I would also publish gladly any position-paper produced by you. In the third place, I am of the firm conviction that to hold these meetings secretly would be contrary to the office of believers. Our people have the *right* to know what is going on. And they would have the right to be gravely suspicious if these things were done in secret. These matters of doctrine and of doctrinal agreement or disagreement are *their* matters. In the fourth place, I will never agree to have the *Standard Bearer* restricted in this manner. Our magazine has from its inception been a *free* paper, not a closed one. We established it originally because *The Banner* and *De Wachter* were closed to our leaders. We will not allow it to be closed by you, not even muzzled. We have nothing to hide, and you should have nothing to hide about these matters — either from us or from your own readers. Finally, I detect in the reason for your condition an element of distrust. I am not afraid of your writing anything about the meeting or meetings. As far as I am concerned, you may write as you please. But I want the same liberty. I will write frankly. I will report honestly and factually. But there must be open agreements (or disagreements) openly arrived at. There were far too many secret works of darkness in 1924!

So there matters stand. We are back at home plate, if you will. That is, we are back to my original question, to which I must have a no-strings-attached answer. Do you want to meet, or don't you?

Frankly, I am disappointed. I had first seen a ray of hope for a conference. But this is not the first time such contact has been refused. It has twice been refused by your Synod. It was refused at the time when Dr. Schilder was here in 1939. It was refused by you, Rev. Vander Ploeg, when you were Editor of *The Banner*. Nor is this the first failure of Reformed Fellowship. Several years ago *The Outlook* (at that time *Torch and Trumpet*) first asked my father, among others, to write on the subject of God's Grace. But when he complied, Reformed Fellowship after all decided not to publish it.

Most of all I am disappointed, however, not for myself and for our Protestant Reformed Churches, but for you. I warn you as earnestly as I can that there is no hope for your Christian Reformed Church,



nor even for the conservative segment of the Christian Reformed Church, as a Reformed denomination, unless and until you repent and return from the path you chose in 1924.

And if you want a Congress of Conservatives at

which you mutually say, "I'm Okay, you're Okay," forget it! "Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

Sincerely, in Christ,  
H.C. Hoeksema

## ALL AROUND US

# The Doctrine of Election

Prof. H. Hanko

It is, to say the least, unusual to find a discussion of the doctrine of eternal predestination in church papers nowadays. It is more unusual yet to find almost an entire issue of a paper devoted to this truth. Nevertheless, this is what recently happened in an issue of *Covenanter Witness*, a paper put out by the Board of Education and Publication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.

The article which particularly impressed us was an article by Gordon J. Keddie entitled "Finding God's Elect" and carrying the subtitle, "How Calvinism Affects Missionary Activity." This article impressed us, in the first place, because it took an approach to mission work which is almost never heard in our day. And it impressed us, secondly, because it was so thoroughly Scriptural.

We cannot quote the article in its entirety, but we do want to give a number of excerpts from it to give the reader the flavor of what the author writes.

In the first part of the article, Pastor Keddie describes current views of mission work and gives his criticism of these views. He writes:

A common misconception abroad in the world today is that which sees "soul-winning" as the primary task of the Church. "Evangelism" is redefined (why "redefined" we shall see later) and narrowed down to mean simply the persuading of the lost to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord — this, for most Bible-believing Christians has become *the* mark of the true Church. All Church functions are to be tailored to "evangelism" — we must attract people in, we must not preach above a certain agreed level of "spiritual depth", we must "grow" or seriously revamp our present programs. The "Great Commission" according to this theory is no more than "soul-winning" and-or training those already won to be "soul-winners" too. This is "evangelism", this is "mission".

His criticism of this idea is as follows:

The problem with this is that it is an essentially *man-centered* approach to the question, "What is the missionary task of the Church?" ... It is man-

centered in *theory* and therefore is man-centered in *practice*! Basically, it involves the following wrong view of God's sovereignty, man's sin and Christ's work.

1. God is *not* absolutely sovereign in *election*: ... It is not God who *makes* the man elect, that is left to his unaided free will as he hears the Gospel. Clearly God's "sovereignty" in this scheme actually *effects* nothing with respect to man's will that is sovereign in the actualization of election.

2. Man is a sinner, but is not so totally depraved as to be unable to choose freely, without prior action of the Holy Spirit with respect to the condition of his heart. The will of man is substantially unaffected by sin — it is still *free* to "decide for Christ" ...

3. Christ died on the Cross to achieve the potential for salvation for *all* men. ... He made it *possible* for them to be saved, if only they decide for Him. ... Christ's death does not *effect* salvation for anyone — it merely opens the door in front of humanity, which is left to exercise its own sovereign will as to whether to accept or reject the offer. ...

The success of the Gospel rests on *men* and their decisions, not on God or His own dear Son. ...

Turning to what the author calls "The Mission of The Church", he discusses positively the relation between election and mission work. He writes:

... Our main point is that IT IS A FALLACY TO THINK THAT THE PRINCIPAL TASK OF THE CHURCH IS TO "WIN SOULS". ...

1. In contradistinction from the errors catalogued above, we must assert God's absolute sovereignty in election; man's total inability to move a millimeter towards salvation, by reason of his sinful nature, and the particular and effectual atonement of Christ, whereby he actually accomplishes salvation for the particular lost sinners who are the objects of God's electing love from eternity.

2. God's "sent messenger" ... goes out in the knowledge that in the declaration of "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26), the election of God is being carried out in time.



His confidence is in the Lord, whose work it is by His Holy Spirit, to apply the Word in *regeneration* and *conversion*. . . .

3. There is therefore to be no man-centered rush to "grab" souls as urgently as possible. The divine requirement is that the church diligently, urgently, simply, honestly, lovingly, prayerfully point men to Christ, the Way. . . .

4. Let us clearly distinguish, then, the role of men, i.e., of the church, from that of the Spirit. The church witnesses to the Truth *before* the world. Its primary task is to keep close to the doctrines of Christ and to preach them with the love of Christ and in dependence upon the Spirit. No artifice or gimmick will be employed to woo men, but only a simple presentation of the case and a consequent resting in the sure knowledge that God will by His Spirit vindicate His truth either in the converting of those elect from eternity, but until now, in time, numbered with the lost, or in passing by the reprobate, who by further rejection of the Gospel call harden their hearts against the day of judgement. . . .

5. It is essential that the Church know, believe and preach a full-orbed confession of Scripture truth. . . .

There is more to the article, but this is sufficient to point out to our readers that there are others who are clear on the truth that election is not only not a stumbling block to missions, but is exactly the doctrine which makes missions the important calling which it is.

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In the November, 1974 issue of *Present Truth* the editor, Robert Brinsmead also wrote concerning the doctrine of election. He wrote of this in an article entitled "The Ordo Salutis" or "The Order of Salvation." This was a very lengthy article, and we can only touch upon one aspect of it here. In many parts of the article the author very strongly supports the doctrine of sovereign grace and sovereign salvation. We quote the following excerpts.

In salvation God is *cause* — the sole cause. Man is the *response*. The devil's constant aim is to pervert this *ordo salutis*. He makes man's activity the *cause* and God's activity the *response*.

The gospel is the good news, not of man's act of choosing Christ, but of God's act of choosing man.

If God chose the elect from the beginning, it cannot mean that He chose them in response to their faith or holy lives. That would be to alter the whole *ordo salutis*. He chose them in order that they might believe and live holy lives. God is the sole cause of the call. It is true that men are called upon to choose Christ and the way of salvation, but this must never be understood as *cause*. It can be nothing more than an appeal to *respond* to the gospel fact that they have been chosen from the beginning.

The author even stresses in several important paragraphs that Christ stands behind election.

This means that before *predestination*, before God chose us, there stands Jesus Christ, the eternal Word. There was nothing planned or chosen before Him. All that was chosen and planned was both chosen and planned by Him and for Him.

But this position is not consistently held. And it is not consistently held because the author, in this article as well as in other articles which had previously appeared in other issues of the magazine, takes the position that Christ is the representative Head of all men. As he applies that to the current discussion, he writes:

If we have a duty to tell each man the gospel, in the very nature of the case we must tell him that his sins have been borne by Jesus Christ, that he has been chosen and accepted in the Person of his Representative and that, consequently, God now calls upon him to repent and believe the gospel.

That God has seriously intended all to share in the benefits of Christ's atonement is clear from the blessings of "common grace." . . . If all the blessings and good things of life — food, air, friendship, human affection, civil righteousness — may be enjoyed by all, are they not evidence that Christ died for all? For these bounties which theologians call "common grace" are still grace — undeserved kindness — and grace comes only through (because of) Jesus Christ. He was nailed to the cross that all these blessings might flow to this earth. Every man who lives on this planet lives solely because Christ died. Herein God gives proof of His love for all and of His provision for all through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the gospel, therefore, two great facts are announced and must stand together:

1. God chose one Man. He found one Man righteous, holy and pleasing in His sight. He accepted Him as the new Head of the race to stand in Adam's place, to represent all, even as Adam represented all. He punished this one Man, put Him to death and buried Him out of sight. Then He resurrected this one Man, a *new Man*, and received Him into glory.

2. This one Man stood before God as *everyman*, and that human nature of everyman was in Him. Therefore when One died, all died in Him (2 Cor. 5:14), and when One was found righteous, all were constituted righteous in Him (Rom. 5:18). That human nature which was lost in Adam has been restored in Jesus Christ, and every man who is sure he too has a human nature may be just as sure that he is included in that redemption.

The author makes it very clear that faith is a gift of God. He writes:

We have seen that God has elected one Man. He is the elect One just the same as He is the righteous One. Therefore only those who receive Christ in faith and are joined to Christ in faith-union can be called the elect ones or the righteous ones. This is the human side of election. Faith is not the *source* of



election. That is *sola gratia*. Neither is faith the meritorious cause of election. That is *solo Christo*. But faith is the instrumental means of receiving it (just as it is the instrumental means of receiving righteousness). That is *sola fide*.

Nevertheless, the author wants to look at election from what he calls "the side of human response." And then he writes: "None are called elect until they

come to faith and are in Christ." And it is in this way that he attempts to square his universalism with his views on sovereign and gracious election. But this won't work. This is very close to the position which was taken by the Arminians back in the 16th and 17th centuries. And it is essentially a denial of sovereign and gracious election.

## STUDIES IN ISAIAH

### Corrupt Zion To Be Reformed

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

*"Therefore, saith (the revelation of) the Lord, Jehovah-tsebhaoth, the mighty One of Israel, 'Ho! (cp. v. 4) I will avenge Myself (ridding Myself) from My adversaries, and I will avenge Myself (so) from My enemies'" (v. 24). (Read Isa. 1:24-31, KJV).*

1. *The Reformation and Redemption of the Righteous.* 1. Increasingly severe judgments may be expected. "Therefore!" or *because* the faithful city became a harlot! because Israel once silver became dross, his officers corrupt, loving bribes! *Therefore* (going back to vv. 21-23) judgment is threatened. For judgment is now the only means left for realizing the reformation and redemption of the Church. This judgment will be realized by the invincible omnipotence of God revealed in His names, the Lord (Ha-Adon), Jehovah-tsebhaoth, the Mighty One of Israel. Such a God surely is able to do what He determines and threatens to do. All the hosts of the heavens, of the angels, of the devil, of men, armies and nations, of saints and elect are at His command to execute His purposes and exert His power for His Israel. "I will avenge Myself (ridding Myself) from My adversaries, and (so) avenge Myself from My enemies." These enemies are not out in the world, but in Israel, the enemy within. The Lord would not be an adversary to Israel's adversaries (as the Philistines or Chaldeans), but to Israel. He is *their* enemy. *They* are adversaries of God. Here it is not said that God loves these wicked enemies of His, but that in fact the day of vengeance is in His heart (63:4). He will have vengeance on them to their total destruction. They are such a *drag*, even on the *Almighty* who can bear anything, who upholds all things by the word of His power, that He is wearied with them, and will no longer put up with them, but will throw off the burden of them. He will spew them out of His mouth. He must be rid of them. They too long have borne too hard on His patience.

2. These judgments come not by chance, but from the hand of God. "And I will stay My hand upon thee, and I will purify as purity (itself) thy dross, and

I will cause to depart all thy alloys" (v. 25). The purifying of the Church is always God's own work. "On *thee*" (fem.) refers to the city (21, 26), the remnant according to the election of grace (v. 9). Such a purifying is less that of a judgment in wrath, separating the wicked from the righteous, as more a regenerating, irresistible grace in quickening His people from death to life, giving them a new heart, turning their hearts to Him, opening their hearts to understand the Scripture and to attend to the things spoken by the Lord. This great purifying did come in Pentecost, when the Jews of sixteen nations received the cleansing fire of the Holy Spirit from the ascended Lord, and this purifying continues throughout this age in the blood (I Jn. 1:7) and Spirit (I Pe. 1:2) of Christ. The purifying extends to the removal of "thy dross," the Lord's vile, detestable enemies, including not only corrupt rulers, but also the impenitently wicked people. "Thou putttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross" (Ps. 119:119).

3. The judgments will see officebearers restored. "And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning, after (it) so (happened, i.e., afterwards) thou shalt be called to thee, City of righteousness, a faithful city." As their evils had their origin in their princes (v. 23), so the Lord would "purify that rank." Israel would again have notable judges and counselors as they once had in the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, the judges, David, Solomon and the prophets. This would especially be so in the time of the Messiah when the Church was blessed with apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers and ministers of the gospel. This promise, then, is fulfilled in the New Testament Church as instituted by Christ and His apostles, and in the local church organized according to their pattern and principles.



"A true church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men who keep the ordinances as they were delivered, stand fast in the faith of the gospel, take care that the laws of Christ's house are put into execution, and do not suffer sin upon one another, nor bear them that are evil, whether in doctrine or practice. . ." (John Gill).

4. Reformation and redemption go hand in hand. "Zion in judgment shall be redeemed, and her captives in righteousness" (v. 27). The promises in the prophecies of Scripture are for the elect church, while the denunciations of judgment are for the reprobate wicked. Promises and threatenings are so intertwined, involving each other, that they are fulfilled together. The promise of the refining of the silver carries with it the warning of the certain casting off of the refuse, the dross. All the dross shall be destroyed in justice. Yet also in justice, Zion, by nature no better than dross, shall be redeemed. We are redeemed, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, "not by works of righteousness which we have done," but, "the Lord is exalted (not man), for He dwelleth on high (not the will of man); He hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness" (Isa. 33:5). So that salvation is entirely of the Lord. Redemption is a setting free of the captives of sin and Satan, so that they become Zion's captives, the church's converts (Heb. 12:22), redeemed in righteousness. Israel in the wilderness came to Mount Sinai, which was only a way station for them. "But you" (New Testament believers) "have come to Mount Zion," which is more than just a mountain, as Sinai also was, but is "the city of the living God" (there was no city on Sinai), "the heavenly Jerusalem," which is the Church of the Firstborn (i.e., a church of divine heirs, Exod. 4:22, 23). So Zion in reality is the Church, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us in his infallibly inspired letter. "The Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), thus saith the Lord, is His firstborn.

So the Church is redeemed in judgment, that judgment coming with a vengeance on Christ, so that by His blood His church is truly redeemed, sin is fully condemned and punished, the law is magnified and made honorable, the demands of divine justice are satisfied and the law completely fulfilled.

II. *The Ruin of the Corrupters.* 1. Sinners are finished. "And destruction (of) transgressors and sinners together, and the deserters of Jehovah shall be finished." What the "together" is saying here is that Zion shall be redeemed and at the same time transgressors and sinners shall be destroyed. Redemption and destruction occur in the Church together. While the true Church is preserved, hypocrites are swept out of it. By the captivities the Lord purged His church of hypocrites. So the Lord did at Pentecost. Zion was then blest and redeemed,

but as for mere pretenders, "no man durst join himself to them" (Acts 5:13). "While He speaks of the redemption of the Church, He at the same time threatens that sinners, i.e., wicked men, shall be destroyed, that they may not suppose that these acts of God's kindness belong at all to them" (Calvin). "God allows the reprobate to perish, but preserves His own in safety." "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee" (Ps. 91:7).

". . . and the deserters of Jehovah . . ." Recently (Aug. '74), we heard that a "bingo" party in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, had to close down hurriedly that the participants might clear things away in order to celebrate Mass! Here it is warned that all deserters of the Lord shall be stopped: all who desert His word, worship and sacraments, as Romanists have done in setting up the traditions of men against the Word of God, in corrupting the sacraments and adding strange new inventions to them. The Lord will finish them off in the day of judgment.

2. Then follows how they are finished. "For they shall be ashamed from (or, of) the trees which ye have desired, and ye shall be put to shame (become red and blush), from (or, for) the gardens which ye have chosen." The prophets clearly and continually denounced the sin here referred to. "For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, 'I will not transgress,' when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot" (Jer. 2:20). "The Lord also said unto me in the days of Josiah the king, 'Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain, and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot'" (3:6). Israel was "a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face, that sacrificeth in gardens . . . that sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord" (Isa. 65:3; 66:17). Read also Hos. 4:13, 14, then read the two chapters, Ezek. 8 and 9, following this up with Mic. 5:10-15. (For further light see *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* at this point).

"For ye shall be as a tree (with) its leaf withering, and as a garden, which, as to waters, nothing to it!" (v. 30). They themselves should become as a tree and a garden blasted with dearth. "And the strong shall become tow, and his (image) work a spark, and they shall consume, they two together, and — nothing to quench!" (v. 31). Tow is highly inflammable material, as a mass of flax or hemp fibres balled up like a bird's nest to catch a spark from flint-and-steel. The idolater shall find that his idols are not the security he had



supposed, but are rather a refuge of lies, which shall act as a spark to his own tow, setting him on fire, so that he and his work shall burn together. His own sin shall spark the exploding flame of God's wrath

against him, which shall burn with unquenchable fire to the lowest hell. Jehovah's adversaries are tow, their sin is the igniting spark and God himself is the consuming fire.

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

# Re-prioritizing Priorities

*Rev. G. Van Baren*

That first word in the title is, of course, an invention — not mine, but another's. A member of our Theological School Committee has been responsible for handling matters which concern government approval of our Seminary for foreign students. This involves untangling a considerable amount of "red tape". Since this approval must be made by immigration officials, since they are understaffed, government conveniently presents the officials with a list of "priorities". Whatever is first on the list, is dealt with first. Items on the bottom of this list of "priorities" receive scant, if any, attention. Recognition of seminaries for purpose of admitting foreign students happens to be on the bottom of the list of "priorities". So it becomes rather frustrating in trying to accomplish what is not on the top of this list. It was in that context that this Theological School Committee representative, tongue in cheek, suggested to the official with which he was dealing, that perhaps it was time they began to "re-prioritize" their priorities.

That thought has remained in my mind. Surely, one of the signs of the end of this age is this question of "priorities". Everyone, whether he admits it or not, has such a list of priorities. There are certain things which each believes he *must* accomplish. Either these must be accomplished because we find pleasure in doing them or because external circumstances demand that they be finished. Other items lower on this list of "priorities" will be finished if one has the time and opportunity.

It makes for an interesting study of one's own life when the question is asked, "What are your priorities?" What comes first, second, third, or fourth, etc. in your life? A clear indication of the end of this age is seen when governments and also churches have on the top of their priority lists that which concerns this world and its improvement. The same is true with respect to individuals. When on the top of his list of "priorities" is found that which is not spiritual but is earthly and materialistic, then we are reminded again of the age of apostasy in which we

live, where the earthly is first — and the heavenly is, perhaps, appended.

The child of God, then, recognizing the sinfulness of his own nature, is called repeatedly to "reprioritize" his priorities. More simply, Scripture insists: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness. . . ."

But what of this matter of our priorities? What comes first, or second, or third on our lists?

We face this question as churches. Other churches, as can be easily observed, in many instances have placed on the top of their "lists" not the preaching of the gospel, but social improvements. The preaching of the gospel is again regarded as both foolishness and weakness. But what of ourselves? Do we still realize the importance of the preaching of the Word? Do we insist on the regular attendance of the worship services? Do we maintain that the central element of all worship is the proclamation of Christ crucified? We, too, must beware the dangers of having other things intrude into that central calling of the church to preach the gospel. The "priorities" of the church are clearly outlined in Scripture. First, second, third, etc., are: the preaching of the Word. All other labors of the church must flow forth out of that. When churches depart from this Scriptural priority, they are called to re-prioritize their priorities.

The same must be true in the realm of education. We, at least, have set up schools as extensions of our Protestant Reformed homes. This has been done because parents believed that priorities in local Christian schools were not all proper. There had to be a "re-prioritizing" of priorities so that first things might always be first. But we had better ever keep that before our minds. There are constant dangers in the realm of education. We must keep proper priorities.

Priorities are present in the home and in the lives of individual children of God. Often, these priorities are not what they should be. That becomes very evident when one hears excuses given for failure to



carry out necessary tasks. How often one does not hear, "I don't have time to learn my catechism lesson." Or, "I don't have enough time to study for society or to read Scripture as I ought." Or, "I don't have time to train and direct my children in a proper way." Such statements obviously do not imply that this person has no time. All have an equal amount of time. But these statements suggest that in the order of priorities, catechism, societies, reading of Scripture and other endeavors of similar nature are on the bottom of our list.

Whatever is on the top, is accomplished. Perhaps one must spend his time, and all of his time, working — to advance himself on the earth. Perhaps one is much enthused about sports: participating or observing. Perhaps one is interested in a different sort of study: the reading of books and magazines which are not concerned with the spiritual. So, there is not time for the study of Scripture; it is on the bottom of the list.

On the bottom of the list, too, often is labor within the church. Many have no time to serve as officebearers, no time to visit the sick, no time to help those in need of assistance. Other things assume the priority.

And each must examine his own list of priorities. In these last days, priorities of many have been changing. Man seeks the earth and the things of this earth. He desires to establish a kingdom below. What, then, of our priorities?

Scripture speaks clearly on this. Jesus said in Matt. 6:33, "But seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." This word of Christ does not mean that after seeking *first* the kingdom of God, that *then* we can seek whatever our flesh might desire. Rather, in seeking first that kingdom, there is no time nor opportunity to seek anything else. Seek always that kingdom of God. In all that one does, in all of his thoughts and words, he must reveal a seeking of that kingdom. That has the priority.

All that we do must be examined in light of that priority Jesus sets forth. If what we do does not measure up to that requirement, we are walking then in sin. We need, in the light of Scripture, a constant examination of our own priorities. We must be reminded of this in these days of great evil. Therefore

there is the requirement that we hear regularly the pure preaching of the Word of God. Therefore we are required to study that Word faithfully. Therefore, too, we are to seek often the face of our heavenly Father for guidance and wisdom in this question of our "priorities".

For many, there must also be a "re-prioritizing" of priorities. Putting this another, and Scriptural, way: there must be repentance from sin. Too often, one agrees to the theory that often we have wrong priorities. It is easy to agree. But how often one continues to go in the old course without change! Our lack of Scriptural studies continues; our interest in worldly entertainments, especially on T.V. and radio, remains unchanged. We can still enjoy the things of this earth — with our hearts set on such things. To "re-prioritize" simply means that we have a calling to flee from all things which interfere with our calling to seek the kingdom of God.

The last days are indeed upon us. The temptation is very great to imitate this world. What this world finds to be most important also affects our thinking. When materialism is the spirit of this age, we think in those terms, too. When the world boasts of worldly peace, we would desire (sometimes) that kind of peace, too. When the world sets up its goals, these appear appealing to us, too. So, beware!

If we profess that our "priority" is the kingdom of God and its righteousness, then this must be evident in all things. In church, within our denomination (and particularly as we commemorate our 50th anniversary), we ought to be concerned with the maintaining of the pure preaching of the Word. Let us never succumb to the temptation to cater to the whims of man and change proper preaching into that which seems to satisfy the sinful flesh. In our schools, may our "priority" ever be to instruct covenant children in the fear of God's Name and in harmony with our promise given in baptism. In our daily lives, may we be increasingly faithful — children of the light who look for the return of our Lord on the clouds of heaven.

The time is short. Many have distorted priorities. May ours be proper. Where such is necessary, may we have the wisdom and grace to "re-prioritize" our priorities. Thus may the Name of our God be most highly exalted.

### 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.



*FROM HOLY WRIT*

## Exposition of Hebrews 12: 18-24

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

The basic argument and admonition of the book of Hebrews is that the Old Testament dispensation of the grace of God has passed away by the coming of the Son of God in the flesh in these last days. God has fulfilled His promises, made to the fathers, in Christ's death and glorification. The church of the Hebrew Christians must not return to the Old Testament shadows and types, but must boldly enter into the holy place in the heavens, where Christ the forerunner has entered. He is our great High Priest after the order of Melchisedek, according to God's word of oath.

Verse 18 begins with the conjunction "for." This indicates that in these verses the author is assigning the reason for something which he stated in the former part of this letter. The writer may have in mind the immediate context, where he spoke to the church not to be weak, not to have feeble hands and shaky knees. They must take a very strong, militant stance in this matter; and they must keep a very watchful eye over themselves and over one another. They must not allow a breach in their ranks; a bitter root must not be allowed to grow in their midst, so that many be defiled with the error of unbelief in the Son of God. If the writer refers to this context, then what he says here in these verses makes good sense and is stringent proof for his admonitions. We may also view this as referring to the entire book of Hebrews, and then to the basic argument of the book. The keynote of this is given in the very first four verses of Chapter 1, in that majestically beautiful passage which reads: "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." This is the theme of the Epistle. Again and again this theme is treated from various aspects and considerations from the Old Testament Scriptures, the types and the shadows. Beautiful contrasts are drawn, and the implications are clearly pointed out in these contrasts between the Old and the New Testament. To fall back from the New Testament to the Old Testament is a refusal to enter into the rest,

into the finished work of God. Such die in their unbelief and disobedience to the Son of God. It is the sin for which the Lord reveals Himself as being a flaming fire. Now to underscore this reality of the New Testament being better than the Old Testament dispensational grace, the writer here contrasts the coming of Israel to Mt. Sinai in their journey from Egypt to Canaan with our coming to the real and heavenly country, the heavenly land of promise, particularly the heavenly Jerusalem. If connected with the entire argument of the Hebrews, we have here the final and conclusive argument for our running the race with patience. Our covenant status is that of the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

To our mind the writer is here underscoring the basic argument of the Hebrews as this basic argument was repeatedly brought into sharp focus in this letter in the many arguments which the writer forwards. When this argument has been thus reinforced by this contrast of Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion, the writer can conclusively write: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, (we do have grace?), whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear," (Hebrews 12:28). The chief and last argument of the book of Hebrews ends here, then, in Hebrews 12. What we read in Chapters 13 are various admonitions which flow from our new relationship to Christ in the world, in our practical life of thankfulness.

## THE TERRIFYING SIGHT AT MT. SINAI IN ARABIA (Vss. 18-21; Ex. 19:12, 18, 19)

We should not neglect to remember that when God appeared to Israel at Mt. Sinai, He appeared to His covenant people, whom He had very recently delivered out of Egypt in remembrance of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These promises had been given to Abraham some 430 years before, (Gal. 3:17, Ex. 12:40, 41). And these promises God is fulfilling in bringing Israel from Egypt to Canaan, even when He brings them first to the nether part of Mt. Sinai to receive the words of the Covenant. These words of the covenant spoken from out of the darkness, storm, and fire, do not annul the promises. They are added that God's people may be kept unto the time appointed of the Lord for the redemption in Christ Jesus. Israel is not viewed here as mankind in general; but they are addressed as those who will "be a peculiar treasure unto me above



all people: for all the earth is mine," (Ex. 19:5). This means that they shall be the people to whom the oracles of God are entrusted (Rom. 3:1, 2); and they are the people from whom Messiah will be born, as the salvation of the Lord, which He has prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel, God's people. Salvation is out of the Jews. (John 4:21-24; Luke 2:29-32; Isaiah 40:5; 52:10; 42:6; 49:6.) Israel is the servant of the Lord, a new creation of God as they are brought forth out of Egypt! Such is the exalted and liberated people here at Sinai. The shout of the King is in their midst; they are God's firstborn people. (Num. 23:21)

This is a viewpoint of Israel which we may not lose sight of. They are standing in the grace of God — be it, then, typically seeing it from afar when "faith would come." (Gal. 3:22) Was not this the Israel of God who had been baptized into Moses and the sea? And have they not recently, at Rephidim, drunk from the miraculous waters of the Rock, which symbolized the Christ? And again, had they not eaten manna, which was really angels' food? (Ps. 78:24) And would they not eat of this bread until they would eat the bread new in the land of Promise for a period of well nigh forty years? (Josh. 5:12) "Blessed art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!" (Deut. 33:29) This is the Israel of God which gathers at the nether part of Mt. Sinai. They are unto the Lord a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. To be sure, it is not all Israel that is of Israel, as Moses would learn when he received the two tables of the law on stone. God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, the remnant according to the election of grace. (Ex. 33:19; Rom. 9:14, 15; 11:1-6) But Israel is here the *church* of God in the wilderness (Acts 7:38)

Keeping the foregoing in mind, we then notice that Israel and the entire church of the Old Testament dispensation really never came any farther than Mt. Sinai. They ever needed to worship from afar. They could not draw near to the Lord. The law perfected nothing. (Heb. 7:19) And if Israel of the New Testament will attempt to deny that the "bringing in of a better hope" did perfect all things, all they have left is the thunder, lightning, and the terrifying sound of the trumpet which not a living soul could endure.

That is why it is stated so very strongly that we "have not come" to the mountain that can be touched. Such is not our covenantally-dated relationship to the LORD. Concerning that awesome sight the writer tells us, as in an ever rising crescendo, the terrifying experience of Israel at the mount of God. It was really only an earthly mountain, a far cry from Mt. Sion, the heavenly. Yet, even so it was

not friendly, welcoming. It was forbidding! It was burning with fire, declaring that God is a consuming fire to transgressors of His law. It was blackness, darkness, and tempest. There was here no manifestation of the glorious light of God's countenance of grace and mercy. All was symbolic of righteousness, wrath, and judgment upon all who broke the words of God's covenant, denying the Lord Who redeemed them. We have not come to that mountain in Arabia which speaks of bondage and death. All that we have there is the "sound of the trumpet" calling for men to come and worship. It was very really the "trump of God." It was so terrifying a sight to sinful man that even Moses, who might speak with God in the holy mount, uttered the words "that he exceedingly feared and trembled." True, he uttered those words after he had been for forty days on the mountain, to receive the lively oracles of God from the hands of angels. (Deut. 9:19; Gal. 3:19, 20) But they are a true commentary of how Moses experienced the law-giving at Sinai. Would not even a beast be killed if it touched the mountain?

Now who desires to go back to this promise of God as it is given in the package of the law? The law, which came 430 years later, was added for the sake of the offense! Let the Hebrews take notice that we have not come to that mountain, we who have been born in these latter days, in the end of the ages, when Christ died once for all! (Heb. 9:24-26)

Really, Israel never came beyond Sinai's awful sight in all her Old Testament history. This was true even when Solomon's temple was built. When the Lord came to dwell in that temple, it was exactly as when He came in His glory to fill the Tabernacle at Sinai. The book of Exodus ends on this note of the distance which the Old Testament dispensation of grace demands. It was the testimony of the Holy Spirit that the way into the most holy place was not yet opened. (Heb. 9:8) Wherefore the book of Exodus must needs end by telling us that even Moses could not enter into the tent of the Lord, the tent of the congregation, when "the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." Literally we read: "And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle," (Ex. 40:34, 35).

When Solomon dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem, the typical place of the final resting place of the Ark of the Covenant, the priests, too, could not minister in the temple. We read in II Chron. 7:1-3, "Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house." Israel of



# THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

... OF THE ...  
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

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Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema, Rector  
Departments of Dogmatics and Old Testament  
Prof. Herman C. Hanko,  
Departments of Church History and New Testament  
Prof. Robert D. Decker,  
Departments of Practical Theology and New  
Testament

March, 1975

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

It is time we write you concerning the affairs of the Seminary. By the time you read this, we will be well into our second semester. One wonders where the time goes!

There is a total of 10 students enrolled in our Pre-seminary Department: 1 freshman, 5 juniors, and 4 seniors who look forward to graduation in May. These students are busy with such courses as Latin, Greek, Psychology, History, Philosophy, Speech, and Dutch. In this connection, we urge prospective pre-seminary students to contact the faculty before planning or beginning their college programs. This is important if students are to include the required subjects for seminary entrance and are to avoid scheduling problems in our pre-seminary department.

In the Seminary Department we have 4 students: 3 are from the Free Reformed Church of North America and 1 is from our own churches. These students, all in the first year, are getting their first taste of practice preaching this term. Each must preach on two assigned texts before the faculty and student body this semester. This is in addition to a full course-load.

While all this makes for a rather heavy teaching load and a busy daily schedule of classes, we are grateful for the privilege to be busy in this aspect of the work of God's church. We ask that you pray for us. We need that: for without the Lord's strength and grace we cannot labor. Even as we ask for your prayers, we are deeply grateful to you for your support, encouragement, and prayers on our behalf in the past.

We have received a goodly number of gifts for our Library, for which we thank you. Some of these gifts have come from brothers and sisters outside of our churches. We appreciate this more than we can express. Our library is growing, but it "has a long way to go." In this connection, we wish to encourage you to make use of the seminary library. The library is open to all of our people. Anyone, therefore, wishing to borrow books may contact our Student Librarian, Steven R. Houck.

May God's blessing rest on you, us, and our churches, in order that His name may receive the glory.

With love in the Lord Jesus Christ,  
*Robert D. Decker*  
(for the faculty)



Solomon's day had come to Mt. Sinai. They had not yet come to the heavenly city, to the true and living temple of the living God. This must wait till the time of reformation. (Heb. 9:10) That time of reformation

has come when Christ by a greater and more perfect tabernacle will purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. 9:11-14)

### CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies this fall in either the pre-seminary or seminary department of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches are requested to appear before the Theological School Committee at its meeting to be held on Thursday, March 20, 1975, at 7:30 P.M. in the Theological School Building, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418.

#### Pre-seminary Department:

Permission to pursue the pre-seminary course of study shall be granted by the Theological School Committee. A transcript of grades from High School and College (if any), a letter of testimony from a student's pastor or consistory, and a certificate of health from a reputable physician shall be submitted.

#### Seminary Department:

Permission to pursue the Theological course in the seminary shall be granted by the Synod, upon

recommendation of the Theological School Committee, to such an aspirant only who comes supplied with a testimonial of his consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, and also a certificate from a reputable physician showing him to be in good health.

A complete high school education and the equivalent of a four year (125 hour) college education are required for entrance into the seminary department. Moreover, each entrant into this department must produce evidence that he has credit for the required college courses. Requirements are listed in the school catalog, available from the School.

In the event you cannot be present at this meeting, please notify the undersigned secretary of your intentions, prior to the meeting. Mail all correspondence to the Theological School.

Richard H. Teitsma, Secretary

## Book Review

*CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*, by Martin Anstey (Foreword by G. Campbell Morgan); Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich.; 271 pp., \$12.95 (cloth). Note: due to the size of the pages and the format of this reprint, these 271 pages are equivalent to some 400 pages of ordinary size. [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

This is another very worthwhile volume in the Kregel Reprint Library. This work was originally printed in 1913 in two volumes under the title "The Romance of Bible Chronology." In this reprint the original two volumes are presented complete and unabridged. They are companion volumes. The first volume is called "The Treatise," and contains all the material which deals with the principles, the exegesis, and the calculations involved in Old Testament chronology. The second volume is a section of very complete chronological tables.

Any student of Old Testament history knows that the chronology of the Old Testament is really a study

all by itself. And it is both an important and a very interesting study to anyone who is a true student of the Old Testament. This work by Martin Anstey will certainly prove to be a very helpful and valuable addition to the library of any student of the Old Testament. Why do I make this statement? Not because I necessarily agree with all the calculations and the conclusions reached by the author, but because this is a study that is basically faithful to the Scriptures, and a very careful and thorough study. Moreover, in a day when everywhere the idea of a "young world" and, in fact, the very idea that it is possible to construct a chronology on the basis of the Bible is virtually laughed out of court, it is refreshing to become acquainted with a book such as this. Let me add, too, that the value of this book is not limited to ministers and seminarians. Although any reader will have to put on his thinking cap, also the ordinary man of the pew may very well make use of this book. Especially do I suggest that our teachers will find this book helpful in connection with their Bible teaching and their history teaching. Highly recommended.



## GUEST ARTICLE

## Anniversary Celebration Plans

Rev. Ronald J. Van Overloop

Remember...?

And can you imagine? On the basis of those memories can you imagine?

\* \* \* \* \*

Remember what? Remember the fourteen annual Field Days held in the Grand Rapids area. The first Field Day was advertised as follows in the July, 1925 issue of the *Standard Bearer*:

FIRST ANNUAL FIELD DAY  
 Protestant Christian Reformed Churches  
 SATURDAY, JULY 4th, 1925

The First Annual Field Day of the Protestant Christian Reformed Churches will be held at Boynton's Grove, near Jenison, Michigan, on Saturday, July 4th. Come in the forenoon and enjoy the whole day. Addresses will be given by the Revs. H. Hoeksema, H. Danhof, G. M. Ophoff and Candidate R. Danhof. There will also be singing, band music and games for the children. You will find room for picnic dinners, so bring your baskets. Refreshments will be on sale at the Canteen.

The proceeds from a collection and from all sales will be for the support of our monthly paper — THE STANDARD BEARER.

EVERYBODY COME  
 Let's make this a success.

Remember how these were held for fourteen years in a row on the 4th of July? Remember the speeches, fellowship, and fun had by all?

Can you imagine having one of them again?

\* \* \* \* \*

Remember? Remember the Protestant Reformed Young People's Conventions you were able to attend over the past 36 years? Can you still remember some portions of the speeches? Can you recall the family with whom you were housed, some of the events, and some of the young people you met?

Were you, perhaps, too old to attend a convention by the time they began in 1939 at South Holland? Or were there other reasons which hindered you from attending one of these wonderful events? Do you, whether you have attended one or not, feel a twinge of envy for the young people who leave your congregation to attend one?

Can you imagine attending a portion of the Young People's Convention this year?

Can you imagine what a thrilling event that would be if a Field Day and a Young People's Convention were held together?

\* \* \* \* \*

The Lord willing, just such an event is being planned and will take place this summer. No matter your age, or how many children you may have, you can be part of a very special young people's convention. This will be the 35th annual convention, hosted by the Young People's Societies of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids.

Can you imagine a beautiful, air-conditioned building, seating twelve hundred people, filled to capacity on two different warm summer evenings? The occasion for these overflow crowds will be lectures given by two of our seminary Professors, telling us of aspects of the covenant faithfulness of our God.

Can you imagine an all day outing sandwiched between those two lectures. Imagine Rev. C. Hanko, as only he can do, reminiscing both soberly and humorously of past events in the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Imagine one of our faithful ministers standing on a make-shift platform, in the cool of a summer night, telling us of the historical realization of God's covenant faithfulness. Imagine 1200-plus Protestant Reformed people gathered together out of doors singing praises to their covenant God. Just think of the enjoyment and fellowship involved in such an event!

Is this imagining the wild workings of the imagination of the writer?

No. All of this could be a reality, the Lord willing. All of the above-mentioned events are being planned now.

All of this began in Hudsonville, at the Synod of 1972, when a committee was elected to take care of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. This committee has been busy over the past year and a half doing just that. In the carrying out of their duties this committee, in turn, appointed a committee of two and gave them the responsibility of coordinating the Young People's Convention and the celebration of the 50th Anniversary by the adults of our denomination.

The young people of First Protestant Reformed Church are now a long way in their preparations for



this annual convention August 4-7. Having been informed of the tentative schedule, nine energetic couples were found to make the celebration of our anniversary by the adults a wonderful reality.

As these couples met with the above-mentioned committee of two, many ideas were presented and discussed. And during this discussion an air of excitement took hold! Were they excited because they were fooled by one who could make good use of propaganda? NO. Rather there was excitement because these people saw great possibilities that many of these ideas could become a reality and make the celebration of the 50th Anniversary by the adults of the churches a long remembered event. No, these are not the wild workings of a vain imagination. They are not a pipe dream. They are already becoming a reality. The Lord willing, they shall take place. It is up to you, the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, to make this a success.

As a denomination we are small enough to be able to gather many of our families into one spot at one time. Vacations could be taken at that time. Those who do not live in the Grand Rapids area can journey there, where arrangements will be made for lodging. Families can take their young people to the convention, rather than just sending them there. What a thrill to be able to see so many who are of like

faith. How wonderful, especially for those who are a part of congregations which are separated by many miles from any other Protestant Reformed congregation. What a communion of those "agreeing in true faith!"

Would such a celebration be a glorying in man? NO! No one desires that, and it may not be that. This would be no more glorying in man than an open house for a couple's celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. Certainly, there is no denying it, that there is a danger of this being a celebration of what man has not. But that danger exists every minute of every day in the life of the child of God, and it is no reason that such a celebration should not be held. Because of that danger we all must exercise ourselves in the sanctifying battle of faith, so that we can see only the graciousness of our Heavenly Father and the faithfulness of our covenant God.

This is a celebration of what God has wrought. It is a celebration our covenant God has made possible. This is the Golden Anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It is OUR Golden Anniversary, even though many individual members of our churches are not yet 50 years old themselves. The Lord willing, let us celebrate. And by His grace, let us celebrate aright.

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## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### To The Rescue

*Rev. John A. Heys*

Were it not for the testimony of Scripture in II Peter 2:7 that Lot vexed his righteous soul, it would be hard to believe that he had a righteous soul. His works did not reflect such a soul. And tracing his life, we see him departing farther and farther into the world. He moved away from Abram because he saw the lush, green fields near Sodom and Gomorrah. But now in Genesis 14 we find him living in the midst of the heathen in Sodom. He is a citizen of the land.

Undoubtedly those lush fields had served him well from a material point of view, and now he, who had much goods and cattle and servants when he departed from Abram — and in fact that was exactly why they had to separate — is now much richer. He can afford a house in Sodom. He can operate from out of the city and have his servants take care of his many cattle and sheep.

But all his riches do not change the fact that he was an ingrate. Nor does it alter the fact that he was an extremely weak believer. He showed no gratitude

to Abram who had cared for him ever since his father died. He had a covetous eye. And Paul declares in Ephesians 5:5 that a covetous man is an idolator. One does not simply covet and break the tenth commandment. But a covetous heart leads one to all manner of sin. And it is not at all surprising that Lot, who shamefully treated Abram by choosing the best part of the land, should also make himself at home with the wicked and appear as another idolator.

And, by the way, let it not escape us that the advantages in the world materially are always to be found where the wicked are. That is all that they know and seek. You can be sure that where material advantage is to be found, there you will find the world. So often these earthly goods can be gotten only in fellowship with the world. And Lot does not hesitate to join with wicked men to satisfy his covetous eye and heart.

He was a deserter, and soon enough he experiences what it means to cast one's lot in with the wicked.



When the judgments of God fall on the wicked, those who have joined the wicked can expect to be caught up in the misery of His judgments. Lot joined the world, and Lot suffered the miseries of the world. Four kings to whom tribute had been paid came up with a large army to punish the five kings that refused to pay tribute. And two of these five kings were the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. When Sodom and its inhabitants were captured Lot was taken. The four kings asked no questions. They saw no difference between the Sodomites and Lot. His righteous soul did not show on his face. To them he was an enemy as well as all the rest of the Sodomites. And had his righteous soul shown on his face, it would have made no difference to the four kings and their army. This was no righteous war. Had it been, Abram would not have come with an army to fight them. He would have presented the case of Lot being a righteous man and pleaded for his release.

But although Lot was an ingrate, Abram was a man with a big heart. He was not vindictive. Well could he have said, "Let Lot learn a lesson. He treated me shabbily. Now let him know what it means to be numbered with the transgressors. He deserves what he got. He asked for it. I cannot bother myself about the troubles into which he got himself." This Abram does not do. Such thoughts he never entertained for a moment. When providentially an escapee brings him word that Lot was taken, he gathers his trained servants at once and goes to rescue Lot.

And behind Abram, of course, was God Who had the tidings brought to Abram. For Lot had not simply sinned against Abram. He sinned against God. And let us remember that when we sin against the neighbour, it always is a sin likewise against God. You can break the first table of the law without breaking the second. But you cannot break the second table without breaking the first at the same time. Hatred towards the neighbour always reveals a hatred towards God Who put that neighbour there.

Similarly, if we love God, we are going to love the neighbour as well. And Abraham loved God and in that love also loved this ungrateful nephew. He is ready to rescue him from the slavery which he deserved because of allying himself with the wicked inhabitants of Sodom.

But, as we began to say, behind Abram is God, and God loves this weak and faltering child of His covenant. And therein is hope and comfort for you and me. We are not altogether different from Lot. We, too, are ingrates and covetous. Our ties with the world are so often very close. And if salvation depended upon works, we would never enjoy any part of it. But God loves us because He chose us in Christ. And His love is unwavering and unchangeable. He saw to it that Abram heard of Lot's plight, and He

gave Abram the victory when he went with his servants to rescue Lot. While we were yet sinners, also, Christ died for us. How terrible if He had to wait for us to cease being sinners. How hopeless the case would be if that were the condition of our salvation. But even as we see here with Lot who was walking in sin, so it is with us, that God, having chosen us, also loves us and is with us through thick and thin, never forsakes us and rescues us from the awful mess into which we got ourselves. Yes, behind Abram is God, and let us never overlook that fact. There is a God in heaven Who knows all things, and He saw to it that Abram heard of Lot's plight, because He intended through him to save this deserter of whom Peter can only say that he vexed his righteous soul. He did not do much more than that. But the spark of life God will not allow to go out. And in wonderful mercy He sends Abram to rescue his nephew.

Is that why Abram rescued him? Because there was this blood tie whereby Lot was his nephew? Is that the meaning of the statement in Genesis 14:14 that Abram heard "that his brother was taken captive"? Well, in the literal sense Lot was not his brother but his nephew. That we read in verse 12 when Lot is called Abram's brother's son. So we have both statements here. Lot is called Abram's brother's son, and he is called Abram's brother.

The latter undoubtedly refers to a spiritual relationship while the former is the natural physical relationship. Lot was Abram's spiritual brother. Abram was not looking upon Lot as another man, and as one who was related to him by blood ties. He saw a spiritual connection. He knew Lot as a brother in the Lord. Yes, it grieved Abram that Lot had defected and was living in Sodom, and that he showed so little interest in the things of God's covenant. But he believed that Lot was a child of God. In fact, it is not at all impossible that Abram still looked to Lot when he thought of the covenant promise of seed like the sand of the seashore. He had no son. They could have no son. And he believed that promise of God. But, as we also do, he looked around to see how God would fulfill that promise and wanted something on which he could fix his natural eye.

This is plain from the next chapter, when Abram somewhat later tells God that his servant Eliezer was his steward, and a little later that one born in his house — and not born of him — was his heir. It is not at all impossible that Abram for a time looked to Lot as the one in whom God would fulfill that promise of children to inherit the land. At any rate, Abram does consider Lot a child of God, and he goes to rescue him for that reason. He feels attracted and attached to Lot because of spiritual and not because of mere material, physical ties.



We do well to remember this lest we go astray in the "social gospel" — which is no gospel — that appeals to this incident as an example of what the church must do for the "brother" in the ghetto and in poverty and suffering from social and economic troubles. There is nothing in the whole incident that allows us so to interpret this event.

Everything in the whole account indicates that Abram had one thing in mind, and that was his brother Lot. Had not Lot lived in Sodom, Abram would not have bothered himself to go and fight the four kings. And do not forget that this was a risky matter for him to do. Here he was living in the land of the Canaanites. They tolerated him because God watched over Abram and would not allow them to touch him. He provided so that Abram could feed his cattle on other men's land and not be driven off or be killed. But he would cast himself in an entirely different light from the peace-loving shepherd and cattle raiser that they knew him to be, were he to take up sword and attack those who had attacked his spiritual brother. They might take quite a different attitude towards Abram and not tolerate him in their land and see him as a very real threat to their own existence. God would not have this; and having given Abram the victory, He also filled the Canaanites with a certain fear of Abram. But the point is that Abram did what he did only for Lot's sake.

Abram is not then going into the inner city and the ghetto to do some social improving. He is not moved by a social gospel that declares the calling of the church to be seeking such improvement in man's material, earthly lot here below.

There is no brotherhood of man that includes all the human race and makes it the church's calling to improve man's social standing and earthly standard of

living. Physically the whole human race is one brotherhood coming out of the loins of Adam and of Noah. But there is also a spiritual side to consider; and the human race is not one spiritually. As God predicted and promised in Genesis 3:15 there is a sharp two-fold division of the human race into the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And in that spiritual enmity between these two seeds, of which God there speaks, Abram has no use for the five kings any more than he has for the four which he attacked with his sword.

It is the member of the church of God that interests Abram, and it is for his sake that God uses Abram to rescue him and restore him and his goods back into the land of Canaan.

Do not misunderstand. As individuals we surely have a calling to help the neighbour in his distress. The law requires that of us. We are to do unto others what we would like to have them do unto us. But the gospel of the kingdom is not that the *church* has such a calling to strive for social improvements and security. The church's calling is to preach the gospel of salvation from our sins. We hear far too little about sin; and the cross of Christ as the atonement of our sins does not come to its own today. And those who appeal to this incident in the life of Abram and Lot for support of their social gospel reveal how desperate they are for some purported proof of their contention. It is a spiritual brother that Abram rescues, and it is his spiritual wellbeing that is behind this bold piece of violence performed by Abram to rescue him. A social gospel that appeals to this event must take the consequences of teaching that the church — or the individual member of the church — may take the sword in order to realize his social improvements.

### IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Society of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa, extend our heartfelt sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. John Mantel, in the loss of her mother-in-law, MRS. JACOB MANTEL. In the midst of our sorrow we may rejoice in the fact that our heavenly Father has called one of His children Home, and that we share with her that blessed hope fixed upon our Father's House with its many mansions.

Rev. Richard Moore, Pres.  
Mrs. Henry Miersma, Sec'y.

### IN MEMORIAM

On Thursday, February 13, 1975, our beloved husband, father and brother, ROBERT G. PASTOOR, was called to eternal glory.

Our comfort is in the promise of God's Word.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28).

"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)

Wife, daughter, son-in-law,  
and brothers

### IN MEMORIAM

In the morning of February 13, 1975, it pleased our heavenly Father to call our beloved brother, PETER CNOSSEN, to his heavenly home at the age of 76 years. We extend our sincere sympathy to the bereaved, Mrs. P. Cnossen and the family.

We rejoice in the glorious hope of the resurrection of which also the departed brother was fully assured. His was the testimony that, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." (Rev. 14:13)

The Men's Society of the  
SouthWest Protestant Reformed Church  
Rev. Herman Veldman, Pres.  
Clarence Kuiper, Sec'y.

### IN MEMORIAM

On the evening of January 30, 1975, it pleased our Heavenly Father to call our beloved husband and father, MR. JOHN RUST, to his heavenly home at the age of 84 years.

"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).

Kalamazoo, Mich.

Mrs. John Rust  
Berdona Rust



## News From Our Churches

February 27, 1975

It seems that Young People's Societies throughout our denomination are busily engaged in various fund-raising projects, with a view to their attending the eagerly-anticipated convention. The Federation Board of those societies, for example, sponsored a pancake breakfast at Hope School's gymnasium last December 28. The young people of Hull, Iowa, held a soup supper, followed by sports' activities in the gym of the community building, on February 22. The young people of the host societies (First Church) sponsored a Casserole Supper on the evening of January 30. South Holland's society held a baked goods sale in February, and, beginning in March, they're offering an extended car wash-and-wax service. And all that is only the beginning. The host societies, in the newsletter which was distributed recently, reported that they were "tremendously excited about the coming convention." Many of the other societies, apparently, share that enthusiasm.

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According to a February bulletin from Hull, the work of the Reformed Witness Committee "is now concentrated in helping our small congregation in Forbes." The committee has taken upon itself the task of publishing Rev. Mark Hoeksema's pamphlet, "God's Sovereignty Revealed in Predestination." The Forbes' congregation, it seems, is furnished with copies of the pamphlet for their distribution, with the cost of postage assumed by the Reformed Witness Committee.

That committee, which, if I remember correctly, includes men from Doon, Edgerton, and Hull, has a mailing list of its own, too. A Hull bulletin which I've been saving in my box for entirely too long, gave some information concerning the formation of that list. It reads as follows: "Some ask, how do we build up our permanent mailing list. . . . We send our

pamphlets to all box holders on rural routes or in towns. We do this for four issues, and then enclose a postage free card which they are asked to return to us with their name on it in order that we may then add their name to the permanent list. . . . Our committee also prints the same pamphlets for other churches, having their own name printed on them. These are paid for by these churches, (who then use them) for mission work in their area. . . ."

Written response to the work of that committee appeared in another of Hull's bulletins. Here's a sample:

"I would like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere appreciation for the leaflets we have been receiving, would like them to continue. It is indeed very heartening to read this type of material founded so squarely upon the Holy Scriptures. It is our hope and prayer you may continue earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

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The Evangelism Committee of South Holland distributed a newsletter to the members of that congregation in December of 1974. The committee reported that "we have a good supply of our consolation booklets on hand (*God is Our Refuge and Strength*). The congregation was urged to "make use of them as 'cards' sent to shut-ins or when visiting hospitals, doctors' offices, or rest homes for the aged and retired." The booklet consists, incidentally, of Meditations written by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema.

The letter went on to report that the committee expected to receive "a quantity of the booklet, *The Three Forms of Unity*. Here, too, is a handy means of 'broadcasting' the truth, and the Evangelism Committee would stress to the congregation that we

(continued on back page)

### 50TH ANNIVERSARY THANKS BE TO GOD!

The Lord willing, the Hull (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church will observe her 50th anniversary on March 21, 1975. We, the members of this congregation, give thanks to our Faithful Covenant God for the many blessings of the past and look to the future with trust in Him, and Him alone. *The congregation cordially invites the public to attend this momentous event and celebrate with them.*

"Be thankful unto Him and bless His Name. For the Lord is good: His mercy is everlasting: and His truth endureth to all generations." (Psalm 100:4, 5)

An anniversary booklet has been prepared and may be obtained for \$1.00. Address requests for this booklet to: Mrs. Tom Van Maanen, RR 1, Hull, Iowa 51239.

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### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses our deepest sympathy with Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Cnossen and family in the loss of their father and grandfather, MR. PETER CNOSSEN, who has entered into the Rest.

May their comfort rest in the promise, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage feast of the Lamb."

The Adult Bible Class,  
Mrs. D. Van Overloop, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express their sincere sympathy to their members Mr. & Mrs. J. Kuiper Jr. in the loss of her mother, MRS. JOHN SCHOLTEN.

"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."

The Adult Bible Class



should distribute these Reformed confessions to people, urging them to read one or the other of the creeds as circumstances warrant. . . . The Lord has given us the happy privilege and deep responsibility to be diligent in the dissemination (Eccl. 11:1) of the truth with which He has singularly blessed us."

The Evangelism Committee, like the Reformed Witness Committee, also makes some of its material available to other of our churches. In response to their offer, the committee received from one church a request for 500 copies of the Consolation booklet, from another a request for 100, and, "even the *Standard Bearer* asked for 100 of them."

Concerning correspondence (from those outside our denomination), the committee had this to say: "It is our desire to answer each one individually with a personal letter. In response to a request, to merely bunch together a group of pamphlets and send them out seems to us to be rather dull. We would like to avoid, if possible, the impression that we are a pamphlet-sending-out-agency. We desire to tell them a little about who we are and what we are doing — that we are a body of believers pointing men to the Lord and His truth, not to ourselves."

Perhaps for the remaining space in this column we could quote from some of that correspondence received by the Evangelism Committee. The following excerpts are taken from another newsletter to the congregation:

"... from De Motte, Ind.: 'I'm writing for additional copies of Meditations. . . . The Scripture texts in the pamphlet have always been known to us, but now with the Meditations, mean so much more.'

"... from Hanover Park, Ill.: 'Thank you for sending out the booklets of Meditations so promptly. I use them faithfully for people who are passing through trials and illness. They tell me that they are a source of comfort and strength.'

"... from Holland, Mich.: 'We pray that this avenue of Evangelism may continue to be a rich blessing to those who distribute it as well as to those who receive it. Keep up your fine work.'

The newsletter was concluded with an expression of gratitude, on the part of committee, that "God is willing to use us and deems us worthy to be used by Him so that others may 'rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.'"

D.D.

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